Public communication and challenges in the current digital environment

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Table of contents

Introduction / 7

Ana-Maria OSADCI-BACIU, Oana-Alexandra SARCEA
Innovation and digital transformation in the publishing industry / 9

Reka NAGY
Evolution and impact of live streaming
in social commerce: current landscape, challenges, and prospects / 33

Larisa MUREȘAN
Influencer marketing:
influencers' perception on promotional content labelling / 47

Manuela Oana ANGHELESCU
Place branding in Timisoara – an approach to the cultural sector,
as reflected in the project TM2023 European Capital of Culture / 61

Oana ȘLEMCO, Alina BÂRGĂOANU
Platformization as a problematic form
of journalistic adaptation to the new digital technologies.
What journalists gain and lose. Risks and solutions / 74

Ciprian DUMITRU, Marina ENACHE
The role of governmental communication
in the transparency process of public institutions
in Romania. From transparent communication to social trust / 100

Roberta RĂDUCU, Andreea STANCEA
Digital engagement across media generations in Romania / 132

Narcis CRUCIAN
Social media repertoire. An analysis by age group / 147

Gabriela CONȚU
The Intelligence Choice
for Social Media Communication in Romania / 176

Mihaela PANĂ
The age of digital deception:
tracking disinformation and malvertising in deepfake advertising / 200

Ioan ȚEPELUȘ
Russia's propaganda and disinformation in the Middle East before and after Ukraine's invasion / 221

Constantin BĂLAN
Solutions to measure and assess the role of emotions in the propagation of fake news and disinformation / 243

Eveline MĂRĂȘOIU
Russia's foreign policy concept and the information sphere / 259

Roxana Varvara BOBOC
Constructing COVID-19 disinformation narratives in Romania: the weaponization of public discontent as populist political communication strategy / 270

Constantin SPÎNU
Russian propaganda tools: from Cold War tactics to XXI century realities / 297

Cătălina NASTASIU
Strategic narratives in contemporary warfare: conceptualization, typologies, and objectives / 320

Introduction

The landscape of public communication has undergone major changes, driven by rapid technological advancements and the proliferation of social media platforms. The evolution of these digital environments has reshaped the dynamics of communication, influencing political discourse, societal perceptions, and affecting the fundamentals of democratic engagement. These platforms, once perceived as tools for connecting individuals, have emerged as main channels for disseminating information, disinformation, strategic narratives and official messages.

This volume builds upon the works presented by young scholars and seasoned researchers at the 3rd *International Graduate Conference in Communication* which was held on June 15-16, 2023, at SNSPA, in Bucharest, Romania. The volume addresses the broader media landscape, highlighting the challenges and opportunities posed by the digital transformation. Social media platforms have provided new opportunities for engagement, allowing individuals to create and share content more easily than ever before. However, this shift has also led to the erosion of traditional gatekeeping functions within the media. Journalists and media organizations now find themselves navigating a fragmented and decentralized information environment, where the lines between fact and fiction are often blurred. As such, the volume examines the implications of this transformation for the practice of journalism, exploring the risks of platformization and the loss of editorial control that comes with reliance on digital giants for content distribution.

Additionally, the volume reflects on the evolution of the media landscape, from traditional channels such as newspapers and television to the digital transformation marked by social media. This shift has not only altered the ways in which information is disseminated but has also redefined the role of communication for intelligence agencies and public institutions. The increasing transparency and engagement of such institutions, particularly in Romania, through social media communication represents a significant change in how state institutions communicate with the public. This development reflects broader trends in public communication, where government institutions strive to build trust and communicate directly with citizens in the digital age. The volume also highlights the importance of understanding how

these institutions can navigate the complexities of digital communication to enhance their role in safeguarding national security.

Furthermore, by focusing on the specific emotional triggers and keywords used in disinformation, it provides a framework for understanding how emotional appeals are crafted to resonate with public fears, desires, and biases. The volume further investigates the evolution of the Kremlin's propaganda apparatus, exploring how traditional Cold War-era techniques such as reflexive control and active measures have been repurposed and enhanced for the digital age. The transformation of these tactics, from Soviet propaganda to modern disinformation campaigns targeting Western democracies, highlights the growing sophistication and scale of digital influence operations.

In summary, this volume explores the dynamic and complex interplay between digital tools and public communication in the current media landscape. Through a series of case studies and theoretical analyses, this volume explores the challenges of the digital environment from multiple perspectives: the day-to-day user experience, the evolving role of the media, the broader implications of major state actors and the carrying out efficient strategies in public communication.