

THE MESSAGE UNDER THE FORM OF PRESS RELEASE

Margareta ANDREESCU¹

¹Lecturer, PhD, „Apollonia” University of Iași, Romania
Corresponding author: Margareta Andreescu; e-mail: marga.andreescu@tvr.ro

Abstract

The elements of communication are centred on the message. When we speak our speech represents the message. Its content can be addressed to only one person or to millions of people. Mass communication messages break the boundaries of interpersonal communication. They are built and influenced according to the laws of the market and the media product, meaning the message, behaves exactly like a commodity. The character (the spokesperson during a press release in front of a camera or during a press conference) represents one component of the message structure, and of the message expressiveness. The explanation is simple: the character encompasses all the elements of the actor's art (mimicry, the expressiveness of the body movements, the expressiveness of the look etc.), as well as the characterisation and suggestion capacity of the relationships between characters or of the relationship between the character and the world of objects which is part of the frame. Ambient arts, the costumes, the make-up and especially the light (together, all these elements form the design of the frame) complete the arsenal of the filmed image.

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The word is sometimes found in the structure of the message also under the form of the written text, or in the press release. In the volume “The audio-visual rhetoric” Laurențiu Șoitu states the following: “In television the word is the one who opens the perspective. There is an inner dynamism of the show triggered by the movement of ideas, emotions and characters acquired using the art of the word (ȘOITU, 1993).” The author notices that the text may have the role of generalizing, concretizing, interpreting and explaining.

The message depends on a broadcasting network, therefore making it “portable” in the farthest places. It can also be received by people who lack any form of education or by those who have difficulties in reading (preschoolers, old people, and disabled people) (CHARAUDEAU, 2004).

Gaining the public's attention represents the ultimate goal. Due to the communicators' efforts, the public becomes attached to certain programs and allocates more and more time to the media. Today, mass-media represents the most important source of information and therefore communication services must keep a close collaboration with media institutions. The public receives real-time news about economic, political, administrative and social events. Information helps public opinion to be up to date with the realities of the surrounding world and the changes that take place. Its volume is large and it covers almost all the fields. People can find out about events, may know things from places that are difficult to reach. Communication means define their existence by proper roles and functions. They depend on those who manage the society and on the political parties in power. Studying the media models according to political the political regimes that governed the society, the American researchers Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm identified four press regimes, two democratic and two totalitarian ones: the authoritarian model, the totalitarian model, the liberal model and the model of the public service (SIEBERT, et al., 1976; ZELIZER, 2007).

In the case of the authoritarian approach the power of the monarch restricted the use of the press with the help of a license. The totalitarian model refers to the Soviet politics in which the media was controlled through surveillance in the context of the Marxist thinking. The liberal approach pays attention to the freedom of the press. Its goal is to inform, and especially to discover the truth and to control the government. In the case of the public service model, journalism was assessed according to professional ethics

and the ability of making the conflict visible to the public opinion. The 1956 book signed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm and entitled "Four Theories of the Press" represents one of the classic works on journalism. Barbie Zelizer states that the study was valuable because the American researchers presented those characteristics which were considered to connect journalism to its political environment. "The study presented some relevant characteristics which should have been taken into account for the theoretical positioning of journalism (ZELIZER, 2007)". Barbie Zelizer noticed that the models offered by the American researchers presented a more clear distinction between the worldviews as they actually were. Denis McQuail identified six models (authoritarian, Soviet, liberal, of social responsibility, democratic-participative and developmentalist). The author states that most press systems represent the putting into practice "of some different (and even incompatible) elements belonging to some different theories (MCQUAIL, 1987)". There were also some theoreticians who approached the needs of the developing countries. J. Herbert Altscull claimed in 1984 in the volume entitled "Agents of Power" that there are three forms of press: the one from the First World, or the media from the liberal-capitalist countries, the one from the Second World, from the Soviet-socialist countries, and the one from the Third World, referring to the journalism practiced in developing countries. Following the direction of the American researchers Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, Wilbur Schramm and Barbie Zelizer we may assume that there is an interaction that can be identified between the journalistic and the political world (BIGNEL & ORLEBAR, 2009; COMAN, 2000).

When it comes to the relationship between spokespeople, media and the society Mihai Coman believes that it can be expressed in terms of the global consequences (the functions of the press), overall and of influences (the effects of the press) or in terms of mission attributed to the media systems (the roles of the press). The above mentioned author believes that "the functions of mass-media are sometimes understood as encompassing the three senses or viewed

differently they are situated between roles and effects (COMAN, 2003; COMAN, 2007)".

Charles Wright added a fourth function: that of entertainment.

The communication service represents a channel which, through the broadcasted information, fulfils a fundamental need of the modern individual: information. The news about social, political, economic, cultural and educational events represents an informational flux which is continuously broadcasted to the public. Since television has become an extremely accessible tool people have the chance of knowing facts and events which would have been completely inaccessible without the small screen. Spokespeople have to be present in order to inform the public about the activities in which the institution is involved. On the basis of the information that they receive from communicators journalists build their productions and broadcast them to the public. The public perceives the informational flux as a necessity since it encompasses a large range of topics (from exchange to weather, from the economic situation to legislative initiatives, the new scientific technologies etc.).

Information can be divided into general, instrumental and for prevention. Traian D. Stănculescu proposes two definitions for information. From a structural point of view any propriety of reality (material or spiritual) capable of being reflected in any reference system, and eventually that of thinking, is called information. From a functional point of view, information represents a measure of the organization degree of any system. "Both definitions are operational and may be connected, either explicitly or implicitly, to the ontological side of the information. Practice proves that if we get close to the most profound structures of the material world, we shall discover the sine-qua-non presence of information (STĂNCULESCU, 2004)". The author states that the characteristics of information are: objectiveness, specificity and universality. In the American terminology the information function is also called the surveillance function (GROSS, 2004).

In communication services the surveillance function can be found especially in press releases and it can be edited in two ways:

1. warning surveillance – it is included in releases that inform us about threats caused by weather conditions, such as storms, floods or blizzard and it includes the following message: “Keep away.” Here we can also include the messages that inform people about certain problems that they are interested in finding out, such as: the economic crisis, social problems concerning revenue or unemployment. These aspects play a prevention role for the public;
2. utility surveillance – it can be met in press releases which broadcast information such as: timetables for hospitals and pharmacies during holidays, exchange, etc.

As Peter Gross points out, mass-media has to become morally and professionally responsible for its public. Mass-media verifies information with the help of the spokesperson. “It has to broadcast correct, balance, complete and verified information in order to allow citizens to discuss matters, to draw conclusions and to take decisions (GROSS, 2004)”. Since it fulfils the public’s fundamental need for information Yves Agnès says that this function belongs to the beneficiary. A news bulletin on a TV channel has to be similar to an information desk. “The essential dimension of this function finds its expression in what we agreed to name practical information (AGNÈS, 2011)”. Analysing the information on the political life, gathered by the communication departments and presented by the journalists, Mihai Coman states the following: “in order to fulfil the individuals’ need oversee the surrounding world, a piece of information has not have to have an immediate utility. Information regarding the internal political life doesn’t serve only to situational decisions, but it gathers elements for a decision that people take once in a number of years, for example when they elect a party or a candidate (COMAN, 2007; GHERGHEL, 2009)”.

Studies on mass communication reveal the fact that dependence on communication services can turn into a real danger. Being suffocated by the large number of information journalists can

become indifferent because they do not have time to analyse press releases. The pathological state induced by over-information is passivity to real events. This informational oversaturation is called a narcotising dysfunction. Ioan Drăgan also calls it an abnormal function. In his opinion, this aspect was not taken into account enough nor was it commented into detail. “Overwhelmed by information the individual may enter into a passive consumption, focusing his attention on problems of the private life (BORDIEU, 2007; DRĂGAN, 2008)”.

Indifference represents another dysfunction of mass communication meaning that the texts written by communicators are not taken seriously by journalists and they are treated with indifference.

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