

The Romanian Media - An Overview

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The Romanian Media Sector from the last 17 years can be described as a dynamic one. In the current study, which is also a part of national report of the Grundtvig 2 project "The Influence of Media in Adult Education Development" 06-G2-94-TM-RO-C, we divided the media sector into: printed media, audio-visual media, media based on web and new media. Within this article, I tried to present a short history, state of the art, as well as the tendencies on short term, for each of them.

Keywords: newspapers, audiovisual media, media based on the web, new media.

Introduction

Soon after the fall of communism, in Romania media began a new road, a democratic one. Romanian media landscape has evolved in different directions and Romanians cannot complain about the number of media outlets. The specific enthusiasm of those years generated the emergence of an enormous number of newspapers, much different than in the previous period. So, more than 1200 new titles emerged in 1990-1991, in fact of only few years later, in 1996, the number of these titles increased to 106 dailies and 1781 other periodicals. Nowadays there are about 1500 publications in Romania.

If initially media was oriented towards sensationalism and tabloid-style journalism in order to attract and keep audiences, five years after, some media start to address the new category of Romanian business people. However, the evolution of the media has also been greatly influenced by political or economical circles (political people, period of the national or local elections,). They often used the media as a tool to gain influence and political power and, of course, to try to keep it.

Freedom House classified in 2003 the Romanian media as "partially free" and Ioana Avadanei (head of the Centre for Independent Journalism) said "media is as good as the society is". Even there are plenty of progresses, anyone know the Romanian society is still plagued by corruption, scandals, lack of economic resources and political battles.

The state of the art

A. The written press

The majority of the Romanian publications are weeklies, supplemented by a couple of hundreds of daily¹ newspapers. There are also TV guides and the market specialized and niche magazines (weeklies, monthlies etc.). Newspapers published in the major cities have a local or regional circulation. Major cities like Timișoara, Iasi, Cluj, Brasov, Galati, Constanta, Craiova, and Sibiu have two to six dailies. In the capital Bucharest there are over 20 dailies being published and most of them have a national circulation.

In past years, Romanian newspapers were visible the tendency to overestimate their print run and circulation in order to attract advertisers. Now, the total market of the Romanian national newspapers rises to roughly 915.000 distributed copies. You can see the top 10 newspapers in the following table (Figure 1), according to <http://www.comanescu.ro/>.

The Romanian written press is concentrated around five big companies or people: Ringier Romania, Dan Voiculescu, Dinu Patriciu, Adrian Sarbu and Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, as you can see in the figure 2.

Mainly because of distribution problems, all Romanian dailies are morning newspapers and there are no afternoons or evening ones. It would be too difficult, given the present infrastructure, to produce and sell afternoon or evening editions.

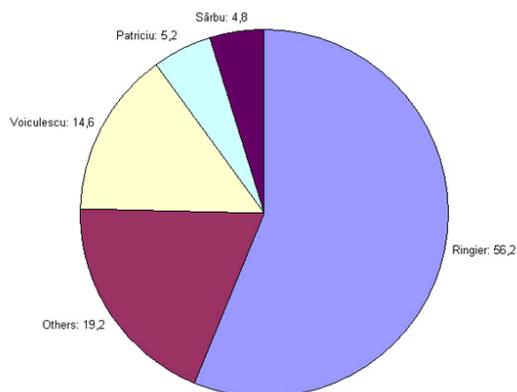
¹ A comprehensive list of the Romanian daily newspapers and other publications with links to their web-sites is available at www.ziare.com.

Figure 1. The top 10 newspapers best sold

Variations of the main daily newspapers, Autumn 2006			
	Jul-Sep	Jan-Jun	% variation
Libertatea (Ringier)	246.572	270.428	-8,8
Pro sport (Ringier)	74.482	76.171	-2,2
Gazeta sporturilor (Voiculescu)	71.360	72.427	-1,5
Jurnalul național (Voiculescu)	69.796	90.985	-23,3
Evenimentul zilei (Ringier)	65.861	71.291	-7,6
România liberă (WAZ/Adamescu)	56.295	57.794	-2,6
Gândul (Sîrbu)	28.813	34.198	-15,7
Avea (Patriciu)	26.705	16.496	+61,9
Ziarul (Ziarul C.N.)	23.678	22.912	+4,7
Adevărul (Patriciu)	22.847	25.335	-9,8
Ziarul financiar (Sîrbu)	16.739	16.119	+3,8
Total	703.148	754.156	-6,7

Source: <http://www.comanescu.ro>

Figure 2. The big 5 on the Romanian media market



B. The audiovisual media

1. TV market

“During communism period, the regime had suppressed one of the two existing public TV channels and had reduced the national broadcasting to firstly two and later three hours every week-day. At present, public television broadcasts through two mainland channels - TVR 1, a general interest channel, and TVR 2 which focuses on cultural and educative programmes, and two international satellite channels - TVR International and TVR Cultural. There are also several regional channels belonging to the public television, with TVR Timisoara, TVR Cluj and TVR Iasi being the most prominent ones. TVR 1 however remains the only national channel covering almost the entire territory of the country.” (Ulmanu, 2004)

There are private owners for the TV channels and the most important are ProTV, Antena 1, Prima TV and Acasa TV. The first two have more viewers in the cities than the public television. Other stations broadcasting nationally via satellite are Pro Cinema, TV K Lumea, OTV and Realitatea TV, the first all-news channel, TV Sport, National TV and National TV News, BITV, Etno etc. In addition, there are many local stations, usually affiliated with a national operator.

Big international names such as HBO, Hallmark, Fox Kids, Discovery, National Geographic, Animal Planet and Eurosport, distributed via the cable, have programmes translated into Romanian.

In 2001 the National Broadcasting Council reported 2,093,121 households, or almost 27 per cent of the total number of households, were subscribed to cable television. In 2005 there were 3, 5 million of subscribers (which makes Romania the fifth country in Europe by number of cable subscribers). At the end of 2002, there were 52% of households with cable television. In Bucharest and other big cities, the percent of households watching TV per cable reaches 80-90 percent.

There are 625 TV operators registered, but the most important TV cable companies are UPC (now joint with Astral Telecom) and RCS.

The Romanian spent a lot of their spare time in front of TV – much more over than the European average, according to the latest report of the Eumap in this matter. The surveys highlighted that the Romanian advertising between the 70’ and 80’ went to TV stations, that being the most important information resource for more than 80% of the inhabitants of our country. In spite of the TV’s consumption level, too exaggerated for one of us, and even of the pressure exercised of new media, it’s obvious the evolution of the Romanian market. This is sign that the audiences and the other relevant scores, as the advertising data, will maintain at the same level in the next few years.

After the big success encountered by Realitatea TV and Acasa TV stations in the last few years, the number of Romanian TV stations niche increased considerably. The ex-

perts predict the continuity of these phenomenon in the next years.

2. Radio Market

The public national radio is the most popular in Romania with nationally broadcasting on AM and FM. It has four national channels (News, Culture, Youth and Music), an international channel and ten local or regional

The most important networks are established by Radio Contact (re-branded into Kiss FM), Radio ProFM and Radio Uniplus (re-branded into Star FM). FM stations are usually music stations with short news bulletins and few other shows. The most influential owner is the French Group Lagardere.

The public national radio stays the most popular in Romania, according to the latest Association for Radio Audience (ARA, Sept. 9-oct. 29, 2006) figures, as you can see in the figure 3, and Europa FM is now the audience leader in the FM segment.

C. Web-based media

The government estimates in 2005 Internet traffic to stand at about 24 per cent. Trafic.ro, Romania's most used web audience measurement system, announced that in the month of October, it has counted over 7 million² Romanian unique visitors.

If in year 2007, rate of internet was around 28%, for 2007 MCTI estimate a similar rate to other countries from European Union. From total number of internet users, more than half are "heavy users", but only a small percent go online from home, while most do it from the office, from school, or from Internet cafes.³

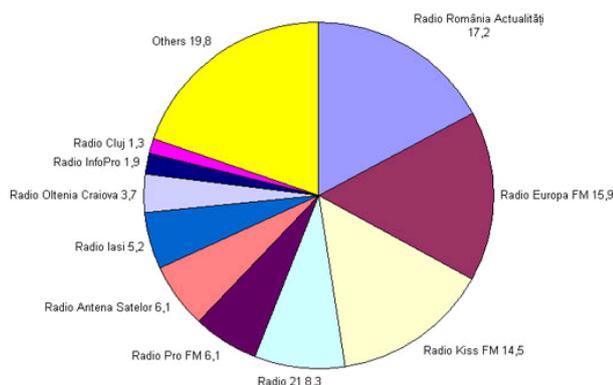
² Romania has around 3,7 million Internet users aged 14-64 years, in the urban areas, according to the July 2005-July 2006 SNA (National Audience Study). The difference between SNA and Trafic.ro is given by the duplicated audience of some of the sites. E.g., if one user accessed both Aaa.ro and Bbb.ro, Trafic.ro would count the person twice.

³ The official statistics are not representatives because they present not very recent datas and the existent Internet statistics are in contradiction. According to

channels broadcasting their own programmes in different languages, too.

On the radio market, the first private FM radio station appeared in 1990 in Bucharest but even now, there are no AM private stations as yet.. At present there are more than 150 private local FM stations which broadcast mainly music and hourly news bulletins.

Figure 3. The national market shares pie



Source: The Romanian Association for Media Audience

Broadband, cable, ADSL or mobile connections are usually too expensive for the average Romanian, which limits such options to the big companies and NGOs. Unfortunately, still home users connect mostly via dial-up modem, even cable connections are increasing very much. More than that, TV cable operators have started to upgrade their infrastructure and to offer cable access at reasonable prices. Additionally, our governments try to extend Internet infrastructure with at least two new and important projects: PowerLine Communications and Broadband in Gas. So, a lot of disadvantaged regions (villages, cities etc.) will be able to have Internet access and equal chances to knowledges, to programmes, to opportunities etc.

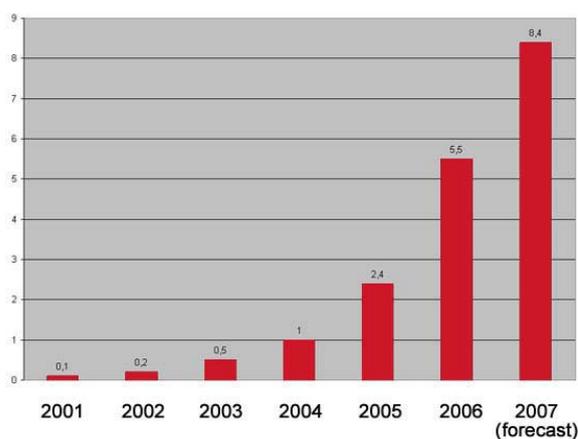
There are very big differences between rural area and urban area. For example, in the ur-

Trafic.ro, 97,03% of the online users interviewed access Internet daily. 50% of them access Internet from home, 25% from work, and the rest of them from other places. Likewise, 91,35% of interviewed people mentioned they have Internet connection at home.

ban environment, according to Iulian Comănescu⁴: 70 % of Romanians have a high-bandwidth connection, 81,90% have computers, 64,16% have access to the internet 27,97% have own sites.

Experts in the field predict that until 2008 there will be over 4 million home connections. According to the same source (Iulian Comănescu), the "Romanian Internet" includes a total of 25.000 websites and 100.000 romanian domains registered.⁵

Most Romanian media newspapers and TV stations are present online. However, unfortunately many websites are poorly designed and maintained, and do not take all of the advantages and all of the possibilities for interactive content and frequent updates offered by the Net. Most websites' content is formatted by a simple trasposition of offline content to online content.



Source: [ARBOMedia \[RO\]](http://www.arbomedia.ro)

Figure 4. The Romanian Internet advertising expenditures in 100.000 euros

However, there are changes for the better. As media outlets are starting to realize, on the one hand, that they can reach an important number of readers online, and on the other hand, that online advertising (Figure 4) is

⁴ <http://www.comanescu.ro/>

⁵ Starting with the first of January, individuals and organisations from Romania can send requests to obtain .eu domains. Even if the fee that has to be paid annual is just 14 euros, (although this fee is higher than the one of 60\$ on life, as is necessary to be paid for a .ro domain), the number of the European domains registered by a specific person or an organization is under the authorities expectations.

growing (and is growing very fast - The Romanian Internet advertising market is estimated in 2007 at 8,4 million euros net, according to the "Internet Advertising 2007" forecast of [ARBOMedia \[RO\]](http://www.arbomedia.ro), the most important Internet ad broker), news sites have started to renew their design pages and to improve content.

The biggest and most popular portals are [Kappa.ro](http://www.kappa.ro), [Bumerang](http://www.bumerang.ro) (a news portal), [Apropo](http://www.apropo.ro), [Home.ro](http://www.home.ro), [Portal.ro](http://www.portal.ro) and [Neogen.ro](http://www.neogen.ro). From these, only Bumerang, Romania Online and Apropo have significant journalistic content.

Online journalism⁶, although not as developed as in some Western European countries and the USA, is growing fast in Romania. Like in other countries too, despite the fact that most newspapers do not employ journalists to work on their websites (where they usually paste the content from the print edition), there are exclusively online publications such as [Revistapresei.ro](http://www.revistapresei.ro), [Bumerang.ro](http://www.bumerang.ro) or [Anchete.ro](http://www.anchete.ro) attracting an increasing number of users.

Mainly because we need to implement the European Union tasks, in the past years, government and administration (public sector) together are aware of the need to be present online. The same situation is regarding with businesses, NGOs, private sector etc.

The Romanian Government's website, [Gov.ro](http://www.gov.ro), offers comprehensive information about the executive, as well as links to other state institutions, such as the Presidency, the Parliament, various governmental departments, and local administration. The government is trying to get the entire central and local administration online as by law, every government agency is supposed to have its own website where all public information should be available. The Romanian eGovernment programmes (partially sponsored by the Romanian Government) wins very important international competitions. For example, Siveco has obtained in 2005 the prize „eEurope Awards for eGovernment”. However there is still a long way to go before every agency will be present on the Net.

⁶ Here I didn't include blogs as an online journal.

Anyway, Romanian media mogul realized the potential business of the Internet and because of these they continue expansion on the Internet. Almost every TV station or Radio station has a website, even if there are without new elements.

D. New media

When I included „the new media” in our country report, I took into consideration only a small part of what Web 2.0 changed the traditional media. Because of these, in the following lines, I present only blogs and wikis like new media.

Blogs are, at international level, in fully expansion process (over 55 millions). At national level we can speak about “blog phenomenon” starting 2004, and there are around 15.000 active blogs on the market.

As at the international level, Romanian blogs have started to be used as information sources by the print media. There are also discussions about blog credibility. There is a small group of dedicated readers that check frequently blogs such as Blog.HotNews.ro (maintained by this author), Netoo.wordpress.com (RO), Jurnalisonline.ro, Tolontan.ro, Orlando.ro, Manafu.ro etc. to obtain different kind of news or informations. Obviously, newspaper readers should not see the same news the next day in the print edition, so print media should adapt to the new situation with a new editorial policy. Or, otherwise, lose their readers, at least in narrow domains like the one discussed.

As much as critics and suspicions are raised by the blog polemics, there in one issue we have to take into account: the power and the value of the blogosphere consist in the increasing number of blogs and bloggers. Until when can this trend continue? According to the experts from the Gartner market analyse company, the blogs increasing rate will reach its limit in the next years.

The same company predict for 2007 the number of blogs will increase globally around 100 millions. The reason is that the majority of those who want to have blog, already have one and the people who aren't bloggers lost the start moment because this market had

settled the major actors. Is this true? What about the fact that the majority of the bloggers are young and very young people and the youngest are waiting to get through the galactic gate of Internet? And what about the fact that Romania has just start to feel the pulse of blogs? In the period that will come, we'll find answers at least to some of these questions.

Wikis are collaborative web sites which became day by day more attractive, more used and more appreciated Web 2.0 sites. More and more people are interested⁷ to understand what do they mean, and as far you are using them you become a fan. You are easily impressed by their simplicity way of using them, by these open source sites, by the multiple advantages they give us (Malița, 2006d) etc.

Wikipedia is the most famous examples of wikis in Romania. When I write this material, Romanian version of Wikipedia registers 53237 articles and is growing very fast.

The combination between blogs and wikis, named *bliki*, gains the strengths of both of them. Blogs become more interactive and more collaborative, but wikis obtain an alternative crossing way and a RSS feed through which the updates are easier signaled to the interested users. The current tendency is to add to this combination the elements of an agenda (contacts, calendars etc.) and even the elements of a content administration system. All of these new elements emerge *bliki* into a complex collaborative application, but still easy to use and to managed.

Media Grundtvig 2 Project

For the national report⁸ in the Grundtvig 2 project: “*The Influence of Media in Adult Education Development*” 06-G2-94-TM-RO-C, we presented the state of the art of the

⁷ The Google search engine publish a statistic for 2006 with the most used keywords to start a search and in the top was the word “wiki”. Related to the these sort of web 2.0 sites is Wikipedia also, which obtain the fifth position in the top of the most searched terms.

⁸ The first part of the national report was focused on the state of the art of the Romanian adult education. The second part was focused on Romanian media overview and the last part was the research.

Romanian media market. There were 100 students from the University of West from Timisoara, the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, from all departments including the Social Work distance education, who filled the questionnaire.

Through the questions of the questionnaire I wanted to obtain the student's perception regarding the using of media in the field of adult education⁹. As the students came from different counties, as their age was between 18-45 and even more, as they are men and women, as they are different ethnic minorities and different religions, the answers were valuable.

Because of the fact there were some difficulties to implement on the VCP the questionnaire by the German partner and because of these the time left wasn't enough, we decided to interview only around 100 students. In fact almost all the students who participated to classes in that day agreed to fill the questionnaire.

As we expected, the answers were as following:

- The most used media in the learning activities is still the printed media (books, journals, newspapers, magazines etc.). Then were the audiovisual media, the media based on the web and new media.
- The students used not so often media based on the web and new media in their educational purposes, many of them never heard about these two.
- Almost all of them agreed with the fact that using media can be really useful in the educational process, that using media can meet their needs of information, communication, interaction and entertainment. Even so, they aren't too interested to get the necessary knowledge in order to use them efficiently.

In state of conclusions

Media form Romania is still influenced either by political sector either other "influencing powers" from the country. Situation is changing, but slowly. Our adhesion to EU imposes

some changes and they are made, sometimes easily or in one more difficult way. The coming years will hopefully bring the much needed quality that some Romanian media presently lack and a good and strong legislation in this area. Even so, media sector from Romania is very dynamic and it suffers a fast development. This is a good thing for education, democracy and freedom of expression.

In this way the Romanian media market had a continuous evolution in the last years, after trying a lot and the needs of its consolidation. These changes are natural and in a few years the Romanian media had to become competitive on the international level. It was necessary to keep its target audience and also to attract a new one.

Because still there are a lot of things to do and because the international media must be in a continuous process, we expect that in the future the Romanian media market to be more and more dynamic and more competitiveness when looking for new ideas, new concepts we'll benefit from. I mention some of these reflection themes, but we hope they are not the only one:

■ Media in Romania needs to develop according to EU tasks (which our country agree on).

■ The state must involve more in media development, otherwise, private market will "make the rules", because they have an instrument to use to gain more influence.

■ Often, media is influenced by different sectors (e.g. political sector where one leading television is owned by a political leader), so what can we say about media democracy and freedom of the media in Romania?

■ Media (especially new media) has a major impact in education (strategies and approach, demands and society, informational society – knowledge society – learning society) – next society?

■ Last years media in Romania become more and more dynamic because our government need to create conditions in order to avoid Brain Migration, to keep Romanian good specialists in Romania, and to bring back part of the others Romanian

⁹ It is known that the young Romanian citizens get the legal status of adult when they are 18.

emigrant well qualified.

■ The newspapers and the media companies started to become aware of the Internet potential, so their content will converge to the online, even in the beginning the content will be online and offline too.

■ The Romanian media market in 2007 will be more concentrated, involved into the local market and new media.

■ Foreign ownerships are present in almost all types of Romanian media and I think this is a strength for all of us, because even if they follow only commercial aspects, as well as it is possible, they are impartial.

■ The new media is more attractive and much more competitive than traditional media. So, in order to be at the same level of audience, the traditional media has to improve its schedules, to redesign the way it looks etc.

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