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STUDY ON THE REPUTATION OF THE (MASS) MEDIA IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:

Part of a bigger research project conducted by Media Reputation Lab (Media REP Lab) on the reputation of media in Europe, the study explores the reputation of media among informed population in Romania. A sample of 100 cases was involved in the online survey taking place in December 2019. The results provide a description of the country's media reputation (media in general: radio, print, digital and television). For each one of these media, the valuation obtained by each of the reputational attributes (credibility, rigor, impartiality, willingness to rectify) by the informed population would be indicated. Moreover, insights on the knowledge and use, as well as on the reputation (overall and by category, considering ten key reputation aspects) – of twelve selected media – would be provided.

Key words: *Key Reputation Aspects; Mass Media; Reputation; Reputational Attributes; Romania*

1. Introduction

Faced with unprecedented complex challenges – fuelled, against the background of the digital era, by the emergence of the “fake news era” (Albright, 2017; Berghel, 2017; Pangrazio, 2018) – the (mass) media industry seems to have nowadays more trust-related issues than ever (Fletcher, & Nielsen, 2017; Fink, 2019; Voznesenska, 2019; Strömbäck et al., 2020). If considering **trust** “a social mechanism that helps to deal with social complexity and reduces it in a suitable way” (Blöbaum, 2014), this is quite a paradox that needs to be (addressed and) solved by the media – for their own interests (as industry/organizations), but also for the interests of their stakeholders (e.g., providers, consumers, and the society at large).

Though, trust in (especially news) media is not a new concern – it is almost a century since it has been accompanying the media throughout its journey; during this time, the literature has identified three main areas of research in the field: trust in the information, trust in the provider of the information, and trust in the medium through which the information is transmitted (Fisher, 2016).

In the (new) context of media (industry) transformation (Winseck, 2011; Knoche, 2016; Evens, 2018; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2020), the same three "objects" of trust are the main subjects of interest not only for academia (Peters, & Broersma, 2013; Hopmann, Shehata, & Strömbäck, 2015; Martens, et al., 2018), but also for a series of benchmark (national, regional or global) reports (Lupu, 2020; European Commission, 2019; Edelman, 2020; Neuman et al. 2020). Tackling media's trust related issues from different theoretical fields/perspectives (e.g., communication, business, economics, anthropology, political science, information science) and/or by different (quantitative and qualitative) methodological means, they identify and discuss the antecedents and/or outcomes of trust in (the different kinds of) media and put them in (diachronic and/or synchronic) perspective, while suggesting solutions and/or new areas for future research.

Encapsulating "the opinion that people have of someone or something, based on past behaviour or character" (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>), **reputation** is one of the most important factors influencing trust (Blöbaum, 2014). As strategic asset, reputation is a (possible) source of competitive advantage for an organization (Lunguleac-Bardasuc, Budac, & Ogorean, 2020) – which, to be sustainable, needs to constantly be nurtured and honed, through consistent reputation management endeavours. Within this framework, the **reputation of the (mass) media** is of particular interest; in its capacity as mediator, the media have (through their organizations/institutions) the capability to capitalise on its own reputation to influence the public's opinions, as well as the reputation of others (either individuals or organisations). Thus, the magnitude of the media's impacts and (propagated) effects on different stakeholders depends on the reputation of the media; to assess and benchmark the reputation of the media, the literature proposes several research and tools.

In a theoretical paper, Aleknonis (2010) proposes The Media Reputation Quotient for the measurement of media reputation – a tool which "consists of four dimensions: (1) a public or 'external' dimension; (2) an 'invisible' market dimension; (3) an organizational dimension; and (4) a journalistic dimension". In an empirical paper, Ortiz de Guinea, Villafañe, & Caffarel-Serra (2018) aim to "test a method designed from scratch to assess the reputation of the different media"; the study was built on the findings of a questionnaire – exploring media reputation's journalistic and business variables and 31 dependent variables – applied to highly knowledgeable panellists in Castellón). Later on, Villafañe, Ortiz-de-Guinea-Ayala, & Martín-Sáez (2020) have performed "a quantitative analysis of the reputation of the Spanish media (...), based on a qualitative analysis of the professional and business reality of the media with the best reputation".

Part of a bigger research project conducted by Media Reputation Lab (Media REP Lab) on the reputation of media in Europe, the current study explores the reputation of media among informed population in Romania. A sample of 100 cases was involved in the online survey taking place in December 2019. The results provide a description of the country's media reputation (media in general: radio, print, digital and television). For each

one of these media, the valuation obtained by each of the reputational attributes (credibility, rigor, impartiality, willingness to rectify) by the informed population would be indicated. Moreover, insights on the knowledge and use, as well as on the reputation (overall and by category, considering ten key reputation aspects) – of twelve selected media – would be provided.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the second section makes a brief introduction on the Mass Media in Romania, the third one presents the Methodology of the Study, the fourth shows the Findings of the Media REP Lab survey on the reputation of media among informed population in Romania, and the last one is dedicated to Discussion and Conclusions.

2. Mass Media in Romania

It is commonly known that mass media may have both a positive and a negative impact on public opinion. However, besides the individual-level effects, mass media may also influence other spheres of society, such as economics or politics. That is to say, mass media portrays the main source of information for the entire society, a source that represents collective consciousness, allowing individuals to clearly express their interests or to build their own perspectives and points of view regarding reality. The downside of this information is that it can generate a negative reflection on society, influencing citizens in perceiving only the less positive aspects of reality, and consequently, producing changes in attitudes, behaviours, and emotions.

If we analyse mass media in Romania according to the number of channels available locally, it would result in an entertaining and diverse mass media, with rich content. However, if we are to look closely, we note that valuable content is missing and that the traffic is made mainly through accidents and sensational news. Although there are a multitude of small, fragmented sources of information that publish enormous information, in most cases, this is often taken from press releases. The content produced by journalists and resulted from their documentation work is rather poor. This practice is dangerous since it gives the public the illusion that they are well informed.

The Romanian press is facing certain problems. Among them, we can mention (Lupu, 2020):

- the dilution of the journalism identity, resulting from the continuous chase after high traffic and producing conveyor-belt news that is irrelevant to the public;
- the social media competition;
- the undersized human resource, which led to the impossibility of specialization (amateur journalists are practicing both journalism and marketing, sales or editing);
- the migration of specialized human resource for better jobs which bring them higher professional satisfaction;
- the influence of political forces on mass-media, either directly performed, or by sizing the advertising budgets they allot to the various political players;
- the lack of alternative funding resources leads to censoring the information provided;

- poor mass-media management resulting from: the qualified human resources' lack of interest in their profession; the lack of financial means that could attract skilled human resources in this field; the political interests of mass media channel owners that may result in uncomfortable situations for competent management;
- the lack of interest of businesses in buying ad spaces on traditional media, preferring online advertising (Google and Facebook), at lower costs;
- the improper distribution channels for print media (especially in rural places, where people are not large internet consumers, leaving them without any alternative source of information to TV);
- low wages of journalists and the lack of high-performance equipment that prevents them from performing qualitative work.

Unfortunately, the Romanian press has become too much tempted by numbers only, and out of the desire to make a profit, it tends to broadcast in the breaking news only that type of information that has a high emotional impact, which arouses fear and insecurity. Yet, such behavior can only be sanctioned by the public, which could oppose the consumption of the before-mentioned news. However, this is considerably difficult, given that it is not the information that changes people's mindsets and behaviour, but the way it is communicated. We believe that it is very important for society to take action and act in such a way to protect the sources of information. The right to honest and fair information must not be neglected but, on the contrary, it should be defended and respected. A viable solution to this could be the co-participation of the public as a stakeholder. Otherwise, the only payers remain the authorities and the business environment that will preserve their power of decision concerning the information to be transmitted.

Regrettably, the Romanian public is still unwilling to pay for content. And there are several reasons for that. Some claim that media institutions already make money out of advertising, while others claim the poor quality of the journalistic product they receive. The non-participation of the public means that the press will remain a slave to various interests, which arbitrarily finance media products, while the interest of the citizen will remain, most of the time, unrepresented.

Access to accurate information is as important as an independent justice system or a performing health system. Through press rightness and the information it produces, a kind of civic education can be built, through which Romanians can regain their self-confidence and overcome themselves.

Mass-media credibility is made up of its audience size, the volume of broadcast advertising, and inevitably, its market price, while at the same time, it affects the intensity of the persuasive effects that that media organization has on the public. (Tătar, 2018).

It is expected that in the medium term, the written press in Romania will no longer resist and that we will be the first country in the EU to abandon written press (in the sense of relevant daily newspapers) (Beligăr, 2020).

When it comes to media, Romanians continue to use television as the main source of information on different topics of interest - 97% of Romanians say that they watch TV programs at least once a week, which is above the European average of 92%, while the internet is being used by more than half of Romanians (58%), situating Romania under the

European average of 78%. Social media are perceived as a modern means to stay up to date on political issues, but also as a way of expressing opinions in this regard by 54% of Romanians (Eurobarometru Standard 90, 2019).

According to a study of the Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism, confidence in journalism and its ability to correctly inform the public is declining. The published data show that only 35% of Romanian news consumers still trust media, which places Romania in 29th place out of the 38 countries included in the research. (Digital News Report, 2019).

Finding solutions to media problems is not an easy task, especially since these problems are found in countries all around the world, with certain peculiarities depending on the national context (according to data published by Eurobarometer Standard 90, 2019 only 36% of Romanians consider themselves well informed, while the European average being 42%).

Public engagement in the content delivered must be folded by a better understanding of the role of journalism in the community. At the same time, educating people on how to inform themselves correctly, discern between real facts, opinions, verified content, and promotional materials is of high necessity. Without the former, and without understanding the way mass media works (regardless of the fact that it is online or offline), the attempt to regain public trust is in vain.

According to Digital News Report 2019, completed by the Reuters Institute and Oxford University, the top three highest-rated and most trusted media institutions in Romania are Pro TV, DIGI24, and Antena1 (Figure 1). Digital News Report 2019 confirms a general trend towards a more digitalized news world, that is dominated by platforms, and having mobile devices at its core. Digital News Report confirms that the confidence in the press is influenced by social evolutions and the degree of division of society, with more than half of digital audiences (54%) believing that the main source of false or misleading information can be identified around the notions of government, national politicians, and political parties.

TV, Radio and Print

Online

Figure 1 Weekly use of media channels in Romania (%)

Source: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2019)

3. Methodology of the Study

The study overall is an extension or replica, at European level, of a research conducted by Media REP Lab in Spain at the beginning of 2019. The methodology is fully substantiated, developed, and explained in Villafañe, Ortiz-de-Guinea-Ayala, & Martín-Sáez (2020). As regards the research on the reputation of media in Romania, the following should be mentioned:

- **Geographical scope:** Romania.
- **Target:** Informed population, defined as residents of legal age, with University studies, working, studying, or actively seeking employment, and users at least 2 or 3 times a week of paper press, digital press, radio, or TV.
- **Type of interview:** Online interviews (Computer Assisted Web Interviews) via online panel.
- **Sample:** 100 cases.
- **Sample error:** At a confidence level of 95.5% and $p = 0.5$ and $q = 0.5$, the margin of error for the whole sample, without segmentation (100 cases) is $\pm 10,0\%$. This means that the extrapolation of perceptual results may vary in $\pm 10,00\%$.
- **Sampling distribution:** 50% male, 50% female. Evenly distributed by age.
- **Questionnaire:** All closed-ended questions, with a length of about 12 minutes. The questionnaire was conducted in local language.
- **Fieldwork dates:** 11 to 16 December 2019.
- **Quality control:** In compliance with ISO 20252 and ICC/ESOMAR Code of Conduct.
- **Analyzed media:** press: Ziare.com, Adevarul, and Evenimentul zilei; radio: Europa FM, Radio Romania Actualitati, and Radio ZU; television: Pro TV, Antena 1, Antena 3, DIGI24, Stirile Pro TV, and TVR. The selection of the media under scrutiny has been made based on a first consultation with the Association of European Journalists (based in Madrid), which was then contrasted with phone interviews with ten local media professionals.

4. Findings

As regards the **frequency of media use** (Figure 2), almost all the Romanian interviewees watch TV daily (92%). On top of that, 7 out of 10 read digital newspapers and two in three listen to the radio every day. Printed newspapers, on the other hand, are read daily (or almost every day) only by 1 in 10 participants (13%); in fact, half of the participants read them from time to time (50%) and 7% never.

Figure 2. Frequency of use (overall)

Source: Media REP Lab

If considering the use of the media on a weekly basis, by gender and age (Table 1): (a). there are no relevant differences by gender – although it seems that women are slightly more interested in using media than men, regardless of the specific medium; (b). despite the differences are not statistically significant, younger people (under 45), listen less radio and read less paper press, while those over 45 use more all the media overall.

Table 1. Frequency of use on a weekly basis, by gender and age (%)

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE	
		Male	Female	Less than 45	45 or more
	100 cases	50 cases	50 cases	52 cases	48 cases
TV	99,0	98,0	100,0	98,1	100,0
DIGITAL PRESS	94,0	92,0	96,0	94,3	93,8
RADIO	83,0	82,0	84,0	80,8	85,5
PAPER PRESS	43,0	42,0	44,0	40,4	45,8

Source: Media REP Lab

In terms of overall **associations of every medium** with fundamental media attributes – credibility, information rigor, impartiality, and willingness to rectify – without focusing on any specific medium (Figure 3), TV is more strongly associated to most of the aspects shown, it is considered by more people the most credible medium (to 46%) and the most rigorous (39%) and willing to rectify (36%). Radio stands out for being the most impartial medium to many interviewees (39%), but it performs poorly in terms of rigor and credibility. Digital press is quite associated to willingness to rectify, impartiality and rigorousness. Its traditional counterpart is the least associated to impartiality and willingness to rectify, but one fourth believes it is the most rigorous medium.

Figure 3. Associations of every medium

Source: Media REP Lab

The analysis on **knowledge and use of every medium** (Figure 4) reveal that Televisions overall occupy the first positions in terms of usage, in particular Stirile Pro TV and Pro TV are both watched usually by 7 in 10 interviewees, and DIGI24, by more than half of the sample. After, radios are the medium used more frequently, with stations like Europa FM and Radio ZU. On the contrary, press media like Evenimentul Zilei, Adevarul and Ziare.com are read often by less than 30% of the participants, while most interviewees read their information sporadically.

Figure 4. Knowledge and use of every medium

Source: Media REP Lab

If looking in structure, at knowledge and use of every medium by gender and age while considering the respondents that usually follow information from a specific medium (Table 2), it shows that: (a). two TV media channels (Pro TV and DIGI24) are more "masculine" (with a 16 percentage points gap between the male and female audience), as

well as the "traditional" paper press representative Evenimentul zilei (with 8 percentage points gap), while one Radio station (Europa FM) is more "feminine" (with 8 percentage points gap between the male and female audience) – there are no other significant gender based differences for the media under scrutiny; (b). Adevarul and Radio ZU are more appealing for the younger audience (considering their 21,8 and 12,9 respectively percentage points gaps between the "under 45" and "over 45" categories), while TVR and Ziare.com for those over 45 (the percentage points gaps being 18,6 and 14,4 respectively in their case).

Table 2. Knowledge and use of every medium – by gender and age (%)

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE	
		Male	Female	Less than 45	45 or more
	100 cases	50 cases	50 cases	52 cases	48 cases
Stirile Pro TV	71,0	74,0	68,0	73,1	68,8
Pro TV	70,0	78,0	62,0	75,0	64,6
Digi 24	52,0	60,0	44,0	53,8	50,0
Europa FM	48,0	44,0	52,0	51,9	43,8
Antena 1	47,0	46,0	48,0	44,2	50,0
Radio ZU	38,0	36,0	40,0	44,2	31,3
TVR	32,0	34,0	30,0	23,1	41,7
Ziare.com	30,0	28,0	32,0	23,1	37,5
Radio Romania Actualitati	28,0	26,0	30,0	23,1	33,3
Adevarul	28,0	30,0	26,0	38,5	16,7
Antena 3	25,0	26,0	24,0	23,1	27,1
Evenimentul Zilei	18,0	22,0	14,0	23,1	12,5

Source: Media REP Lab

With respect to the **reputation of the media** under scrutiny, it was assessed (based on a 0 to 10 rating scale) both overall, and by category (considering ten key reputation aspects). The two categories and their respective aspects were: (1) Journalism and professional values – encompassing: Credibility, Information rigour, Journalistic quality, Independence, Professional ethics and deontology, and Contribution to democracy; and (2) Corporate values – encompassing: Economic and corporate sustainability, Transparency in business management, Owner responsibility with the medium's economic obligations towards employees and suppliers, and Workers' rights and duties.

The **Ranking – assessment of the media – Heatmap** (Table 3) reveals quite significant differences both within and (especially) across the different media – with ratings varying from 6,07 (Antena 3 for Independence) to 8,34 (Pro TV for Journalistic quality).

If considering the different media: Pro TV scores the best at eight out of the ten key reputation aspects – namely: Credibility (8,2), Information rigour (8,22), Journalistic quality (8,34), Contribution to democracy (8,07), Economic and corporate sustainability (7,91), Transparency in business management (7,56), Owner responsibility with the medium's economic obligations towards employees and suppliers (7,94), and Workers' rights and duties (7,94). Stirile Pro TV scores the best for the other two key reputation

aspects (both belonging to the Journalism and professional values category) – Independence (8,1) and Professional ethics and deontology (8,31).

At the other end of the spectrum, Antena 3 (also a TV medium) scores the worst at eight of the ten key reputation aspects – Credibility (6,43), Information rigour (6,57), Journalistic quality (6,51), Independence (6,07), Professional ethics and deontology (6,41), Contribution to democracy (6,13), Owner responsibility with the medium's economic obligations towards employees and suppliers (6,41), and Workers' rights and duties (6,46). TVR is the medium with the worst scores for the other two key reputation aspects (both related to Corporate Values): Economic and corporate sustainability (6,38) and Transparency in business management (6,17).

Table 3. Ranking – Assessment of the Media – Heatmap

	Antena 1	Ziare.com	Adevarul	Evenimentul Zilei	Europa FM	Romania Actualitati	Radio ZU	Pro TV	Antena 3	DIGI24	Stirile Pro TV	TVR
Credibility	7,1	7,07	7,36	6,83	8,06	7,55	7,58	8,2	6,43	7,54	8,15	7,06
Information rigour	7,02	7,12	7,23	7	7,94	7,42	7,53	8,22	6,57	7,56	8,13	6,94
Journalistic quality	7,13	7,12	7,32	6,91	8	7,64	7,2	8,34	6,51	7,54	8,28	7,01
Independence	6,51	6,91	6,99	6,61	7,79	7,27	7,43	7,98	6,07	7,09	8,1	6,64
Professional ethics and deontology	7,16	7,07	7,23	6,95	7,96	7,59	7,61	8,16	6,41	7,42	8,31	7,26
Contribution to democracy	6,71	6,82	7,16	6,7	7,7	7,32	7,18	8,07	6,13	7,26	8,04	6,85
Economic and corporate sustainability	6,83	6,96	7,06	6,86	7,52	7,24	7,3	7,91	6,53	7,19	7,87	6,38
Transparency in business management	6,55	6,69	6,88	6,68	7,31	7,03	7,08	7,56	6,21	6,93	7,55	6,17
Owner responsibility with economic obligations towards employees and suppliers	6,87	6,96	7,03	6,88	7,6	7,27	7,29	7,94	6,41	7,25	7,88	6,65
Workers' rights and duties	7,07	7	7,07	6,81	7,68	7,33	7,28	7,95	6,46	7,2	7,87	6,59

Source: Media REP Lab

The **Positioning Map of the Media** (Figure 5) – built on a factorial correspondence analysis – provides a more visual representation of the twelve media, the main findings being the following: (1). the media most associated to quality (in terms of credibility, journalistic quality, rigour and ethics) are Pro TV, Stirile Pro TV, Europa FM, and to a lesser extent Romania Actualitati and DIGI24; (2). Radio ZU is clearly positioned as an independent medium; and (3). Antena 1 and Antena 3 share a great association with employee's rights and duties; Antena 3 is also considered very sustainable in economic terms.

As regards the assessment of the **reputation of the media overall** (Figure 6), it shows that two TV channels, Pro TV and Stirile Pro TV occupy the top positions in the ranking, both around 8,30 points. Two radios follow, Europa FM with nearly 8 points and Radio ZU with 7,57. On the contrary, another TV, Antena 3, is the less reputed medium, with about 6,40 points. Also, other media like Evenimentul Zilei and TVR obtain lower reputation levels, both below 7 points.

Figure 5. Positioning Map of the Media

Source: Media REP Lab

Figure 6. Ranking – Reputation of the Media

Source: Media REP Lab

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In terms of **frequency of use**, almost all the Romanian interviewees watch TV daily (92%). On top of that, 7 out of 10 read digital newspapers and two in three listen to the radio every day. Printed newspapers, on the other hand, are read daily (or almost

every day) only by 1 in 10 participants (13%); in fact, half of the interviewees read them from time to time (50%) and 7% never. This latter finding is rather consistent with: (1). the respondents' profile (residents of legal age, with university studies, working, studying, or actively seeking for a job), preferring a more dynamic and/or rich news providing medium; (2). the recent transformations in the Romania's media industry, which experienced: (2.1.) the total or partial transition to digital of some previously printed publications (including *Evenimentul zilei*, which became exclusively online since the beginning of 2020) and the extinction of others (due to complex causality combining new consumer behaviours with new approaches as regards businesses' spending models on advertisement and the decreasing number of newspaper stands) (Ziarul Financiar, 2019); and (2.2.) the rise of new/social media, which has not only come with new and diversified "media and entertainment" alternatives (to "divert" news consumers), but it has also to some degree replaced traditional sources of news (ISense Solutions, 2020; Newman & al., 2020).

Overall, the results are compatible with those of similar studies, carried out either (a). locally: "nearly eight out of ten Romanians kept themselves informed by watching the news on the TV. Facebook was considered to be the second most commonly used information source while only 16 percent of respondents read newspapers and magazines" ISense Solutions (2020); or (b). globally: "TV and online remain the most important news sources in Romania, with printed newspaper and magazine consumption amongst the lowest in [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020] survey" Neuman et al. (2020).

The search for the **associations of every medium** with fundamental attributes / variables – credibility, information rigor, impartiality, and willingness to rectify – by media category (without focusing on any specific medium) – has revealed that: (a). paper press is the least associated to impartiality and willingness to rectify, but one fourth believes it is the most rigorous medium; (b). digital press is quite associated to willingness to rectify, impartiality and rigorousness; (c). radio is the most impartial medium to many interviewees (39%), but it performs poorly in terms of rigor and credibility; and (d). television is more strongly associated to most of the aspects shown, in particular it is considered by more people the most credible medium (to 46%) and also the most rigorous (39%) and willing to rectify (36%). The four above-mentioned media attributes/variables are fundamental determinants of **trust**, which is an increasing concern nowadays, especially considering the high proliferation and impact of fake news – phenomenon seen as "fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent" (Lazer, et al., 2018).

Naming trust "the ultimate currency in the relationship that all institutions [media included] build with their stakeholders" (Edelman, 2020), the 20th annual *Edelman Trust Barometer* (based on an online survey in 28 markets and involving a sample of more than 34000 respondents) reveals an overall 49% trust in media. More in details, considering the reason for trusting/distrusting, media got: a (+4) net score for being a purpose-driven institution; (-19) net score for being fair (serving the interests of everyone equally and fairly, as opposed to serving the interests of only the few); (-8) net score for having a vision for the future that respondents believe in; and (-5) net score for honesty (being honest and fair as opposed to being corrupt and biased). At the same time, more than a half of the respondents (57%) agree that "the media I use are contaminated with untrustworthy

information”, while more than three quarters of them (76%) “worry about false information or fake news being used as a weapon” (6 pts more than two years before).

As regards trust in media in the EU countries, the *Trust in Media 2020* report (EBU Media Intelligence Service, 2020) – that defines trust as “an individual’s perception of the reliability of other individuals and institutions and the result of socio-economic conditions, education and long-standing perceptions” and is “primarily based on data from the 92nd Standard Eurobarometer” – shows an overall 60% trust in media (19% high trust and 41% medium trust), and 40% low or no trust; against these results, Romania (RO) scores higher (70%) on overall trust (with 33% high trust, 37% medium trust, and 30% low or no trust) in media. The values for net trust – considering the different media – are: 21 (EU) and 27 (RO) for radio; 2 (EU) and 22 (RO) for TV; (-1) (EU) and 20 (RO) for written press; and (-23) (EU) and (-1) (RO) for Internet.

The analysis on **knowledge and use of every medium** revealed that: (a). televisions overall occupy the first positions in terms of usage, in particular Stirile Pro TV and Pro TV are both watched usually by 7 in 10 interviewees, and DIGI24, by more than half of the sample; (b). after TV, radios are overall the medium used more frequently, with stations like Europa FM and Radio ZU; (c). press overall like Evenimentul Zilei, Adevarul and Ziare.com are read often by less than 30% of the participants, as most interviewees read their information sporadically.

The **reputation of the media** under scrutiny was assessed both overall, and by category (considering ten key reputation aspects).

As regards the **assessment of the media by key reputational aspects**: Pro TV scores the best at eight out of the ten key reputation aspects, while Stirile Pro TV scores the best for the other two key reputation aspects. At the other end of the spectrum, Antena 3 (also a TV medium) scores the worst at eight of the ten key reputation aspects, while TVR is the medium with the worst scores for the other two key reputation aspects.

If considering the key reputation aspects based on the average scores they got (for the twelve analyzed media), Professional ethics and deontology is the most appreciated one, while Transparency in business management is the least. Overall, there are: (1). four “green” reputation areas (aspects scoring the highest average ratings): Professional ethics and deontology (7,43), Journalistic quality (7,42), Credibility (7,41), and Information rigor (7,39); (2). five “yellow” reputation areas (aspects scoring medium average ratings): Workers’ rights and duties (7,19), Owner responsibility with economic obligations towards employees and suppliers (7,17), Contribution to democracy (7,16), Economic and corporate sustainability (7,14), and Independence (7,12); and (3) one “red” reputation area (aspect scoring the lowest average rating) – Transparency in business management (6,89).

When looking at their medians, Credibility scores the highest (7,54), followed by Information rigor, Professional ethics and deontology (both scoring 7,42), and Journalistic quality (scoring 7,32). Owner responsibility with economic obligations towards employees and suppliers (7,25), Workers’ rights and duties (7,2), Economic and corporate sustainability (7,19) and Contribution to democracy (7,18) have lower medians, while Independence (7,09) and Transparency in business management (6,93) – the lowest ones.

In terms of **reputation overall**, two TV channels, Pro TV and Stirile Pro TV occupy the top positions in the ranking, both around 8,30 points. Two radios follow, Europa FM with nearly 8 points and Radio ZU with 7,57. On the contrary, another TV, Antena 3, is the less reputed medium, with about 6,40 points. Also, other media like Evenimentul Zilei and TVR obtain lower reputation levels, both below 7 points.

If considering the average overall reputation score (7,36), five media (Pro TV, Stirile Pro TV, Europa FM, Radio ZU and DIGI24) got higher reputation scores – with a 7,91 average, while seven of them (Romania Actualitati, Adevarul, Antena 1, Ziare.com, TVR, Evenimentul zilei, and Antena 3) got lower reputation scores – with a 6,97 average. Comparing to the median (7,31), there are six media with better reputation (Pro TV, Stirile Pro TV, Europa FM, Radio ZU, DIGI24, and Romania Actualitati) and six media with lower reputation (Adevarul, Antena 1, Ziare.com, TVR, Evenimentul zilei, and Antena 3).

In **conclusion**, the study provides (although not exhaustively) insights on the reputation of the (mass) media in Romania – with implications for both the literature and the practice in the field. As regards the literature, the study contributes with knowledge inputs to the “reputation of media in Europe” eleven pieces puzzle – a snapshot to be assembled based on the results of the project conducted by Media REP Lab in eleven European countries. With respect to the practical implications, they spread firstly on the Romania’s media industry and secondly on its stakeholders – because, in its capacity as mediator, the media industry has (through its organizations/institutions) the capability to capitalize on its own reputation to influence the public’s opinions, as well as the reputation of others (individuals or organizations). Therefore, assessing and benchmarking the reputation of the media is crucial for the media actors – to position themselves within the industry and develop their reputation management strategy accordingly – but it is also important for their stakeholders – to substantiate their decisions – as consumers and/or business partners.

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