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## Mass Media and the Internet Challenges – Romanian Experience

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### Abstract

The analysis of the available databases allowed us to evaluate the evolution of the media, after the challenges engendered by the expansion of the Internet and the economic crisis that started in 2008. In our study, we present media in terms of quantity; we also deal with some traps generated by official statistics, the paradoxes of recent years (the apparent reducing of the media supply although statistics show its growth etc.). Here I used the research and statistical reports achieved by the Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulations / the National Readership Survey, the National Legal Deposit / Romania's National Library, the National Audio-visual Council, the Ministry of Communications.

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In recent years, in various milieus, the bells are rung for traditional media, the prophecies are written on the end of culture; agony of journalism is announced. All fears are generated by the Internet, by the technologies that seem to have escaped an imaginary control. In this study, we show the status quo, relying on figures. In other words, whether or not to worry, judging the evolution of Romanian media strictly quantitatively.

Romania has a post-communist, post-transition, post-accession, post-crisis, post-digitization, etc. media system; hence the range of successive or simultaneous changes that have abused it and forced it to get mature. It was predictable that the expansion of the Internet would bring about deep structural changes in the media supply. According to the NAARC (ANCOM, NARC - National Authority for Administration and Regulation in Communications / ANCOM – Autoritatea Națională pentru Administrație și Reglementare în Comunicații, 2013) statistics, in recent years there has been a surprising dynamic spread of the Internet (Electronic communications market in Romania. ANCOM, 2013), which means that the penetration of the Internet connections reached 37.4% in

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2012 (per 100 inhabitants). Some analysts (*Capital*, 26 August, 2013)<sup>1</sup> recently estimated that about 53 % of Romania's population has Internet access.

Table 1. Indicator: Penetration rate of Internet access per 100 inhabitants (%). Source: ANCOM, 2013

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
%	0.06	0.49	1.75	5.04	9.05	11.65	13.12	15.6	22.2	37.4

If this indicator has followed an upward trend in terms of Internet providers, we notice the reduction of the number of competitors that may be explained by the concentration process, ie by the merging of small companies with larger ones.

Table 2. The number of Internet providers. Source: ANCOM, 2013.

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Companies	981	1,412	1,338	1,100	1,066	973	985	896

The change of the technologies for collecting, processing and disseminating information was concomitant with the international economic crisis, which has severely affected domestic markets, a visible fact in the official statistics. For example, the media will benefit from dwindling advertising allowances, which led to the resizing of newsrooms both in the private and public sectors.

Table 3. Advertising expenditures (in millions of Euros). Source: [www.paginamedia.ro/cifre-utile/](http://www.paginamedia.ro/cifre-utile/), 25/ 09/ 2013.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total, d.c.	178	215	275	368	486	593	339	308
TV	88	113	158	229	310	383	222	209
Print	58	62	66	71	79	87	37	27
Radio	12	14	17	23	30	38	25	23

As one can see, after the 2008 maximum, the values are significantly reduced, the most severe cuts in benefits being recorded by advertising expenditures in print press. Here is the context in which some publications cease production, others change their frequency or remain in the *on line* format.

Table 4. Evolution of the population of "newspapers, magazines and other periodicals." Source: ISSN National Center / National Legal deposit – Romania's National Library (As of 09/02/2013).

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total of periodicals	2,400	2,690	2,626	2,665	2,772	2,780

The expansion of the Internet and the economic crisis have influenced the evolution of the press, yet, when analyzed quantitatively, we find that the number of periodicals has not been decreasing, but increasing to 2.780 units in 2012. There is a significant reduction in the number of dailies, from 80 in 2007 to 51 in 2010 and 53 in 2012, in the whole country. It is worth mentioning that these values include all media supports (print, CD Rom and *on-line*) and exclusively refer to the titles registered in the Legal Deposit. On September 27, 2013, the ISSN National Centre

<sup>1</sup> See recent investigations by GfK Romania, according to which in January 2013 the Internet penetrated 61% of the urban environment and 33% of the rural environment .

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