

**NATIONAL SCHOOL OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES**  
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## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

**THE INTERFERENCE BETWEEN NEW MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL  
MEDIA. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TOOLS ON  
CONVENTIONAL MEDIA CONTENT  
(SUMMARY)**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background<sup>1</sup>

The world has changed radically since the advent of the internet. We live in an era of globalization thanks to the evolution of technology that allows us to be interconnected and connected to everything that is happening around the globe. Communication and the way information reaches people has been transformed over the last three decades since the advent of the Internet and the development of the World Wide Web<sup>2</sup>. The digital revolution has claimed its first victims in the media. The printed press almost disappeared, according to the obvious predictions of practitioners and theorists in the communications industry, with the advent of new ways of transmitting information: much faster and more cost-effective. History has only repeated itself, because before that moment there were other revolutionary breakthroughs that transformed the way we communicate: in the mid-19th century, the telegraph helped information reach people faster, making long-distance communication possible for the first time in history. It was the forerunner of the 'information superhighway', a concept describing the advances in the communications industry that allowed information to be transmitted faster and more efficiently in the early 1990s<sup>3</sup>.

The emergence of new means of communication does not automatically lead to the disappearance of existing ones, research shows<sup>4</sup>, but at worst the new media coexist with the "old" ones. Technology has changed not only how content is produced, packaged and delivered, but also how information is consumed. In short, it has changed processes and forced traditional media industry professionals to adapt to secure their profession. Some authors even assess the changes that technology has wrought on journalism as more far-reaching than the shift from print newspapers to the online era<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from this chapter were included in the first article published during my doctoral studies, Maria Moiş, "The interference between new media and traditional media. Assessing the impact of new tools on conventional media content", *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Ephemerides*, vol. 67, no. 2, December 30, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The World Wide Web, or 'www' for short, is one of the services offered by the internet, a network of servers that, once accessed through a browser, allows you to access information displayed on various websites.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph R. Dominick, *Hypostases of Mass Communication. Media în era digitală*, Editura Comunicare.ro, Bucharest, 2009, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Natalia Aruguete, "The agenda setting hypothesis in the new media environment", *Comunicación y Sociedad*, vol. 28, no. 28, April 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Emily J. Bell et al, *The Platform Press: How Silicon Valley Reengineered Journalism*, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, 2017.

Clearly, Web 2.0 has created an interconnected world, and the era of the supremacy of traditional media creating content and distributing it as it wished is over<sup>6</sup>. With the development of digital platforms, audiences have more choice. We are therefore witnessing a fragmentation of the mass communication process<sup>7</sup>, but also a diversification of audience preferences<sup>8</sup>. In the "age of choice", most researchers interested in the intersection of journalism and the new information context say that television as a media vehicle remains a form of mass communication, despite the disruptions brought about by the advance of technology.

Communication science expert, sociologist Manuel Castells, puts it bluntly: "the internet has already changed television"<sup>9</sup>. Using as an argument a study showing consumption habits among teenagers in the United States, who "don't even understand the concept of watching television according to someone else's set schedule", the author concludes that television continues to play a major role, but the transmission mode and format are being transformed by the "individualization of reception"<sup>10</sup>. A phenomenon similar to the anticipated future of print media has occurred, explains the researcher. Worldwide, internet users read newspapers primarily online. So the newspaper remains a form of *media*, only the platform for transmitting information changes.

Television, as a traditional media vehicle, has yet to be replaced by any other medium, despite the diversity offered by technology and the advent of *smart* devices. Reed Hastings, co-founder and chairman of Netflix, an over-the-top (OTT) service<sup>11</sup> said that "it will be another ten or 20 years before traditional television disappears", adding that *streaming* services "are far from reaching saturation point"<sup>12</sup>. A relevant statement in the context in which studies on the Romanian media market show that the value of the OTT (over-the-top) services segment has had

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<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Weimann et al, "Reevaluating "The End of Mass Communication?"", *Mass Communication and Society*, vol. 17, no. 6, November 2, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Nick Anstead, *What do we know and what should we do about...?"*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London, 2021, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> James G. Webster, Thomas B. Ksiazek, "The Dynamics of Audience Fragmentation: Public Attention in an Age of Digital Media," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 62, no. 1, February 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Manuel Castells, *Communication and Power*, Comun

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Over-the-top (OTT) refers to a media service where content is delivered to users over the internet.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Samoilă, "Netflix chief: It will be another ten or 20 years before classic TV disappears," <https://www.paginademedia.ro/stiri-media/sef-netflix-predictii-televiziune-clasica-20401268>, accessed September 21, 2021.

the highest growth in the media and entertainment market, a five-fold increase over five years<sup>13</sup>. And the trend is global. The supply of these types of services is linked to demand from the new generation of consumers<sup>14</sup> who "prefer to watch what they choose"<sup>15</sup>. A study done in Taiwan after the introduction of *the* Netflix *streaming* platform in that country shows that OTT TV is gaining ground over traditional television<sup>16</sup>. But that doesn't automatically mean that traditional media is succumbing to the new. They are merely transforming themselves to resist the movements generated by the interference of technology in traditional communication processes.

Newsrooms live in convergence with the technologies offered by the Internet, but not without the risks that come with this coexistence. Technology has created a paradox for the fourth power in the state. In addition to the benefits in absolutely all aspects of improving life on the planet, the new communication medium has also brought risks to the health of democracies, as was to be expected due to the democratization - at least in theory - of information in the new information ecosystem: "perhaps nowhere are these contradictory tendencies more present than in the fourth estate, the media and journalism"<sup>17</sup>.

In Romania, more than half of citizens use television to get information, according to two<sup>18</sup> of the most up-to-date studies on Romanians' perceptions of the media.<sup>19</sup> The latest Cultural Consumption Barometer on the consumption of media content on TV and radio shows that, although there is a decrease of two percent compared to the period before the pandemic, 7 out of

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<sup>13</sup> "PwC report: Romania's media and entertainment industry to reach \$3 billion in 2019", <https://www.pwc.ro/ro/media/press-releases-2019/raport-pwc--industria-de-media-si-divertisment-din-romania-va-at.html>, date accessed September 21, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Advertising payers relate to a special category of audience - the commercial audience - made up of people aged between 18 and 49, considered the active audience. This audience has been shrinking over the last twenty years, according to studies on media audiences in Romania. "What Esomar categories are important in Pro TV's new commercial audience? Where are the managers and where the unemployed", <https://www.paginademedias.ro/2021/03/ce-sunt-categoriile-esomar-public-comercial-pro-tv/>, date accessed September 6, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Manuel Castells, *Communication and Power*, Comunicare.ro Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015

<sup>16</sup> Yi-Ning Katherine Chen, "Competitions between OTT TV platforms and traditional television in Taiwan: A Niche analysis," *Telecommunications Policy*, vol. 43, no. 9, October 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Guy Rolnik et al, *Protecting Journalism in the Age of Digital Platforms. Committee for the Study of Digital Platforms*, Stigler Center for the Study of the Economy and the State, 2019, <https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03947806https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03947806>, accessed July 7, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> "INSCOP survey: TV channels, the main source of information for more than 50% of Romanians", <https://www.news.ro/social/sondaj-inscop-news-posturile-tv-principala-sursa-informare-mult-50-dintre-romani-43-cred-retelele-sociale-cele-expuse-dezinformatii-45-6-considera-rusia-principala-sursa-stiri-false-1922403018002024030721526964.>, date accessed May 21, 2024

<sup>19</sup> "Reveal Marketing Research study: For entertainment and relaxation, Romanians access social media platforms (54%), radio (52%), podcasts (44%) and television (41%)", <https://reveal.ro/en/media-en/reveal-research-social-media-platforms/>, date accessed May 21, 2024.

10 Romanians still watch TV programs daily (70%)<sup>20</sup> . The decrease in TV consumption is explained by sociologists from the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training by "the growth of internet consumption and increasingly diversified and accessible *streaming* services"<sup>21</sup> .

Television therefore resists inertia and interference from new technologies. This media vehicle was even more relevant in times of crisis, when people around the world needed credible information. The study by the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* at the University of Oxford shows that TV news viewing increased during the state of emergency in all six countries where the survey was conducted and included increases for all age groups, including among younger audiences<sup>22</sup> . The Reuters Institute's 2022 report, which shows media consumption habits in 40 countries, indicates that 74% of Romanians get their news from TV, down a few percent from over 80% in 2017, while online remains the main source of information, with 86% of Romanians consuming information from online sources<sup>23</sup> .

The traditional media may therefore be weaker as a result of the technological shocks to which it has been subjected over the last two decades in particular, but there are premises that it is still resilient in the new information environment. Discussions are opening up about what the future of television, newsrooms and communication in general will look like in the coming decades. Will the death of television predicted by the head of Netflix in the next twenty to thirty years also mean the death of journalism, given the prevalence of this medium among the Romanian audience?

In this context, the research paper aims to analyze how newsrooms have changed compared to ten years ago from the perspective of the new tools that media professionals have with the advancement of new media. In how long these new tools will also become obsolete in the context of the implementation of 5G technology opens up research in new directions. The new

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<sup>20</sup> Carmen Croitoru, Anda Becuț Marinescu, "Barometer of Cultural Consumption 2022. Cultural participation and democratic perspectives", [https://www.culturadata.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Barometrul\\_de\\_consum\\_cultural\\_2022-Web.pdf](https://www.culturadata.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Barometrul_de_consum_cultural_2022-Web.pdf), date accessed February 12, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Carmen Croitoru, Anda Becuț Marinescu, "BAROMETER OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION 2022 Cultural participation and democratic perspectives", [https://www.culturadata.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Barometrul\\_de\\_consum\\_cultural\\_2022-Web.pdf](https://www.culturadata.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Barometrul_de_consum_cultural_2022-Web.pdf), date accessed May 21, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Nick Newman et al, "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020," [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR_2020_FINAL.pdf), accessed September 7, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Nick Newman et al, "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022," [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital\\_News-Report\\_2022.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf), accessed August 5, 2022.

5G technology has already been deployed at least on a test level, one such transmission was made in April 2021 for the generalist television broadcaster Pro TV<sup>24</sup>. The simplification of the real-time information transmission process with the advancement of the new technology could open a broad discussion on the future of traditional networks. And what will journalism look like once Web 2.0 is *upgraded*? Web 3.0, a new generation of the Web, through the power of artificial intelligence, has the potential to revolutionize everything we have known about communication and beyond<sup>25</sup>. The advancement of technology is relentless, and the topic is all the more topical as "the disruptive power of artificial intelligence (AI) will invade the information space this year at a time of intense political and economic volatility around the world" according to the Reuters Institute forecast for 2024<sup>26</sup>.

### **Research problem**

The media industry has undergone a major disruption with the development of technology. In journalism, there has been competition between traditional media such as television and radio and new media. Naturally, people are spending more time on these new platforms and journalists have to adapt to secure their profession. The advent of high-performance internet-connected devices has made the production of journalistic material cheaper, especially for broadcast media.

The research problem examined in this paper is the interference of technology within traditional news organizations, in particular and in general, the future of television news as a traditional media vehicle. There is a competition between old and new media once the internet is booming. Nick Anstead, from the *Department of Media and Communication at the London School of Economics*, cites the presence in the online space of giants such as Google, Facebook, now Meta, the company that owns the Facebook platform, the world's largest social networking

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<sup>24</sup> "PRO TV's first live broadcast over 5G in partnership with Orange Business Services", <https://newsroom.orange.ro/comunicate/prima-transmisiune-live-prin-5g-realizata-de-pro-tv-prin-parteneriatul-cu-orange-business-services/>, date accessed September 21, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Werner Vermaak, "What is Web 3.0? Decentralized Internet Explained," <https://coinmarketcap.com/academy/article/what-is-web-3-0>, accessed September 21, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Nic Newman, *Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2024*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, January 2024, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Newman%20-%20Trends%20and%20Predictions%202024%20FINAL.pdf><https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Newman%20-%20Trends%20and%20Predictions%202024%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed April 15, 2024.

site<sup>27</sup> . These companies have fueled new business models built around targeted advertising on social platforms which has changed the media industry<sup>28</sup> . The author talks about a new model of communication, nurtured by the new information ecosystem: 'it is very tempting to divide information consumption patterns along a chronological axis - <<radio era>>, <<television era>> and <<internet era>>. While this risks oversimplification (inevitably there are overlaps between these periods, with some people consuming media in a new way and others still preferring traditional-style consumption), it is nevertheless fair to say that we have moved from the *media* to the fragmented *media* era"<sup>29</sup> .

The research problem is closely related to the researcher's level of interest in the topic. I started documenting for my PhD thesis back in 2018 about the role and responsibility of the journalist in society, the impact that televised debates have on democracy, I moved from the competition between traditional and new media and after a long process, I came to look at the topic from another angle: that of the professional who experiences change on a daily basis. As a working journalist in a newsroom, with twelve years of experience in the television news industry, I have felt the transformations in the news-making process as technology has evolved. The trigger was the day when 80% of the content I delivered for newscasts came from social media, Facebook, Instagram or was sent by viewers through the WhatsApp platform to the newsroom account.

### **Research objective**

There are many scholarly studies that address the intersection of digital platforms and journalism, with a particular focus on information consumption and the perils of communicating in the digital age<sup>30</sup> , but a specific understanding of this body of literature seen from the perspective of social-media interference in the production process of television news is lacking. Traditional journalistic practices and routines define the content of journalistic materials that ultimately influence the audience. This paper aims to advance a theoretical debate about the future

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<sup>27</sup> Nathan Reif, MARGARET JAMES (reviewed), "Top 3 Companies Owned by Facebook (Meta)", <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/051815/top-11-companies-owned-facebook.asp>, date accessed August 5, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Nick Anstead, *What do we know and what should we do about...?* , p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> Kai Shu, Suhang Wang, Huan Liu, "Beyond News Contents: the Role of Social Context for Fake News Detection", in *Proceedings of the Twelfth ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining*, ACM, Melbourne VIC Australia, 2019

of traditional journalism by studying the effects of technology on the field. Therefore, the theoretical objective is to assess how the basic function of setting the public agenda by journalists has changed in the new information ecosystem with the explosion of digital platforms that provide a stage for the audience, until recently with a purely passive role<sup>31</sup>.

This research complements other studies that have attempted to understand the impact that the emergence of the internet and, more recently, the explosion of social media platforms has had on traditional journalism over the last twenty years. Five years ago, Rodica Șuțu demonstrated that newsrooms live in a convergence with new media<sup>32</sup>, through an analysis of newsrooms in the United States and Romania, showing the interference of technology in the internal organization of news institutions. More than two decades ago, in her work "*New Media and the Reconfiguration of the Television Sphere*"<sup>33</sup>, Camelia Beciu anticipated a new form of journalism "based on new forms of interaction with the viewer", while Georgeta Drulă brings into the discussion, for the first time, the "intermediaries" in a traditional newsroom, i.e. "those who gather, aggregate"<sup>34</sup> using *new media* platforms. None of these studies has as specific an objective as the one proposed in this paper, which has the capacity to question the power of influence of traditional media in the new information ecosystem, since it aims to collect empirical data on the influence of new technologies on television content in order to measure the level of autonomy of journalists competing with new media.

Empirically, the objective of this paper is to show how the content of news journals in the Romanian media has changed over time with the expansion of new media, from the perspective of the sources of images used and to identify the changes that have occurred in the newsroom with the advance of technology. This paper aims to examine the flow of activities in a newsroom, through a mixed methods research, with the ultimate goal of determining possible new practices, routines, and work habits and including identifying the changes that take place in the professional life of a journalist in a news television. Through this endeavor, I will help to strengthen the knowledge now existing in the sphere of communication studies through a new theoretical and methodological approach that targets the traditional audio-visual environment. The interference

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<sup>31</sup> Sina Blassnig, Frank Esser, "The "Audience Logic" in Digital Journalism: An Exploration of Shifting News Logics Across Media Types and Time," *Journalism Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, November 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Rodica M. Șuțu, *Convergent Journalism*, Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Camelia Beciu, "NEW MEDIA AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE TELEVISION SPHERE," *Revista Română de Sociologie Serie Nouă*, anul XXI, nr. 5-6, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Georgeta Drulă, *New Media - Trends and challenges*, Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014.

of technology in newsrooms shows not only the changes on the content, but also the effects on the journalistic profession.

### **Research questions**

From the above description of the research objectives emerges the main research question with the potential to provide answers in the form of trends that mark the world of journalism under the domination of the Internet and new technologies: *How do newsrooms respond to the expansion of new media?* From this question derive two other questions that are intended to determine the proposed objectives: *Who produces the content of television news?* and *How is the role of the journalist changing in the news production process?* Analyzing the content of the news bulletins in terms of the sources of the images used will answer the second research question, and identifying the relationship between television journalists and online platforms sheds light on the third research question. The corroboration of the answers will also shed light on the main research question of this paper: what does the newsroom actually look like from the perspective of the interference of new technologies?

### **The argument**

The coexistence of traditional media and new forms of communication has natural consequences: seemingly benign borrowings between the two media, but with an effect on audiences and ultimately on society and democracy. Online platforms are becoming sources for the news industry, and their influence is driving new practices in the news-making process.

The spread of new media is therefore influencing the content published by traditional news networks. In order to expand or maintain audiences at low cost, journalists borrow content from external sources, so agenda-setting, until recently the exclusive preserve of traditional journalists, is also questionable. Digital platforms jeopardize the role of journalists as democratic gatekeepers by changing the speed and style of news production. The fact that journalists borrow content from external sources and integrate it into news bulletins raises questions about who sets the agenda and what the role of the media professional is in relation to the *gatekeeping* function<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Axel Bruns, 'Gatekeeping, gatewatching, real-time feedback: new challenges for Journalism', *Brazilian journalism research*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2014.

This research focuses on how the growing influence of social media on the news agenda that journalists traditionally set is putting pressure on traditional journalism. Because of this pressure, journalists risk degenerating into information seekers who recycle social media content to report the news and have little time for in-depth investigations. In this environment, competent journalists may unwittingly help democracy to disappear.

As technology has advanced journalists have reconverted one component of the work procedure. Traditionally, a journalist gathers, verifies, analyzes and disseminates information through different channels. New media and mobile digital platforms have either taken away the first component or replaced it with the step of *downloading* files from different media without the search and investigation. The premise of this paper is that new technologies have exacerbated the symptoms of traditional journalism given the political and economic context and it is not entirely the fault of globalization and the intervention of technology in processes that can affect the profession and the industry. The international agenda is laden with research that seeks to identify the place of traditional journalists in a world dominated by digital giants<sup>36</sup> and to make contributions to *agenda-setting*, the main theory that shows the effects that media has or will have on the public<sup>37</sup>. And the results of the present research will contribute to the international literature priving *agenda-setting* and to the identification of the new authorship of the *gatekeeping* function.

The power of the media to guide the social agenda and influence public perceptions of important issues has been questioned in the digital age. The loss of autonomy and irrelevance that threatens newsrooms must be of primary concern to those directly involved. Therefore, the questioning of the research questions in this paper makes practical contributions, as the results can help the industry by raising awareness of the dangers that arise with the interference of new technologies in the conventional news environment. In their desire to keep up with new competitors, journalists stand to lose in the long run. The analysis shows that traditional media is losing relevance in competition with new media and users of virtual platforms, and evidence of the effects of converging newsrooms can help recalibrate the industry on the path dictated by the new information environment. The trends that will naturally emerge from the survey in this paper

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<sup>36</sup> W. Russell Neuman et al, "The Dynamics of Public Attention: Agenda-Setting Theory Meets Big Data: Dynamics of Public Attention," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 64, no. 2, April 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Weimann, Hans-Bernd Brosius, Redirecting the agenda. Agenda-setting in the online Era, *Agenda Setting Journal* 1:1 (2017), 68.

can raise alarm bells for media professionals, media organizations, but also for those in charge of public policies that ultimately determine the framework within which media in a society operate. Without rules and criteria adapted to the current context you cannot maintain the level of professionalization in any industry.

### **Structure**

The argument of this paper is developed in four chapters, in addition to the introduction and the conclusions. The first two chapters focus on the literature review, bringing to the foreground existing works related to the research topic, and the theoretical framework, i.e. the theoretical concepts on which the hypothesis of this paper is based. The last two chapters, Chapter III and Chapter IV, expose the empirical dimension of the paper through quantitative research and qualitative research.

The first chapter, a literature review, identifies the issues and questions raised by researchers analyzing the evolution of communication in the new information age. The new paradigms of mass communication in the technological age, the characterization of the new information environment, the dangers of mass communication in the *post-truth era*, audience segmentation and public involvement in content generation are discussed, which gives rise to debates in the academic world about the role of the journalist and the monopoly of traditional media as an entity that offered control over the information reaching the public. A section in this chapter is devoted to convergent newsrooms and the new tools and practices generated by the interference of technology.

The second chapter focuses on the concepts underpinning this research. The first section is allocated to the concept of mediatization, seen as a theoretical framework within which changes in the field of journalism have been operating with the advancement of technology and which also helps to provide a broader understanding of the role of media in transforming modern societies. Next, the two main theories that show the mechanisms by which the media has or had the ability to influence public opinion are explained: *agenda-setting* and *gatekeeping*. In its original version, *agenda-setting* theory describes how the media influence audiences by having journalists establish a hierarchy of news stories, and distinguish which story is the most important one worth watching. The last section of the second chapter is devoted to the operationalization process, presenting an evolution of the *gatekeeping* function with the interference of technology in traditional news networks.

The chapter usually reserved for methodology, which explains the reasons for choosing empirical research, data collection and the criteria used in data analysis, is replaced in the present work by two other chapters, dedicated to quantitative and qualitative research. In the first part of Chapter III, dedicated to quantitative research, the methodology used in this paper is presented. To understand the changes in the news industry, we use mixed methods research, which involves the integration of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods in a single study. Next, the chapter focuses exclusively on quantitative research, which statistically measures the degree of interference of digital platforms in the television newscast ecosystem by identifying news stories that use content taken from virtual environments. The analysis covers the period 2012 and 2021, respectively. In the last part, I present preliminary results following the analysis of TV news bulletins and data interpretation, showing a tendency of journalists to retrieve audio-visual content from digital platforms.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to qualitative research and includes the analysis of data collected through a semi-structured interview applied on journalists in a newsroom, interpreted through *Grounded Theory* rules. The qualitative investigation aims to describe the journalists' interaction with social media networks and their perceptions of the changes that have occurred in TV newsrooms in the last ten years. In this section, we identify the nature of television journalists' relationship with online platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp and the practices used by professionals in the news-making process. Naturally, the chapter concludes with a full results section, where we present the main findings that confirm the argument of this paper: virtual platforms are involved in determining the content of television news and their influence shapes new practices and working habits in conventional newsrooms. The results demonstrate the impact of technology on the journalism profession and spark new debates about the role of the journalist in the age of digital platforms.

Finally, a summary of the overall results is presented in the conclusions section, which shows that digital platforms interfere in newsroom workflows and even contribute to the production of content that reaches the general public. Next, the limitations of the research are presented, with an amendment regarding the generalizability of the results, as long as the research focused on a single old media outlet and newsroom. The final section concludes with

recommendations for a future research agenda, which should not only extend the present research to strengthen its results, but also shed light on whether there is a link between the importation of material from digital platforms and the quality of the news broadcast.

### **Summary of results**

For more than ten years, traditional journalism in Romania and beyond has been living in a symbiosis with internet platforms, a form of coexistence that is apparently mutually advantageous, but from which the first party has the most to lose. This section explains why. We started the scientific approach in this paper with three research questions: 1. *How do newsrooms respond to the expansion of new media?* 2. *Who produces television news content?* and question 3. *How is the role of the journalist changing in the news production process?*

Contemporary newsrooms are adopting digital tools to stay relevant in the new information ecosystem. The main result relates to the degree of interference of digital platforms in the traditional TV newsroom, scientifically demonstrating significant amounts of content from online sources used for the construction of news bulletins. In order to access content distributed online, journalists develop a dependency on digital platforms, especially Facebook and the WhatsApp app. This research demonstrates that digital platforms interfere in newsroom workflows and even contribute to the manufacture of content that reaches the general public: more than a third of TV news is made with content imported from other agendas. Our research also points to a growing trend in journalists' interaction with digital platforms. The amount of news stories using illustration imported from digital platforms increased 12-fold in 2021 compared to 2012.

The result of this research shows the transformation of the role and identity of what is considered the "watchdog of democracy". With the borrowing of content from the virtual environment, journalists are allowing the audience, which until now had a specific role - that of receiving the information delivered - to take over some of the content producers' tasks. There is therefore a tendency to use new technologies to simplify the processes of documenting and gathering information, leading to situations where ordinary people take over the role of the journalist, changing the relationship between the industry professional and the audience.

The growing influence of digital platforms on the news agenda that journalists traditionally set is putting pressure on media professionals. TV news journalists no longer construct their content based on the set of rules, working practices and organizationally agreed-upon criteria to the extent they did a decade ago. Today, traditional journalists largely make their living by borrowing from

agendas produced in other media, in our case content taken from digital platforms. Unsurprisingly, in these circumstances, journalists can no longer even maintain *gatekeeping*, as they are at least a second filter in the recycling process of content taken from *social media* apps. In the virtual environment, content is moderated according to other criteria governed by the logic of digital platforms. Therefore, the penetration of technologies in the creation and delivery process makes journalists lose the role of *gatekeepers*, becoming rather aggregators of content discovered on digital platforms and could be dubbed "download" reporters.

The results of the present research confirm the argument from which the scientific endeavor started: the phenomenon of digital platform interference is changing processes, habits and working practices and has an empirically proven effect on the content of television news. The fact that digital platforms are involved in the generation of TV content means that *agenda-setting* and *gatekeeping* functions no longer belong entirely to journalists. In short, the results say that journalists are losing out in the competition with virtual partners in terms of relevance and autonomy, and that journalism is no longer the bastion of today's information ecosystem.

This is the first study to show how social networks are being incorporated into television news production in Romania, with the potential to open the debate about the future of traditional journalism. Findings from the empirical research confirm that the media no longer has a monopoly in setting the public agenda on its own. The concept of *agenda-setting* refers to the effect of journalists' agendas on the public, and our study has shown that journalists, in turn, are influenced by digital platforms. The results in this paper contribute to the hypothesis hypothesized by other researchers who have analyzed the consequences of the involvement of online platforms in journalists' practices and procedures over the last decade. The fact that Romanian journalists use *social media* in the process of documenting and gathering information shows that they maintain an *intermedia agenda setting*. The empirical results in this paper may even reinforce the effect of *reversed-agenda setting*, i.e. the concept that the media no longer dominate in the process of setting the public agenda<sup>38</sup>. Consequently, it can be observed that the conventional media only intermediates the message between platforms and society.

This paper presents just the beginning of a trend specific to the television news industry in the digital age. The revolution of journalism in the third millennium is driven by the evolution

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<sup>38</sup> Ilona Grzywińska, Dominik Batorski, "How the Emergence of Social Networking Sites Challenges Agenda-Setting Theory," *Konteksty Społeczne*, vol. 4, July, 2016.

of Artificial Intelligence. Next-generation tools will further streamline the news-making process, reduce the time spent on producing and disseminating journalistic content, and thus change journalistic practices and further disrupt media organizations<sup>39</sup>. Recent studies also show the benefits of "democratizing AI"<sup>40</sup>. Once Artificial Intelligence tools take over from the routine tasks of journalists, media professionals can focus on activities that improve the finished product.

While Artificial Intelligence will lead to more efficient processes in a newsroom, concerns about misinformation remain. The findings in this paper are all the more important as they reinforce the need for journalists to be attached to ethical and professional values. Counteracting the harmful effects imported from online agendas can only be done through careful oversight in the journalistic landscape that also ensures the survival of the industry over time.

This paper makes a contribution to the Romanian news industry: it is the first research that shows evidence of the interference of technology in the world of journalism, both at the level of news organizations and at the level of the newsroom professional. The X-rays presented throughout the paper can be a starting point for managerial decisions and organizational policies that can mitigate the harmful effect of digital platforms on the work of journalists, and by extension, on the field itself, in the future. The more the journalistic act is carried out within parameters characterized by rigor and professionalism, the more public trust in the media will be (re)gained. Finally, the results of this paper should have reverberations throughout society, in particular for those in charge of public policy and authority in overseeing the industry. We also believe that the present paper is another piece of evidence showing the importance of media literacy programs and courses to raise awareness of the dangers of communication in the era of "information chaos".

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<sup>39</sup> David Caswell, Shuwei Fang, *AI in Journalism Futures 2024*, Open Society Foundations, August 20, 2024, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/ai-in-journalism-futures-2024> accessed August 31, 2024

<sup>40</sup> Amaya Noain-Sánchez Noain, 'Addressing the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Journalism: the perception of experts, journalists and academics', *Comunicacion y Sociedad*, vol. 35, no. 3, June 2022.

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