

UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREŞTI

Summary of Habilitation Thesis

**Modul în care reprezentările noastre despre realitatea socială sunt influențate prin
intermediul media**

Interpretarea realității sociale și influența media

How our representations of social reality are influenced by the media

Interpretation of social reality and media influence

Prof. dr. Claudiu COMAN

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The thesis I propose, *How our representations of social reality are influenced by the media. Interpretation of social reality and media influence*, is dedicated to investigating how social reality in its various aspects is influenced by the media. For more than 20 years, from my debut in the university field, in the field of research to the activity concerning the department in which I work, my essential concern has been related to mass media. The personal research program was oriented towards the identification of various forms of mass media influence, the treatment of its effects as convergence effects, and was constituted with each work in a coherent platform, which also supported my didactic activity.

The habilitation thesis is built in three major parts and presents the scientific, professional and academic achievements, in interdisciplinary thematic directions.

The first part describes the scientific activity. I showed here that I continued the results obtained during the doctoral research, which had as its theme the management of electoral campaigns, and then I focused on the analysis of the image and the influence of the mass media. Therefore, after the defense of the doctoral thesis, I continued the scientific research and the exploration of the media field as it was always being redefined with the development of online communication and social networks. The fundamental hypothesis of the new research stage was inspired by the way in which online communication changes the paradigm so that we can no longer speak of strong effects or weak effects of mass media but of so-called convergence effects. That is, the media is part of the new socialization context and becomes a factor inside the reference system whose effects are decisive even though it ends up being very difficult to measure and quantify.

These findings led me to study media credibility and implicitly to the analysis of how we can manage the phenomenon of fake news. The objectives of the research program appear from the need to explore, compare and record the changes generated by the new type of environment in which communication can be manifested, respectively the effects of the liberalization of communication channels.

I developed this topic both in the framework of my doctoral research as a doctoral supervisor in the field of sociology, as well as through publications and through my teaching activity as the holder of the Fake news course taught at the Digital Media study program within the Faculty of Sociology and Communication of Transylvania University of Brasov.

I followed the relationships between traditional media and new media and I came to identify the structural differences in communication and the fact that thanks to the Internet the world has really become a global village. Apart from the benefits of social media communication, we also identified perverse effects, unwanted effects related to the trivialization of contents and the decrease in credibility.

From my analyses, credibility and objectivity began to be affected by fake news and especially by click bait, so that the reality presented by the media became more real than the reality itself, and the role of the media shifted its focus from training and information, on interpretation as I mentioned in the subtitle of my thesis.

The main operational axes of the research program were: mass media effects; credibility of mass media; the paradigm shift generated by social networks; (convergence effects; image analysis; fake news phenomenon .

We have opened directions for exploration, in the sense in which the convergence effect shows us the importance of the media in the process of socialization and in the interpretation of social reality.

The following sequence of the ability thesis describes the strictly professional side of my evolution. I have described the professional route, from the beginning as a researcher at the Institute of Marketing and Surveys (IMAS Bucharest), but also as a teacher, to the present, dedicated exclusively to teaching. Thus, I started my professional and academic activity as an assistant professor, and in parallel I followed a career in the publishing field (editor at Astra culture magazine). From 2014, I became a university professor through a competition, having classes in the specialization of Communication and public relations and then in Digital Media, where I had the opportunity to participate in the development of a field of maximum need at the regional level. I became the specialization coordinator for the bachelor's and master's programs presented earlier.

In the second part of the thesis, I described the Plan for the evolution and development of the professional, scientific and academic career. **The general objective** of the plan is the development of mass media system research, especially by capturing and exploiting the potential of doctoral students.

Research activities will continue the series of interdisciplinary explorations. Developing research teams around topics of utmost importance will be a top priority for me. Thus, I want to

focus on the influence of the media on the perception of the Roma minority, on LGBT, on the effects of smoking. Bullying and cyberbullying will also be the subject of ongoing research. In the new context focused on social media, I think that a direction of research should be related to the way in which universities adapt to the new realities. That's why one of the topics I intend to develop is the study of university and municipality integrated communication. Through the results that I anticipate, I believe that I will be able to contribute to the development of this field in the Center region of Romania, but also to the consolidation of the Romanian international prestige of academic research in the field of media studies.

The third part , according to the methodological recommendations, contains the bibliographic references on which this thesis is based.

My qualification in the field of Communication Sciences can mean an implicit support for the field in the development of which I have been participating for over 15 years with the authorization of the communication and public relations program in 2007. The project itself involves transdisciplinary analyses, a multiperspective approach, demands that I can answer, as evidenced by my work portfolio.

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