

# **C**urrent Issues and Challenges for the Traditional Media (Radio and Television)

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## **Abstract**

The development of the communication means through the introduction of new technologies has brought along significant changes to the modality in which communication is realized, both semiotically and socio-culturally. Technologies are continuously improving, new systems, new means and new instruments of communication and interaction emerge, which, on the one hand have the capacity to synthesize the production of images and, on the other hand, to interact with the one proposing the informative material. This is the reason why nowadays there has been a debate on the ethics of communication. Unfortunately, the harsh reality we all face today is rooted in the fact that many professionals demonstrate their incapacity and unavailability to minimally comply with the ethics in the name of the “liberty expression”.

Non-compliance generates a great deal of confusing for those receiving the information. We can state that the ethics in communication refers to fully committing, consciously engaging and morally approaching every act, either individual or collective, which lead to a responsible use of our liberty of expression. Despite these challenges, the Church understood the necessity of mass- media for the modern individual. Thus, the Romanian Orthodox Church has taken this responsibility and is present in the space of public communication and visibility.

**Key words:** liberty of expression, traditional media, technologies, new media.

Talking about radio and television represents a permanent challenge because a fascinating world opens every time when you come into contact with it, a world of words and sounds and a world of images.

This study is not meant to be a repetition of certain things that have already been said about the world of radio and television, it is a vision of a radio and television presenter using his experience in the world of mass-media and the specialized literature, especially from Italy. We'll discuss several reference works of some Italian experts, professors at the Salesiana University in Rome or at the Roma Tre University in Rome: Enrico Menduni Franco Lever, Zancacchi Adriano, Paolo Restuccia about themes such as: The mind and the radio; Radio and television language; World of radio; Communication Dictionary; The history of radio and television in Italy.

After a brief review of the radio and television history from birth to the new challenges of the "Internet era" we will unravel together some of the most important elements that made this "magic box" a means of communication which challenges revived whenever time challenges put it on second place and a television proposing constantly new approaches. We will point out the most important features of spoken language, some elements of communication ethics, we will try to outline a framework for the nowadays radio and digital television with all the faced challenges, and finally to present the most important challenges of modern technology.

Currently, communication occupies an important place in our lives. Without it, we are persons who neither transmit nor receive information or messages, which isolate themselves, who fail to expose their personal opinion. That is why "traditional media", radio and television are part of the mass communication means which have brought and probably will bring a long-time contribution to information, literacy and socialization of the large audience.

“During its existence, the radio changed its cultural form even though it was broken several times, it went through unfortunate periods, but each time it was able to revive finding a different and modern social function of innovative language, keeping in harmony the spirit of time” (Menduni, 2001: 12).

Talking about radio, “the small box” (De Luca, 2005: 20) is one of the means of communication that has largely kept its characteristics over the time. The radio is accused of eliminating certain receptive field, a very important one for man, namely vision-visual. Maybe it would be helpful and useful for us to stop and focus on this issue, trying to weigh its value. Two examples: the silent film and the photography can give us an answer to the above statement.

The silent film does not create a strong impact when watched; the lack of sound does not create a huge discomfort. Also a painting, a picture that leads you out of reality does not create an unpleasant state, but rather invites you to interact, to unravel it, but from this point of view the radio commits a great sin, namely, it obviously omits the image. We can state that the radio proposes, using only sound, a complete image. “The radio speaks to our minds in a different way and stimulates answers that other media do not require, venturing into new territories that neither television nor the cinematography, not even the written press go through” (Menduni, 2001: 7). With all the ideas mentioned above, the radio remains a complete means of communication, it is the instrument which, by its nature and by its structure characteristics, has remained in many aspects uncontaminated by the technological revolution, emphasizing here that the unchanged elements are those that refer to the narrative and expressive ways”. The listener is therefore tempted to fill in the missing blanks of a radio transmission using his/her imagination in a clear way” (Grandi, 1995: 51). As described above, the lack of images for the proposed text presented to an audience determines the radio to be an absolutely special media channel, but, at the same time, succeeding to thrill, to transmit emotions to its listeners owing to the evocative force of words, music or sound in general. It is not

necessary to be a specialist in soccer in order to make the difference between a TV review and a radio one for a sports event.

The presentation of a soccer game in real time through the radio creates more “pathos” than the game broadcast and commented on television.

The main reason that makes the difference is that the radio amplifies the power of imagination and the ability to generate emotions to the listener. Only the radio is able to generate natural (clean) effects, emotional surprises through the word, the sound of a change of rhythm, a song, many times a jingle or even the radio message identification. “The incredible activation and internalize of human imagination, represents the result of an auditory education” (Arnheim, 1995: 52).

The radio, being different from all other media means, had the ability to adapt to the major changes occurring in society during the time. Its cultural shape has changed several times: thus the radio was born as radiotelegraphy, namely wireless telegraphy. It is about a practical application on the wavy nature of light, Maxwell's theory and experimental confirmation that ends with the discovery of electromagnetic waves by German physicist Hertz in the 80s. Guglielmo Marconi theorised the principle by which the ether can be crossed by waves of different frequencies that man can produce artificially.

The beginnings of the radio take us to 1895 Italy, where, after long experiments in his parental home in Villa-Griffon-Pontecchio near Bologna, Guglielmo Marconi, aged 21, manages to obtain some fundamental results concerning the electromagnetic waves, results which actually represent the birth of the radio as system for transmitting information. It is the beginning of a process tended to mark profoundly the development of humankind for the entire 20th century. We must also remember the moment in 1901 when on Signal Hill in San Giovanni Terranova the first transatlantic transmission took place. If we want to talk about the invention of radio, we have to mention the entire period discussed above and not just one event which is a small part of a long series of moments that led to the

invention of radio. The main concern of those who dealt with this means of communication was to cover the broadest distances to transmit information.

“At the beginning, all these discoveries had special uses, particularly military, but in the end it came to using them to create a means of mass communication” (Traciuc, 2009: 7).

Access to information becomes thus an asset belonging to most people. The radio is right from its start a serious competitor for print media, but time would prove that these two means of mass communication will have a good relationship.

“Among the means of mass communication, the radio is the least studied, not just among communication sciences, but also in academic research in general” (Lever, Rivoltella & Zanicchi, 2002: 944). Even if the specialists' interest to study the radio is much lower compared to other means of mass communication, radio has its beauty. All the elements that it has: word, music, sound effects, noise and breaks make the radio an interesting means of communication challenging the listeners and invite them to understand through the inner eye what it transmits. “The radio has very close personal dimension, namely the interactive and mobile communication” (Menduni, 2001: 8).

As listeners, we must consider certain aspects relating to decoding a message sent via radio. We do not know how effective a listener's imagination can be in this case. The listener gets the impression or the calming feeling to understand what happens when you listen to a radio drama. In reality one feels incapable of arranging them in his/her imagination. He/she feels the persons, hears laughing voices, people moving, unexpected applause, greetings, without realizing that someone has entered the scene. Here are some factors that lead to the assertion that there is no doubt about the fact that the acoustic results are poorer in case of a radio drama. The presence in the theatre opens a perspective of understanding, decoding the message suggested in a straightforward and effective manner.

Nowadays, the radio maintains its position among the means of mass communication. There is a permanent concern of scientists in the field to present the changes, challenges and new conquests of radio. While the “pre-Internet” era had many spaces for interactivity with other means of communication, the possibility to find a space for listening and subjective expression made the radio, for a long period of time, the instrument of individual and collective emotional expression by excellence.

The technology conquests of new media somewhat have changed the things but in some respects, the radio remains a very powerful means of communication now. We state, without venturing, that at present the radio retakes its place among the main means of mass communication. For those who are in the car, the radio becomes a companion, for those who work at home or elsewhere, the radio gives the information needed. The speed with which the necessary daily information is spread, gives its proper place. Given the above situations, the listeners do not use a lot of imagination because they are involved in another action or activity.

“Infiltrating in the domestic environment, the radio was a new way to organize family life, a kind of constant guest with thousands of things to say, around which the conversation is reorganized, the daily schedule, the relationship between family members” (Lever, Rivoltella & Zanicchi, 2002: 940).

Rudolf Arnheim in 1936, in one of his studies about the radio, stated that radio language is composed exclusively of sounds; he considered a limit, but as a means of communication the radio is defined by verbal language and sound. “The radio supports two rarefied, spiritual means: at the same time, verbal and musical communication is used with sounds, producing strong sensations which are difficult to avoid” (Lever, Rivoltella, Zanicchi, 2002: 941).

The word is the main means of communication within the verbal language. It becomes the carrier through which the message reaches the recipient. The radio operator must consider several aspects on how to use words to transmit a message. The audience or hearers are different in many ways: educational, cultural, social, from

illiterates to university professors. The key to successfully send a message remains encrypted or incomprehensible for one but for the other it is superficially trivial, it refers to the ability of proposing radio speech.

In terms of music, it can appear before the public as an element of radio language, of itself, it is part of the radio schedule - or as a complement, accessory, element when used as background music signal sound. We should also note that music plays an important role for radio, it is the element that selects the largely public-listeners. Another element of radio language is the noise; by noise we refer to what is not defined by words or music. Radio noises or effects may be of several types, but it is very important to be counted as natural, even if the sound effects made in radio production studio are more precise, clear or effective than the natural, ambient or background ones. From this perspective, naturalness ranks the second.

The last important element of radio language is the silence, as a background element, because using the break intelligently can create an extraordinary thing when presenting a message.

The first steps in television were taken by UK by official inauguration of the BBC station in 1936, with 12 hours of broadcast per week. After three years, television was introduced in the United States. The number of TV owners in these two countries, however, was very small. Only after the Second World War the situation changed for the better. An important step in the history of television was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, on 2nd June 1953. The coronation was the first event live broadcast television in several European countries and re-broadcast in the United States. This way, the television gave the entire planet the occasion to attend the same event, making possible the beginning to standardize television channels. After this event, the television, now increasingly present in people's homes, has become next to the motorcar the symbol of "consumer society". Since 1960 the television has become a frequent element of daily life. The market for handsets reaches saturation and the number of broadcasting stations increases. Three

major networks appeared: ABC, NBC, CBS. The essential characteristic of programs lies in a mixture of show business, advertising and much information, according to policy of producing network and the contracts with the economic entities and political elements. Since 1955, following the American model, TV stations of European countries introduced a competitive system, which admits the existence of private broadcasters. Withdrawal of the state has resulted, among other effects, in the emergence of new law. The Europeans adopt the formula of an independent regulation when the US tried to limit them.

Image grammar and syntax have changed significantly during the recent years. Thus consumer market sometimes becomes friendlier and sometimes influenced by sub-cultural globalism. Television was and remains one of the means of traditional mass communication present in our homes.

In terms of television, the specialized literature speaks about a "neo-TV", a television risking very little regarding its editorial proposal. This approach of images suggests at first some elements that give them the winning comfort on media market: uses cultural stereotypes, offers show, questions the media values of the company, uses the others' errors, and puts great emphasis on identity (messages, characters, sounds, images).

Another important step in the evolution of television is the fact that at one time it was necessary to introduce on media market the term "television truth" ("televisione verita") (Menduni, 2006: 189), which led to reality show.

Today, the television has reached a new technological dimension of its development, digital television, namely a digital platform that has a productive characteristic and a completely different cultural form from the classic, analogue television.

At the beginning of the study I mentioned the fact that there is a serious concern regarding the ethics of communication. Probably we went too far making a brief presentation of this aspect which proves to be indispensable for the world of media.



Nowadays, we speak a lot about the ethics of communication. We wonder why we need to discuss mass-media ethics. There are certainly many professionals who set this very serious concern for developed societies and the young ones. The difficulty of approaching such matters comes from the fact that “a communication professional, very frequently, agrees with community leaders or with the public on what is or is not ethical” (Deaver, 2004: 46). Unfortunately, there is a harsh reality that we face today, namely, that in the name of “freedom of expression”, many of the professionals demonstrate their inability to prove themselves minimally skilful” (Deaver, 2004: 47) regarding the mandatory ethics, whose violation generates a possible high probability of official censorship. “We are talking about the need for a media ethics, because freedom involves a higher tolerance for any type of communication than we are willing to try to accept in our minds” (Deaver, 2004: 48).

In conclusion, regarding the communication ethics, we can state that everything summarizes to a complete involvement, the commitment made towards the consciousness, more than a moral individual and collective approach and, last but not least, a responsible use of freedom.

In the last part of our study, we outline some important issues that arouse the interest in the new technological challenges regarding the radio. Along with the development of Internet, the radio, we can state that it lost a new impulse. While until the present moment there is a certain difficulty to transport moving images through telephone cables, in terms of audio-sound, these problems do not exist. Today, throughout the world, there are radios that broadcast on the internet or via the internet only. With the invention of digital satellite we do not find radio with high quality in the list of programs received by a satellite dish.

Since 1996 there have been software programmes that allow us to listen to an audio file in MP3 compressed format on personal computer without having to download the file in question to be heard. Today more than 2000 radios worldwide broadcast only via

Internet and there is a larger number of radios that transmit both via ether and Internet. Web radio or internet radio does not require licenses, frequencies, authorizations, avoid bureaucracy, costs and censorship and can be heard worldwide without barriers" (Menduni, 2006: 91). Those sites are not used only to listen to radios on a computer, but to let the listeners know their frequencies, to present the DJ performing shows, to present events that are to happen in the foreseeable future.

A more recent challenge for mass media is the one that refers to the interaction between Internet-radio and the phone, which also emphasize the distinction between personal communication and mass communication. An example that reinforces all the above ideas is the way in which the public interacts with the radio operator, email, SMS or webcam located in the broadcasting studio. The direction towards digitization is obvious, to an intense exploration of new media formats, but certainly not all will be successful.

Digital platforms are currently on tests. There are telematic channels with a search engine that allow the listener to create their own music playlist. There are discussions about an audio interface in the Internet world, but we must understand that "the radio is the contact site between sound and everyday of life millions of people and the way in which the sound expression, voice and music are used may become internet network voice" (Menduni, 2006: 93).

Another challenge of the digital world is the digital audio broadcasting DAB, the digital radio. When it comes to DAB digital radio, we must understand that it provides a constant modulation in its territory of service, therefore changing the frequency is not necessary, using the most of electromagnetic spectrum because digital compression allows transmission of six channels on a single frequency" (Menduni, 2006: 89).

In many European countries, DAB is required to use terrestrial networks with national DAB platform. But there is a reality confirming the weakness of this digital system, mostly due to high manufacture costs of the reception device.

Modern technology has two defining qualities: it provides both synthetic and interactive communication at the same time. The two elements totally change the look of the old means of mass communication. Synthetic Communication refers to the ability to create new words, which are used to transmit multiple elements through a single word: such as morphemes (nouns, verbs, affixes, etc.) are combined to create new words (Munteanu, 2005: 159), such as the Italian *comunicandovele*, meaning “while communicating it to you”. In this word, there are three distinctive words: communication, those and you.

Postmodernism, with the people under the pressure of time and space, is subject to continuous movements. There is an amazing reality regarding continuous movement of modern man, the one who transforms the world due to globalisation in a “domestic horizon” (Triani, 2013: 51), it manages to comply with some requirements of multi informational society, of consume and secularized without any exaggerated effort. Another element of communication, owed to modern technology, namely the interactivity arouses particular interest. Mobility of mass media and hyper-communication we use today, offers the postmodern man the opportunity to interact in a context marked clearly by time and space. It is often mentioned the fact that reading is lower today but if we take an example from the world of the Internet, namely posting written materials on one's blog, the statistics reveal that there are nearly 160 million blogs in the world. Compared to the world population, this number indicates that we have a blog to 42 people, so we are definitely very close to the times in which we were all writing to communicate (UNESCO, the congress, Blog and Blogger Moving World, Marseille, March 3, 2012).

Advertising is certainly another strong example. During the modern and postmodern era it acquired certain qualities in mobility, as time and space become the indispensable elements. Advertising answers all modern human desires, it has the role to answer, be and reach everywhere. Furthermore, advertising is able to attract, engage, seduce, persuade and drive to consumption (Zanacchi, 2004: 9). We often hear on the radio, see on television or simply read on a

billboard about a certain thing which becomes a world that moves along you, or accompanies you, becomes your partner or companion when travelling. But paradoxically, practical and real at the same time it confirms that advertising can move when fixed, it can stand still, does not move. Our physical movement or car movement defines our state or position related to certain things. The dynamic, moving human being can create an active mobile state for the advertising manifesto, aided by our visual space for a certain period of time. The rapidity from desire to purchase has become very short today, speaking in specific terms about “quick finger touching a screen “web marketing” (Triani, 2013: 60). Through these two examples, we can easily see that we live in a postmodern era, in a mobile society, an active society, vivid in terms of communication.

Nowadays, technology has reached untouched quotas. The physicist Alwin Weinberg calls this the postmodern era of technological revolution “big science”, also stating that “today there are more scientists in the world than the sum of scientists who lived before, during the history of humanity” (Greco, 2012). There is one important element that raises many problems in the world during the postmodern era, namely the limit or measure of things. We cannot omit the speed and power that represent the active participants of new technologies, or the binomial “the power and speed” highlights by rapid technological changes the informatics and telecommunications” (Triani, 2013: 71).

More often than not, the contemporary culture is a culture of image, of the external side, of quantity, but the Christian culture invites you to a perspective of the inner soul. Our Church quickly understood the necessity of applying and using these means of mass communication. Christ Gospel Culture is accomplished through different elements and means, from spoken-heard word to digital media of Christian culture.

In Europe and beyond, there has always been a trend on the correct use of these instruments for transmitting the Gospel message. Both in the West and in the East, these challenges have been considered careful. The Catholic Church developed a complex media

system and managed to capture all segments of the Christian life, both nationally and in regional or provincial areas. It has developed a network media for radio and television which took care of all the needs of the Christians and not only. Today, the Catholic Church's slogan is: Information, meeting and dialogue. Three mass-media, one strategy. It is about the three tools of media: *Avvenire* newspaper, Sat 2000 television and Radio in Blue.

In the case of the Orthodox Eastern Church, things have evolved along with the freedom of speech, after the fall of communism. The training and growth period has its steps but we speak today of the church's media holdings, of the daily Christian newspapers, religious radios or televisions, sites or other structures and means of communication.

Basilica Media Holding of the Romanian Orthodox Church is an example in this case. Radio Trinitas, Trinitas television, Lumina newspaper and Basilica site are the elements that define it. Fast communication is the strong point of these tools that are available in places less accessible.

Technological challenges of this society that we cannot call postmodern anymore because it seems to have moved to a new stage of development, bring in our everyday life a “present future”. Both the radio and television manage by own means to rise and to respond to these technological avalanches that created substantial changes to a lot of means of mass communications. The future is now, we live it intensely, the society is mobile even when we are idle, what passes in front of us places us in motion

The trend of this mobile society is to transform everything fixed and to put in motion and what is already in motion, to move faster. We can talk about an historical change, one that is offered by a communicational society of smartphones, tablets, social networks and who knows what will happen tomorrow.

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