

REGIONAL TELEVISION PRODUCTION

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Abstract

In the past years television has earned an important place in the field of communication means. There are discussions of mass-media, but in fact the only visualised field is television, named “queen of the communication means”. When investigating this part of the mass-media, a number of theories are formed which gain a certain weight for communication. Studies dedicated to television have underlined that starting with 1980, all other means of communication have become to redefine themselves with respect to the small screen. Television imposes dictatorship, sets the tone and priorities on the market for means of communication. Its success is owned to the continuous present which it advertises. Mass-media gathers its information from all possible sources, its target being the public opinion. The creation and development of television have sped this up, transforming the flow of information into a phenomenon which has aggressive tendencies towards the individual and society. TV channels are constantly on air, and information and especially news are replaced with great speed, thus being considered perishable products. That is why television has the following attributes: it is public oriented, it is trivial and familiar, it is destined to be viewed by large audiences and addresses to anyone. Also, it uses an advanced communication technology and is fitted with means which allow multiple auditors to receive simultaneously, a variety of messages.

Far from the journalism practiced by some national television, which hunt the most recent celebrity escapades, scandalous interviews and sensational journalism, there is another type of journalism : “journalism with unicast”¹, how Jock Lauterer calls it. It represents that form of journalism in which the viewers can go on air to tell the producers what bothers them. It is that type of television in which the shows tell about the activities of local councils or write stories about the size of weird shaped vegetables. It is the television which overflows with information about police statistics, fights of local representatives, theatre shows, successful European projects, awards won by local high school students at international Olympiads or various distinctions offered by the universities to important people from the international scientific domain. Regional television is situated at the borderline between national television and local television. Focused around a central news programme the regional televisions are not the same. What sets them apart is firstly the editorial policy, then

the programming way and structure of the grid, the format type and various other factors.

Keywords: *regional television, communication, own production, recorded shows, public, grid*

The Romanian television landscape is in a never-ending change. In order to survive the TV shows will be produced after more and more diverse recipes. The channels that do not comply with this will, inevitably, shut down.

Usually when reporters film a certain regional event, they are asked by the people featured in the story, where will they be able to see themselves. When they find out that the story will only go regional, most of the subjects are withholding information, and are generally inhibited by this, not knowing the fact that the event they are taking part of is really close to making a debate theme on national TV.

No one should know better how Christmas is in Bucovina, what a gondola ride in Piatra Neamt is, what the academic performances of pupils in Craiova are, or what Timisoara’s football team budget is. Those who know details like that related to subjects like the previous ones are reporters for the regional TV channel, in that particular area. Regional TV channels answer the people’s needs that cannot be satisfied by national television, particularly the public’s desire to be part of a community, whose events cannot be reflected by the national television but can easily be a debate subject in the region. The purpose of a regional television is to present a unitary culture, so that nations are not divided into local areas. Even though the programme grids of national TV are made to be unitary, there are notable differences in every regional station.

It is fair that in present times, regional televisions from Europe strongly feel the economical recession. This paper does not wish to offer

solutions or models that can be adapted to the present context, but to do a prime analysis on the place that regional televisions occupy on the audio-visual market.

We are living in an era of rapid changes. News papers disappear, tens of online publications appear over night, editors do not publish on paper but on blogs, and favourite TV shows are being watched in trams or underground tubes on mobile phones. Changes in media are ever so numerous and spectacular, and the borders between various communication environments disappear.

Studies show that television has its own law in public space, even imposing parties and political people's chances. Cristian Tudor Popescu states that the importance and valour of a political man depends on telegenie. 'From December 22nd, 1989, Romania has been led through Television. If you are not on the screen, you do not exist.'² That is the reason why an analysis of television functions is present topic. In the first chapter we will focus our attention on mass communication and its defining elements, so that further on we can talk about the audio-visual message, feature that makes television to set itself apart from other instruments of communication, to become attractive and spectacular. We wish to closely analyse the functions of television and the consequences of their fulfilling.

During the last decades the concept of communication has been a research subject for specialists from various domains. Logicians, philosophers, semioticians, anthropologists, have studied communication from different perspectives, adding remarkable contributions towards understanding the concept.

Closely linked to the development of the area, the future of regional television is diminished, however, to fulfilling the basic functions of television, not having the possibility of bringing economic prosperity in the area.

At the same time, the evolution of regional television is closely connected with its capacity to adapt to the new tendencies.

Last but not least, the future of regional television is influenced by the availability of the individuals to allocate time for the classic mass

communication environment, in the context of an ever growing tendency towards the online environment.

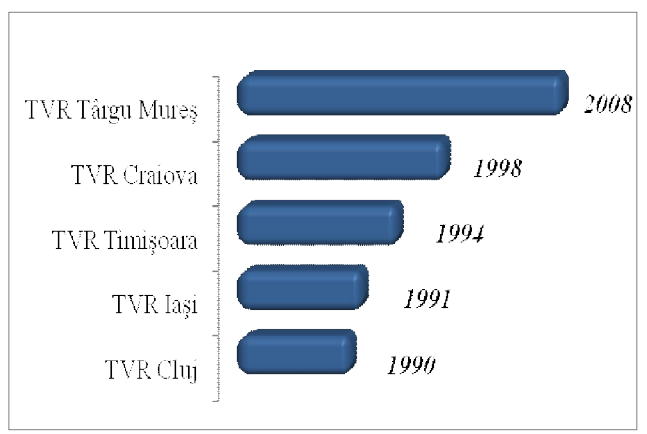
The future of regional television is linked to the future of television in general. The people have a tendency to migrate from the classic environments towards the online one, to a non-linear content. Regional televisions need to follow this trend as a mean of survival. Looked at as a distinct entity, the television present a series of components which gives it identity and offers it the title of regional observer. Also, regional television has a set of particularities at every level of the covered area. In this way, even if we take into consideration the existence of a model for regional television, this gains different shades depending on the community which it represents.

An important aspect for a regional television is the coverage grade for its zones. A disproportionate ratio between the two indicates a preferential treatment for some areas, or just the limited resources of the television. Regardless of the reason, certain is the fact that an insufficient coverage of the county's problems indicates a poor activity of the television, not fulfilling its role as a reality observer in that area.

On first sight, regional televisions in Romania are characterised by a small number of channels. The most representative are the TVR stations. Regional televisions are at the borderline of local and national TV. The shows report events from the regions, and opposed to the national channels where the focus is on tabloid stories, regional posts focus on serious events from the life of local communities. The news and shows of regional televisions represent the main information sources for national channels.

Classification of regional televisions according to their starting year:

A prime aspect is the starting year, the first regional studio being established at Cluj in 1990. The next one, at a year difference is the television from Iasi, while TVR Timisoara starting going on air from 1994. Oltenia area is covered from 1998 by TVR Craiova, the last station being established 3 years ago at Targu Mures.



Regional coverage grid. Included Counties:

Compared with other generalist televisions, regional studios are immediately anchored in the social space that goes under their area of coverage. For regional television, the community represents the nucleus for producing the show

grid, a relationship of interdependence existing between the two. The purpose of television is to answer to the needs and requests of the region and to be permanently connected to social, political, economical, cultural novelty, offering the citizens important information in time.

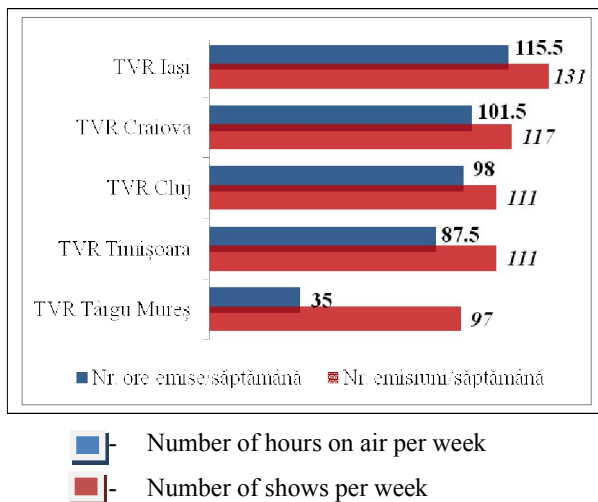
From this point of view, regional television can be considered as being a community one, encased in the terms of the local community’s consolidation and implication in holding the local identity and culture.

In this context, the televisions show grid represents a point of interest for this study, as this determines the way in which regional public televisions in Romania successfully accomplish their mission.

A first step in this direction is represented by setting the number of TV shows over a week of monitoring for each one of the five regional televisions.



Bihor	Dolj	Iași	Mureș	Timiș
Bistrița Năsăud	Olt	Vaslui	Harghita	Arad
Cluj	Vâlcea	Galați	Covasna	Caraș Severin
Maramureș	Mehedinți	Botoșani	Alba	Hunedoara
Satu Mare	Gorj	Suceava	Brașov	
Sălaj	Argeș	Bacău		
Sibiu	Teleorman	Vrancea		
	Bulgaria (valea Timocului bulgăresc)	Neamț		
	Serbia (valea Timocului sârbesc)			



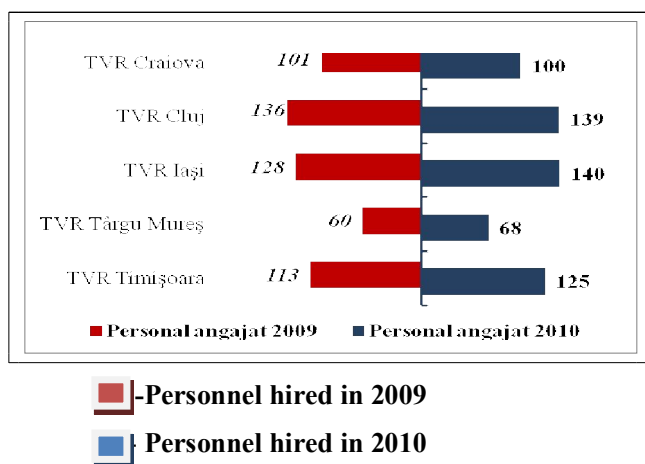
Results show that TVR Iasi has the grid with the most shows (131), this also being the studio with the longest on air period – 16, 5 hours/day. TVR Craiova is second, with 117 shows over the 101, 5 hours of on air time. Though different in on air time, TVR Cluj and TVR Timisoara transmit the same number of shows over the week, the differences being in the space that these occupy in the grid.

The main source of shows of a regional television is the own production, 50, 8% of the on air shows over a week are at the first emission, while 33% are own productions replayed. 16, 2% is the number of shows taken from other TVR stations. In general, an on air day is structured in two parts: the first one is destined to the replays, and in some cases morning shows, divertissement and information, and the second part brings to the viewers attention productions played for the first time or shows taken from other stations.

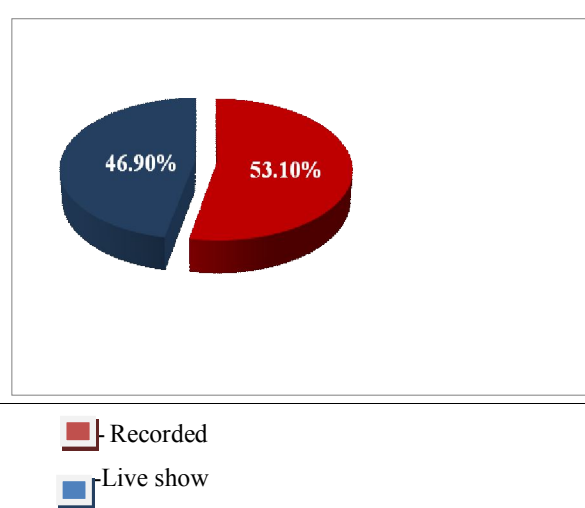
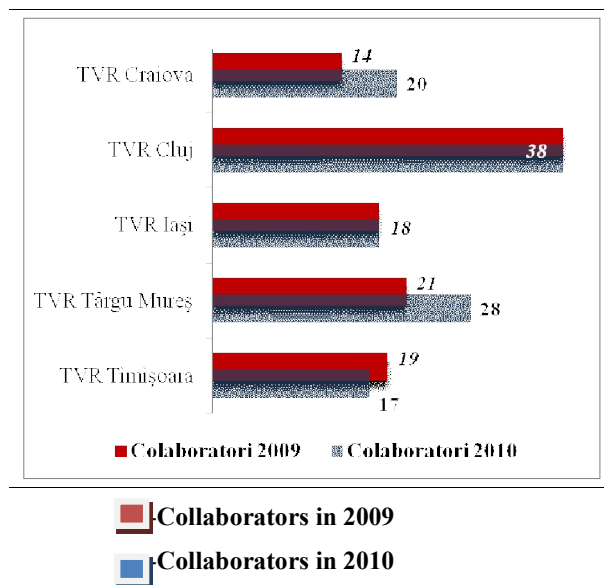
The high percent allocated to own production shows reflect the fact that regional television is anchored in the community's problems, trying to focus its attention over a wide coverage area. In general, the taken shows are shows sold by distribution companies (sitcoms) or cultural shows and documentaries.

As for the theme of own production shows at first display, the highest percent (53.1%) is given to recorded shows, while 46.9% is represented by live shows, news, political, economical or information oriented shows, of present interest.

Information regarding personnel:



Number of collaborators:



Regional televisions have three base sources: own production, programs sold by distribution companies and programmes from the grid which is part of. The main source of a regional television is own production. This consists of shows produced in the station's studios or in other locations but using only the equipment already available. Commonest regional production are the news, aired at noon, evening and at night. Other regional shows are connected to sportive events, morning interviews and shows where public interest subjects are debated.

Shows sold by distribution companies are represented by movie packs and prime-time TV shows.

Through regional news, through live debate, through divertissement and any other own production, regional televisions can cause problems and offer solutions. Regional television influences the social game, having an important role to play in the valuing social rules.

The viewer's perception regarding regional television depends on its association with national and local televisions. Even though they have own shows, because the signal is received only on certain cable grids, these channels lose audience. For example, TVR Iasi has the disadvantage that on the county grid its frequency is not the same, cable grids refusing the retransmission of this channel.

Regional televisions shows are of public interest and need to address education, present, politic and religious issues, as well as stand up for customs and folklore in the area.

- The main type of shows aired by regional television are news, cultural shows, documentaries and informative. This reflects the fact that the most important functions held by the regional television are those of informing, educating and cultural development.
- The main source for programs for a regional television is its own production, 50.8% of the shows being aired the first time, while 33% are own production replayed.
- Concerning the own productions, the programs that have priority are the recorded

ones, over the live ones. This does not influence the establishment of connection with the public, the feeling that it's actively involved in the communities' problems being diminished.

- Most programs have a time span of 15-30 minutes (44.1%), following up are shows with a 31-60 minutes length (28.9%). Opting for a show with a time span up to 30 minutes, where present information is shown, captures the interest of the viewer and has a better chance of being remembered in the collective mental.
- Regional televisions build their subjects for the day starting from news from their coverage grid in a much reduced fraction, giving them a local character rather than regional. The main factors for this are of financial, technical and human order. Compared to national television, the regional one has the task of surprising and synthesizing the congruent elements of all communities in the coverage area.
- Generally speaking, regional television owns a diverse array of programs content wise, trying in this way to comply over the needs of varied public.
- There is no official model for a regional television. According to the statements of all regional televisions spokesmen, at a national level there has never been a unitary model or structure for regional television, which would fundament its organization, studios evolving chaotically.
- In every regional television a poor representation of the counties in the coverage area can be noticed in the news, the focus being on information gathered at a county level, and especially the county residence town. This aspect leads to a deficit of relevant information for all communities in the coverage area of the television channel.
- In every regional television a special interest can be observed for sportive news. Regional television establishes a connection with the public through information like this, sport being an incentive for social

connection, compared to other subject, that generally present isolated cases, that do not especially reflect the local identity.

- The event-news occupies an important position in the classification of subjects treated by a television, this having not only the informative function but also that of stimulating the public into participating. Forehand presentation or under development of certain events with cultural specific could favour the consumption of cultural produces and development in this way.
- The main type of news that regional television journals rely on is hard news.
- The news grid is dominated by common news, which offers an equitable status to all the titles from that day.
- Most of the information transmitted during news time reflects ended situations at the time of transmission, next after being the developing news and then the anticipative one.
- Image occupies an important place in news, this having a significant role in retaining and understanding the presented subject. Most news transmitted by regional television is accompanied by commentated images.
- Reported to the setting agenda, regional television is not the leader in drawing the day's titles, most of the subjects being treated as previous appearances of some stories that have been treated by local/regional press first or simultaneous appearances with other media means.
- The visibility degree of regional televisions is conditioned by their appearance and involvement in various events in the local or regional area.
- There are two components regarding the television involvement as a partner/sponsor: a social one (determined by the appearances of certain unpredicted situations or with the purpose of contributing to finding solutions for some community problems) and a cultural one (music, film, theatre, literature etc.)

- Offering support to cultural projects, regional televisions become supporters of cultural consumerism, an active cultural consume as it breaks the audio-visual domain and encourages social participation.
- Generally, the relationship with local/regional mass-media is a complementary one, but this can become competitive when it's about other regional televisions.
- Another particularity of this media type is represented by the identification and advertising of certain models inside the coverage area, stimulating the part of a community feeling. Furthermore, because the values have been discovered in the vicinity of the viewer, he can become motivated to follow the successful model discovered on TV.
- Adaptability to new technological innovations represents a condition without which regional television cannot evolve.
- A better knowing of the environment can determine advertising, through TV channels, the local and regional identity.
- The methods used in the identification of the needs and requests of the public are adapted to the financial possibilities of the televisions. From this cause, one calls upon methods that do not have a representative character (letter, e-mails, phone calls), the studies being done on regional viewers.

The problems of the area determine the daily agenda, though this is made selectively with regard to the financial, technical and human resources, thus determining the degree of accessibility to the information. Regional television reflects the specific of the area and focuses on the problems of the community but is not a leader in presenting actuality information, this utilitarian function going to other media channels.

Regional televisions have a rather local character, focusing their attention on issues from their immediate space where they have a quick access, only partially extending in other areas included in the coverage area.

Two program grids are created annually: summer and fall. The summer grid, where the

presumption is that the viewers don't spend time at home is mainly based on replays, the fall one is the one where new shows are introduced. The viewer becomes witness to the competition alongside commentators, but at the same time the feeling that the choice he makes contributes decisively to the running of the show is inoculated to him.

Renewal of the grid from one season to another is necessary for variation, but at the same time shows that need to be maintained from one season to another exist, even at the same hour, thus a balanced is searched for between the stability and the mobility of the offer. For example, informative shows are considerate some sort of pillars for generalist channels. The reason for keeping them in the grid is closely linked to the wish to show that they are the stability elements of the channel, and, implicitly to create a relationship with the viewer based on trust.

A less followed by the public show, but with a message that needs to get to the viewers will be placed between two other shows with high audience.

Another programming technique is the use of reception pivots for making the audience higher. The pivot show is that short message that obtains a considerably higher audience than that of the average in the time area where it is shown. The main "pillar" of regional posts is the news editorial.

Regional news are made after the classic rules of this journalistic type and allows analysis and comparisons of events that happen in multiple places in the region.

Assuring diversity and equilibrium represents the first principle the programmers for the show grids follow.

Between the two media sources there is a complementary relationship, but their contribution to the daily agenda is not balanced. Even though – theoretically, television should have temporal priority, most of the presented information is firstly shown in local press or reflects simultaneously appearances. There is a percent of information firstly shown on television but this does not offer regional television the leader

status in present information in the area. Thus, this hypothesis is confirmed only partially.

Regional television is in a considerable amount involved in supporting some regional projects, especially with cultural character. This increases its visibility in the community, offers authority on a regional level and gives it a boost of confidence from the population. These aspects confirm the hypothesis. I will mention that for and in depth analysis of the subject a rigorous study among the population is required.

In our country the lack of laws regarding the status of the journalist and the incomplete internalisation of the deontological principals can be seen. By the Organisational Law nr.41/1994 of the Romanian Society of Radio Broadcasting and the Romanian Society of Television the state defines the legislative limits for the good running of public posts, in the Constitutional spirit that guarantees liberty of speech (art.30) and the right to information (art.31). According to the law, the public television channel, implicitly the regional studios as well, are obliged to give an objective and impartial presentation of the social-political realities, economical, internal and external, to assure the correct information of citizens regarding public issues, to promote the values of the Romanian language, of the cultural creation, scientific, national and universal, as well as democratic, civil, moral and sportive values, to militate for national unity and the country's independence and for the cultivation of human dignity. The television shows that, through their contents, pose a threat to the psycho-moral or physical development of children and youth will be aired during 23:00 and 6:00. Minors with a poor behaviour or those who have broken the law will not be presented with elements that can help towards their identification.

The public television post must allocate some part of their aired time for the political parties represented in Parliament. The time dedicated to these must not be more than a hundredth of the weekly air time.

The financial support for the public post and public regional studios comes from the collection

of the television tax, publicity, funds from the state budget and other sources.

The main problems with which regional televisions are faced are linked to insufficient budget, lack of advertising on a central level, the reduced number of employees and the relationship with the cable providers.

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Endnotes

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