

LBRIS

We know
books

ADINA BAYA, ILEANA ROTARU
Editors

**CROSSING BORDERS IN DIGITAL
MEDIA COMMUNICATION:
ROMANIAN TRENDS AND PRACTICES**



TRITONIC

Tritonic Books

București – 2023

Adina Baya, Ileana Rotaru – Editors
CROSSING BORDERS IN DIGITAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION:
ROMANIAN TRENDS AND PRACTICES

Copyright © Autorii
Copyright © TRITONIC 2023 pentru ediția prezentă.
Toate drepturile rezervate, inclusiv dreptul de a reproduce fragmente din carte.

TRITONIC
Str. Coacăzelor nr. 5, București
e-mail: editura@tritonico.ro
www.tritonico.ro

Tritonic București apare la poziția 18 în lista cu Edituri de prestigiu recunoscut în domeniul științelor sociale (lista A2) (CNATDCU):
http://www.cnatdcu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/A2_Panel41.xls

Colecția Comunicare Media este coordonată de lect. univ. dr. Bogdan Hrib.

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României
Crossing borders in digital media communication : Romanian trends and practices / coord.: Adina Baya, Ileana Rotaru. - București : Tritonic Books, 2023
Conține bibliografie
ISBN 978-606-749-678-9

I. Baya, Adina (coord.)
II. Rotaru, Ileana (coord.)

316.77

Coperta: Alexandra Bardan
DTP: Ioan Dorel Radu
Editor: Rebeca Cojocaru
Comanda nr. CM04 / 2023
Bun de tipar: Iunie 2023
Tipărit în România

Orice reproducere, totală sau parțială, a acestei lucrări, fără acordul scris al editorului, este strict interzisă și se pedepsește conform Legii dreptului de autor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 7

PART I

Media Communication in the Digital Era: Theoretical (Re)framings

Daniel CIUREL

Thresholds, Transitions, and Transgressions in
Media Rhetoric 15

Anamaria FILIMON-BENEA

People and the Need for Communication in the
Digital Era 31

Adina BAYA

Alternative Journalism in Romania: Crossing
Professional Boundaries and Rethinking
Newsroom Culture 53

PART II

Trends and Practices on the Romanian Media Landscape

Simona BADER, Corina ȘIRB

Romanian Online Media: “The Good, The Bad and
The Ugly” 75

Ionuț Suciu

Podcasting Trends on the Romanian Media Market 101

Ileana ROTARU

Young Roma Perspectives on Racially Loaded Online
Discourse: A Qualitative Approach to Antigypsyism 125

Manuela Oana ANGHELESCU

Place Branding in Timișoara: An Approach to
Conceptualizing the Cultural Sector, as Reflected in
the Project *Tm2023 European Capital of Culture* 145

Introduction

In an era in which information is more widely available than ever, mass-media has become a paradoxical actor that can both transfer knowledge and limit access to it. The accelerated digitalization and massive migration of Romanian audiences onto the online space in pandemic times, coupled with the pre-existing digital divide and tendency toward social fragmentation, has led to the formation of a communicational environment in which the mass-media can both erase and erect borders among its audience groups. Overinformation (*infodemia*) and media saturation are often described as being intrinsically linked with information disorders and the spread of false, biased or misleading data to wide audiences – a factor leading to the formation of symbolic borders between different social groups, dictated by media consumption habits. As far as content production is concerned, previously established professional boundaries are constantly being challenged and crossed, and journalism is forced to reinvent itself in the face of technological advances. Media genres face unprecedented mutations in the age of multimodality and transmediation, newsroom culture and professional ethics are being reconsidered in the search of an “alternative” to mainstream norms, while toxic communication practices, such as hate speech, that were mostly kept under control previously by gatekeepers, are now disseminated in an uncontrolled manner over social media. The blurring or challenging of traditional boundaries between media producers and consumers, professional and amateur journalism, or physical and virtual spaces, bring about a mixture of advantages and challenges.

THRESHOLDS, TRANSITIONS, AND TRANSGRESSIONS IN MEDIA RHETORIC

DANIEL CIUREL

Faculty of Communication Sciences
Polytechnic University of Timișoara

Abstract: This paper aims to explore how media genres overlap, combine, and develop in contemporary participatory digital cultures. Media logic in the digital era arbitrates the social construction of reality and enables multiple media literacies. Media influences the representations of ideas, events, people, or institutions using specific discursive genres or formats. Even if, for example, advertorials can be deceptively used as journalism, and news formats can be employed to give credibility to messages with a specific agenda (our), media genres still offer reliable guidance for both producers and receivers. Media employs and expands multimodal rhetorical repertoires, using textual, visual, and aural messages. Rhetorical crossover and multimodality in contemporary media discourses develop as new ways of meaning-making. Transmediation and media convergence revitalize extant genres, generate emerging formats, remixes and memes and develop new modes of reception and interaction with users. Both rhetoric and social semiotics can elucidate the communicative processes of contemporary mediascapes. Their approaches are compatible and complementary and they differ mainly on their starting points and perspectives.

Keywords: Media rhetoric; Media logic; Genres; Multimodality; Transmedia

Introduction

Media logic, a concept coined in 1979, by David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, used to explain how media technologies, institutions and formats make impact on society, has become an influent approach in media studies. Media logic performs a compelling influence on the representations of the events that people assume as reality, by employing different rhetorical genres/formats. Thus, media logic refers to the processes of constructing messages within a particular medium, in which genres/formats become the key standards for defining, selecting, and presenting media content: what is included in the media messages (*inventio*), how the messages are organized (*dispositio*), and how they are presented (*elocutio* and *actio*).

Media logic comprises the processes of mediation and mediatization through which media transmit and communicate messages. The two concepts are different but related. Mediation consists in communication through media in specific situations and genres, employing the processes of selection, representation, and framing. The processes of mediation are camouflaged and made invisible to the public. Mediation is not only medium-dependent, but also genre-dependent. The remediation processes (transfer and transformation of genres over different media) are some important aspects of transmediation. Mediatization is the result of the influence of mass communication on society, where many societal institutions adapt themselves to typical media logics and formats, which become so much taken for granted, even institutionalized, that they determine the templates of social interaction and communication (ex., news

releases, press conferences, soundbites, electoral debates, PR stunts, pseudo-events, or even newsjacking).

Via mediatization, media genres permeate and colonize personal and societal interactions and culture. As a result, individuals are increasingly not only programmed, but they become programs, as they guide and evaluate their social performances in terms and criteria of the media culture. This prevalence of media logic, communication genres/formats, and media content in social life is named the “media syndrome” (Altheide, 2018, p.12). The media syndrome might include individual personas and identities, social issues, and political actions that are modeled on media personalities and characters that are situated in media culture scenarios which are depicted and constituted through media logic, including information technology and communication formats.

As the contemporary mediascape becomes more intricate and disruptive, it can no longer be identified with a single media logic, but many competing and partly intersected media logics. Contemporary media logics influence the various digital public spheres and the communicative practices of individuals both in their private and in their professional lives. Also, media themselves are transformed, reconfigured, and developed by users’ participatory cultural practices (UGC, collaborative journalism, culture jamming, activism, hacktivism, influencers, memes) and by the competitive pressures on media which engender churnalism, passive reporting or second-hand journalism (Allan, 2010, p. 271).

Media logics enable multiple media literacies (news literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, data literacy, etc.), as specific applications of the principles of media education. However, the proliferation of literacies can become confusing rather than illuminating (Andrews, 2014, p. 155). What is becoming more and more clear is that media educa-

tion requires nowadays a strong component of digital and visual literacy.

Media rhetoric between traditional and digital genres

Mediascape is the realm of rhetorical struggles over meanings of people, institutions, or events. Rhetoric is the strategic use of symbolic resources aimed at influencing others (opinions, attitudes or behaviours), at making meaning, and at changing worldviews. Rhetoric can be defined as management of symbols, in order to coordinate social action, and thus, rhetoric is an activity and not just an analytic or productive framework. Digital rhetoric (nethoric) takes into account “the complications of the affordances of digital practices, including circulation, interaction, and the engagement of multiple symbol systems within rhetorical objects, and its methods need to explicitly engage those complications and affordances” (Eyman, 2015, p. 93). The key features of digital rhetoric are speed, reach, anonymity, interactivity and collaboration.

Media include a collective, organizational, and impersonal rhetoric that is generally camouflaged (Kohrs Campbell, Schultz Huxman & Burkholder, 2015, p. 322), producing content which comprises multimodal discourses belonging to various genres, for media audiences, which are active, diverse, and challenging processors of messages. Media rhetoric can be understood under three perspectives (Mateus, 2021, p. 4–5). Firstly, media rhetoric means *rhetoric in the media*: the verbal, aural and visual persuasive devices from the discourses disseminated via media (mediation). Secondly, media rhetoric is media under the influence of rhetoric (*rhetoric through the media*): here, media practices are seen as rhetorical actions (media production). Thirdly, media rhetoric is the inclusion of media in the rhetorical equation or *rhetoric within the*

media: the functioning of the modern persuasive discourses is inherently based on media (mediatization).

Contemporary media are remapping the rhetorical territory. Media rhetoric involves a wide spectrum of new persuasive practices, transforming and expanding the traditional scope, opportunities and resources of communication. One notable transformation regards the media genres. The digital environment provides both producers and consumers of media content with new creative opportunities, but it also elicits an increased demand for online formats and standardized cyber genres (Preston, 2009, p. 68; Allan, 2010, p. 271).

Genres are both structural and situational categories. Genres are fitting responses to various exigences or occasions (rhetorical situations, derived from the ancient rhetorical concept *stasis*). But genres are more than simple responses, they are actions. Thus, genres are typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent rhetorical situations (Miller, 2018, p. 179). There is a limited number of rhetorical situations, and, consequently, a limited number of fitting responses. Rhetorical situations are complex, dynamic, and socially constructed. Their emergent and relative meaning, which is the basis for how people respond, develops from the interplay of context, message, messenger, and audience. A rhetorical situation comes into being, evolves to maturity, decays, and eventually disappears. During this process, the situational cycle may be hampered or hastened as new dimensions of a situation are perceived, new issues become salient, and new ideas are expressed. However, eventually, every rhetorical situation transforms into a newly defined situation with its own controlling exigence. Situations change because they are resolved, or because people lose interest, or because they are transformed. Their changes may be mapped as a cycle of situational development with four stages: origin, maturity, deterioration, and disintegration (Hauser, 2002, 51–52).

A genre is a unified constellation of messages that share discernible conventions and formulas, stylistic or formal (syntactic), substantive (semantic), and situational/actional (pragmatic) characteristics. Genres share stylistic and substantive similarities because they are related to typical or recurrent situations. They function as modes of social action; they are patterned responses to certain situations that audiences perceive as similar or comparable. (Ott & Mack, 2020, p. 130).

Media genres are both stable and flexible (they are fixed, but they also admit variations), so they fulfill the need of both repetition and difference. Media genres or formats are relatively stable and unified repertoires that constrain and condition all the relevant generic elements, but they also evolve and adapt over time. It must be distinguished between genre adaptation and genre emergence, where adaptation includes a relationship with existing genres and emergence denotes the creation of new ones, defined and recognized as distinct. Genres emerge as amendments, accommodations, or suitable modifications of already existing text types with a view to provide an adequate discursive response to a novel kind of situation (or with a view to exploit the affordances of new technology) (Miller & Kelly, 2017, 2–3). Media genres can develop as derivatives of successful formats: hybrids, spin-offs and imitations (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 203). Hybrids result from the fusion of two or more popular genres (advertorials, infotainment, docudrama). Spin-offs employ intertextuality, using characters or situations from one genre to another (ads from news or otherwise). Imitations are mimetic instances of established and prominent genres (ads that simulate news). Moreover, beyond singular genres, generic systems are shaped by sets of interrelated genres which interact with each other in specific rhetorical situations.

Genres usually share a manifest function: a clear purpose for producing or receiving generic content (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 5). In the case of news, the manifest purpose is to provide information to the public, whereas in advertising it is to promote a product or service. However, a genre may also fulfill several latent functions: secondary purposes that are not immediately obvious to the audience (promote a cause, enhance the image of a person or institution, endorse, criticize, persuade, entertain, etc.).

Genres are also sense-making devices which actively shape content. Genres generate meaning by using various multimodal rhetorical devices which are generic cues for the audience. Genres are not only structures that allow individual texts to produce meaning, but they are also restrictive, complex methods of reducing (limiting or constraining) the field of play for individual texts (Klein, 2018, p. 195). They inherently induce specific expectations from the media audiences, and they reflect shifts in attitudes toward various subjects. Each genre encapsulates a certain ideology, a set of tenets and assumptions about how the world should function, who has the legitimate power, what actions or stances are appropriate (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 136). Genres are discursive forms with social functions: they signal the nature of what is being communicated and the social relationships that are being maintained. The frequency of employing certain genres offers insights about social beliefs, attitudes, and power relations. Because media producers explore social and historical trends as material for media messages, some genres manage to anticipate economic, political or technological developments (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 75).

Genres are templates of production/reception of media content, in recognizable forms, according to established conventions, but they can be changed over time, and can combine with one another. The rigid distinctions between

factual and fictional genres become bended and blurred since news have adopted fictional devices and fiction frequently employs realistic codes. The defining characteristics of genres vary from formal to structural and from pragmatic to sociocultural. Genres can be adapted for different media (transmediation). Usually, genres evolve in a cyclic dynamic, from the inception stage to expansion and, finally, to the saturation level (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 208).

Moreover, genres are not neutral, but ideological and value-laden, using specific and general rhetorical topics (*loci*). News and advertisements are clearly different genres (by aim, word choice/degree of formality, framing, rhetorical tools, etc.), but there are similarities as well as interferences between them. Both news and ads are carefully planned and designed multimodal messages with narrative structures and embedded ideologies, created by professional teams in institutional settings and published in media. Ads and news can use all the rhetorical strategies (*ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*), but the emphasis of ads is on *pathos*, whereas news employ predominantly *logos*.

Pure genres can be seldom found in the media discursive practice, but in the digital environment, the growing tendency is to blend the extant genres and to develop new ones. Digital media enable the disintegration and recombination of the generical elements which create new formats and genres. Moreover, this leads to hybrid genres, new genres or the subversion and disruption of the existing genres (Andrews, 2014, p. 156). New digital genres develop as combinations, parodies or remixes of traditional media genres. One representative digital genre of participatory culture is the Internet meme. The prosumers of memes are digital bricoleurs: they reuse and remix elements of different multimodal genres.

News as the fundamental informative journalism genre (with several sub-genres) is emulated by different digital newcomers (professional journalism vs citizen journalism, blogging, tweet magazines, etc). There are four characteristics of contemporary news: they are non-linear, fragmented, and multifaceted; they are enmeshed in a networked online sphere, surrounded and sometimes overwhelmed by disparate social media platforms, which have changed the way news is produced and consumed; citizen journalism has challenged and broadened professional journalism, raising new issues, bringing new voices into the conversation; and they are complex and nuanced, as journalistic categories bend, blend, and blur (Perloff, 2021, p. 22).

News can sometimes take the form of propaganda or can be used by advertising in news-like commercials or in native advertising. But advertising can also provide memes news will use (ex., the Dorel meme, originally appeared in a Tv commercial, have become staple in news reporting about incompetent workers incidents).

Memes originate both from news and from ads, among others, and repurpose and re-signify both analogic and digital content. There is a dynamic relationship between the memes in news and ads. The news usually exploit the threat memes, representing the world as essentially hostile, and unpredictable, and inducing fear or insecurity in the audience, which will be, afterwards, assuaged or removed by advertisements, which deliver a sensation of safety, determined by protection memes.

Also, there are media hoaxes, which try to expose and emphasize the flawed procedures of media journalism (ex., #Free Kekistan at Antena 3 or, more recently, the Digi24 news on Russian army recruitment methods) and parodic news (ex., Times New Roman news-like satiric, but fictional stories).