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**RELAȚIA DINTRE PR ȘI
JURNALISM ÎN CONTEXTUL
GLOBALIZĂRII COMUNICĂRII**

Rezumat în limba engleză

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KEYWORDS: journalism, public relations, intereffication, determination, influence

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between two evolving fields: public relations and journalism.

Public Relations, a relatively new domain in Romania, had a slower development until 1989, when new horizons opened for this profession. Journalism is a field with tradition, but it is constantly evolving.

Journalism in the general sense has the role to form opinions and values in society. This area is the main focus producer of media reality and directly responsible for the selection, evaluation and presentation of informational content in a neutral and unbiased way.

Public Relations handle the role of mediator between an organization and its publics, including journalists. This area is also responsible for the distribution of informational content, which, once taken by the journalists, generates media reality.

The study of the relationship between the two systems of communication is relatively new to Romania. Cristina Coman has conducted several studies on this subject (in 1997, 1999, 2003 and 2009). Her researches targeted journalists and PR people from Romania, by using questionnaires, with the objective to present the respondents interpretation on their relationship with the other party.

Throughout this research, we followed a different approach to this issue: our working tools consisted of informational content presented as news and press releases, to which we added a series of semi-structured interviews with former journalist, current PR specialists, to provide better picture of the subject of the thesis. The purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between professional communicators (journalists and specialists in public relations) and also the connections between the two types of text (news and press).

The substantiation of basic concepts and their application in the research itself presents another objective of this paper.

The thesis is divided into six main chapters, followed by general conclusions and a bibliography.

In the first chapter of this research we defined basic concepts, such as journalism, public relations, journalist, PR specialist, etc. and we identified common points and differences between the two systems of communication.

In chapter II we presented a relevant literature review to the topic of this thesis, the description of empirical researches and theoretical foundations closely related to the subject. The theoretical framework underlying our research is a theory adopted from German theoreticians, namely the intereffication theory by Günter Bentele, Tobias Liebert and Stefan Seeling. This theory has reshaped the perception that only public relations have an impact on journalism, and not vice versa.

Chapter III is devoted to the two types of text: News and press releases. In this part we defined the conceptual elements around the rules of writing the two specific types of texts analyzed of these two subsystems and professional approach of the journalist on the collection, selection and dissemination of information. The selection is an important step in the processing of information. Factors influencing the decision of the journalist regarding the relevance or irrelevance of information have been the subject of several empirical researches. In this chapter, we mentioned four theories regarding the selection of information: news flow theory, the theory of gatekeeping, the framing theory and the theory of news bias. In order to determine the factors that influenced the selection of information, we used a set of values, developed by Norwegian researchers, Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge.

Chapter IV contains a future projection of journalism and PR. All the dramatic changes that have occurred as a result of the digital age's evolution have left their mark on the format in which information reaches the consumer. New media has developed new perception and information processing skills in the consumer: he is able to use traditional media: newspapers, radio and television, but he operates easily in the online world. People often talk about the gradual disappearance of print in favor of the digital. This chapter describes the new problems journalists face due to new ways of transmitting messages and other aspects regarding the quality and control of information. Public relations must adapt to new rules of transparency and ethical conduct in the cyberspace also.

The fifth chapter contains the description of the used methodology. To obtain more representative results and to determine trends we use a mixed methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter we also present the objectives, design and research questions.

Chapter VI contains the results of our research. The first part will reveal the results of the qualitative and the quantitative content analysis, and in the second part we focus on the responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

To achieve our objectives, we started from the following research questions:

Q1. How can the professional relationship between journalists and public relations specialists be defined?

Q2. How do PR products (press releases, press conferences, etc.) influence journalistic contents?

Q3. What are the predictions of the specialists regarding the future of this relationship?

From these research questions we built up two main hypothesis and a few secondary ones:

H1. The contents of the press releases will be found, even if partially, in the content of the relevant articles. This hypothesis was confirmed.

H1a. People quoted in press releases (CEO, managers, etc..) will be found in the content of articles on relevant topics. This hypothesis was confirmed.

H1b. The press release is stated as the source of information for each press article. This hypothesis was confirmed partially.

H1c. Between the emergence of the press releases and the articles is a time slot of two days. This hypothesis was confirmed.

H1d. Press articles will take over the valorizations that can be found in the press releases. This hypothesis was disproved.

H2. Press releases are formulated to meet journalistic standards. This hypothesis was confirmed.

Research methodology

Our investigative approach in the analysis of the relationship between journalism and public relations is based on two research methods, which we combined, in order to validate the results of the quantitative research and to determine the qualitative factors in the interpretation of the message content and structure.

The methods used in this process are: the content analysis (quantitative and qualitative) and semi-structured interview.

Perspectives of combined methods

Practice shows that more and more researchers use both qualitative methods and quantitative methods to achieve the objectives of their studies. Quantitative methods can reach generalizable statistical results and the qualitative methods can study in depth

various analyzed issues or behavioral variables. Both of these methods increase the knowledge base.

Content analysis

The media content description and its analysis can be performed using a systematic approach, i.e., the content analysis.

The qualitative content analysis aims to create an understanding of the latent meanings of the analyzed messages. The quantitative content analysis involves a process of coding and statistical analysis of data extracted from the online newspaper content.

Interviews

In the present study we used semi-structured interviews. For this type of interview we created an interview guide in order to address predetermined topics, but the questions and their sequence could be substituted in the discussions. The reason we chose this type of interview is the flexibility and the possibility of obtaining more information from the interviewee. Using this technique, we could extract some insights of the interviewees' professional and personal experiences, but also attitudes towards two professional fields in which they were active: journalism and public relations.

The research design and the sampling

The research consists of two types of content analysis, a so-called *input-output* analysis. A first analysis, the input, addresses the press releases of the most valuable nine companies in Romania in 2012 (OMV Petrom, Romgaz, Orange România, Vodafone România, Hidroelectrica, Nuclearelectrica, Fondul Proprietatea, Banca Comercială Română, Automobile Dacia). In the second content analysis, the output, we addressed the press articles resulting from the releases coming from the nine companies. We took into account the articles that have been published on the websites of six quality newspapers in Romania: www.jurnalul.ro, www.romanialibera.ro, www.adevarul.ro, www.gandul.info, www.evz.ro, and the daily business newspaper, www.zf.ro.

We have to mention at this point, that our goal was not to analyze the full media coverage about the nine companies, only those articles, which were based on the topics of the news releases, provided by public relations departments of the new company.

The case study focuses on highlighting similarities between press releases and newspaper articles. In the quantitative analysis of the press articles we coded: titles,

pictures, number of paragraphs processed or taken with/without mentioning the source, the identity of the journalist, other sources, the people quoted, the valuing etc.

The qualitative content analysis followed these elements (described in detail in Chapter III) :

- Formulations of the sentences;
- Presentation of information in the form of an inverted pyramid introduced in the literature by Dutch researcher Teun Adrianus van Dijk. We analyzed the structure of the text, namely, the principle of inverted pyramid, where the information will be presented in descending order of importance.
- Answers to the questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?
- Assigned news values: frequency, intensity, unambiguous meaning, consonance, surprise, continuity, change, reference to elite figures, reference to elite nations, personalization, negativity . Each press release was encoded using the values determined by Johan Galtung news and Marie Ruge in *The Structure of Foreign News. The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crisis in Four Norwegian Newspapers.*

The title is one of the most important elements that arouse the interest and the curiosity of journalists. When coding, we also considered this an issue.

The lead and its contents were coded in order to determine whether public relations specialists present the quintessence of the text right at its beginning.

The semi-structured interviews followed an interview guide that contained six themes, namely the professional experience of the person interviewed, the relationship between PR and journalism in the perception of the person interviewed, the quality of news/press releases, similarities and differences between public relations and journalism, the future of both fields.

Research Period

We analyzed press releases and articles published between the first of January to the 31st of December 2012.

By analyzing press releases and articles from the year 2012, we have assured the relevance of the subject.

Conclusions

The research conducted showed, that the relationship between journalism and public relations is more complex than it seems. The results of the interviews and the content analysis demonstrated how much these two areas depend on each other.

Contributions

This study is the first one in Romania to analyze the relationship between professional communicators in terms of mutual influence, adopting the model developed by Günter Bentele et alii. It is also a pioneering work that opens new research perspectives in this field by using a mixed methodology to define not only the relationship between communicators, but also the intertextuality between press releases and news releases.

Starting from the basic concepts, journalism and public relations, we created a general theoretical framework to conceptualize the relationship between the two fields in a globalized communication system. Determining the specific roles and functions of each area is a necessity, as stated by Peter Szyszka in the interview he offered us, because only in this way can we define the relationship between the two areas and the vulnerable points between them.

Theories have been formulated over the years about the relationship between the two areas in many specialized books. This is an evidence of the scientists concern on a complex phenomenon that can be approached from several perspectives.

We focalized on two basic theoretical models that have been the subject of the relationship between the two systems:

Barbara Baerns developed in the 1980s the determination theory and two decades later, the research project of Guenter Bentele et alii reveals reciprocal effects, therefore they formulated the intereffication model. This theory questions Barbara Baerns' unilateral approach, on the assumption, that in both areas exist reactions and reciprocal actions.

The research highlights the importance of individual and organizational adaptations to both PR and journalism: public relations specialists adapt to the agenda of journalists when organizing press conferences, they respect some drafting when creating materials for the press, they adapt to the temporal dimension of journalism, issuing materials before closing the edition etc.

The first research hypothesis, referring to the content of the press releases and the content of the press articles proved that 48% of all press releases issued in 2012 by the nine companies were taken over by journalists. The selection of themes and texts, processing

and placing them is a journalistic induction in public relations, as the Bentele et alii 's intereffication model, the theoretical basis for constructing research. The number of words taken from press releases is averaging 188. This validates the assumption that the content of the press will be found even if partially in the content of news.

The quantitative content analysis determined that, on average, 75% of communications taken by journalists published the same day, in the pages of daily newspapers. The results of the content analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, show that journalists' attitude towards the communicated events is only in 9% of cases positive, while the valuing in the press releases is in 75 % positive.

Journalists change the valuation of the text by using phrases like "officials said", "according to the source ", " it said in a statement", " according to the press release", etc.

Regarding hypothesis *H1a. People quoted in press releases (CEOs, managers etc.) will be found in the content of the articles*, the results show that journalists tend to take over the statement of the people from the PR text. The press release was not always mentioned as the source. *Hypothesis H1b. The press release is stated as the source of information for each press article* concluded that newspapers do not dissolve the source of information in most articles on Orange, Vodafone, Banca Comerciala Romana and Automobile Dacia. Besides the press release, most cited sources are the news agencies Mediafax and Agerpres. These are followed by other sources such as: press conferences, sources whose identity was not disclosed, lawyers, other companies etc.

By using a qualitative content analysis, certain textual elements were identified to show that public relations departments do adapt to rules and journalistic standards when editing and preparing the text for journalists, in order to facilitate the other parties job in the acquisition and processing of information. Specialists in public relations know the importance of a well formulated title, of presenting the quintessence of the text in the first sentence, the technique of the inverted pyramid, that involves structuring the information in descending order of importance, the six important questions of journalism Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? and other rules.

The public relations specialists of the companies Petrom, Vodafone, BCR and Dacia delimit the lead from the rest of the text by using bold letters. The concept of the inverted pyramid was not an issue in every release of the company Nuclearelectrica, where the most important information was displayed in the last paragraphs of the text. This requires an extra effort for filtering and processing the information by the journalist.

Vodafone uses too long titles to be retained and the phrases appearing in the press releases of Hidroelectrica are also too long.

Another important aspect refers to the news values. In this thesis, the set of values was taken from the Norwegian researchers, Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge. We determined on average five news values to most press releases: "surprise", "lack of ambiguity" and "meaning" are the most common news values.

By using a quantitative content analysis we have reached generalizable statistical results, which determined several variables on the interdependence between journalism and public relations: the number of articles that have been inspired by the press releases, the persons from the companies that produce a resonance in the media, the number of press releases that generate themes in more than one quality newspaper from Romania etc. By using a qualitative content analysis we determined how texts are constructed and tailored to match journalistic standards.

Although newspaper articles were subject to quantitative and not a qualitative analysis, we found several "irregularities". Journalists are negligent in drafting news, particularly in mentioning the source, both in the case of photos and information taken from the press release.

The semi-structured interviews with professional communicators, currently active in PR, but with a professional experience in journalism, have strengthened the results of several researches: the relationship between PR and journalism is one of collaboration and cooperation, sometimes disturbed by the fact that neither PR people, or journalists do not know what to expect from each other. The PR specialist does not ask himself if the information "deserves" to be published or not, while the journalist does not know how to treat the source.

Even if the two domains prove to be more different, than similar, both have communication in common, according to the interviewees. The differences lie in serving the public interests by journalism and serving the private interests by public relations.

The responses of the PR specialists show, that some press releases are using a wood language, an "institutional slang", complicated formulations and sometimes the main information is presented only in the middle of text. On the other hand, press articles are dependent on the audience and tend to cover mainly sensational subjects.

Copy-pasting the press release by journalists is not an issue for PR specialists, even if it's plagiarism, because materials released are written in order to be published.

The professional communicators project a more or less bright future for the two domains: journalism is likely to turn into a niche area with a carefully chosen audience. The online journalism may gain ground at the expense of print. PR will have more to win, because organizations have begun to understand the importance and necessity of such a department, and it is possible, that public relations will rely less on journalism in the future. Interviewees hoped however, that the relations with journalists remain in current terms and that their work will be reflected in the final product of the journalist.

Research limitations and new research directions

The specific conditions of the analysis and the objectives of the thesis, conferred by its interdisciplinary nature, imposed certain limits and constraints of our research, which are closely related to the research methods.

In addition to the instruments used in the study, we sent questionnaires to more than 160 professional communicators in journalism and public relations. The response rate was below 10%, therefore the results were not processed and integrated in the results. Questionnaires would have given us general statistical results and a greater number of respondents than the interview.

We interviewed people who have a professional background in the media and public relations. In a future empirical research we can interview two different groups of people: one group of journalists and a group of public relations specialists. The interviews took place in Cluj-Napoca. To determine other trends than those presented in this thesis, other professional communicators from other parts of the state can be interviewed.

For the quantitative content analysis we chose the national quality press and the press releases of large corporations, most headquartered in Bucharest. We propose a local empirical research, on the assumption that local public relations have a greater impact on local and regional media.

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