

# **Journalism in Romania vs. Journalism in Japan: How Much Can We Blame the Technology for the Implosion of Romanian Newspapers**

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## ***Abstract***

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*This paper analysis the claims that Romanian newspaper journalism suffers and it is in complete disarray because of the “surge of technology” and the “impossibility for journals to compete with the internet and the television” by comparing the ways in which journalists and their organisations reacted to the introduction of new technologies in both Romania and Japan, only to discover that despite the fact that the ways, in which they appropriated new technologies, were dissimilar, the cause behind the disappearing journals in Romania is not linked with the “surge of the machines”, but rather with the dwindling trust from the public. Thus, it discovers that once the trust problem is fixed, the technology, as it is used in Japan in the newspaper industry, could be used for the revival of newspapers in Romania.*

## ***Keywords***

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*Romania, Japan, journalism, newspaper journalism, TV journalism, social media, technology.*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper tries to argue that the claim that the disappearing Romanian newspapers are victim of the technology such as the TV and the internet, is gratuitous and it is just an easy excuse for all the actors involved in this democratic vital establishment, such as journalists, commentators, owners, advertisers and public relation specialists. The chute of the newspaper industry in Romania is so sharp, so unique that we can ask ourselves why Romania lost almost all of its printed media while other countries, while suffering a loss in circulation of journals, in recent years, still have a vibrant press.

Of course there is a broad literature suggesting that those blaming the internet and the TV are right. Filistrucchi (2001, 2005) showed how setting a free access for the online version of a newspaper in Italy dented in the readership of the actual printed newspaper but also dented in the competition' circulation. Other studies pointed also that there is "evidence that the internet differentially attracts younger, educated, urban individuals away from daily newspapers" (George. L, 2008) or point that the reading process and habits of people using online newspapers are different that those of people using traditional media, being more focused and precise, or cite the constant updates the online journals are making to attract readership form the printed versions (Neueberger, 1998).

In fact the literature analyzed so far situations on media markets characterized by deep democratic roots where printed press was always a viable

and vibrant public sphere and where the yellow and main stream journalism were always separated. The Romanian situation, on the contrary, enjoyed only a few years of press effervescence after 1990, but its press was always partisan to the point people used to buy the paper to see "what are today's lies". Thus, the sudden appearance of the internet and the usage of the internet as new information technology, together with the dispersion of cable TV throughout the whole country, clearly could make all the commentators on Romanian press, journalists or not, to point to the culprits above mentioned and save face when asked why journal after journal is closing down, and journalist after journalist is loosing of changing his/her job.

However, blaming only the claimed impossibility of the written press to compete with the internet and TV in bringing the news to the readers, is counterproductive for the people involved in this information sector of the public sphere, because pinpointing to a fake cause could not stir a search for a right solution to the problem, but it is also counterproductive for all the researchers in the field who are focusing their studies on only some aspects of the printed press while ignoring the more obvious ones that were the cause of its demise, thus perpetuating the same problems in other mass media sectors that could, soon enough, share the same faith with the Romanian lost journals.

A little known study by Stempel et al states that "*the comparison of those who use the Internet and those who do not shows that Internet users are more likely than non-users to be newspaper readers and radio news listeners. For both local and network television news viewing, there is no significant difference between users and non-users of the Internet. Clearly, the Internet is not the cause of the decline in use of the other media*". (Stempel, et al, 2000) Therefore it is our duty to see if for Romania are there any specific or local reasons for the demise.

To counteract the mantra of the bad internet vs. good printed press we thus decided to compare the Romanian situation with the situation of one of the most technologically advanced countries, Japan. Thus, we have isolated some characteristics of the Japanese printed press and journalism, responsible to the still very high circulation of newspapers in Japan, and we are able to claim that Romanian journals were not strong enough to sail the changing times because of the absence or lack of strength of these very characteristics. And, as a consequence to verify our thesis that the relation between the surge of the internet usage and the vanishing press is just a correlation and not a causation.

## **2. Japanese journalism and printed press at a glance**

In order to identify those characteristics that were either absent or weak in the Romanian press when confronted with the instantaneity of the news in its "fight" with the internet and the TV stations, we choose to present a short insight of the Japanese press, pointing only to those traits that are relevant to our construction.

The Japanese newspapers have the widest circulation in the world. For every household in Japan there are sold 1.2 copies of quality newspapers, meaning that some households buy more than one quality newspaper. Despite the fact that in some rankings Japan stands second after Iceland for newspapers sold for 1000

people, in Japan they do not count the yellow newspapers, such as sport newspapers as "newspapers". They fall into a diverse category and thus are not counted when scholars or journalists argue about the total circulation. However, everywhere else, the tabloids are considered "journals" and every statistic is including them.

Despite a recent loss in readership, the Japanese newspapers are still doing very well. Their success is the result of the trust the Japanese people are putting into printed media, combined with a state of the art distribution system that brings to every doorstep the journal in between 4am and 7am every morning. Some papers have also evening editions, but every edition, morning or evening, is printed in different other editions, sometimes as much as 16!

This means that despite reading the morning edition that you got on your doorstep at 5am when you woke up at 7am, at 9am, when you go to work, in the subway at a kiosk you can find a completely different first page of the journal you just read.

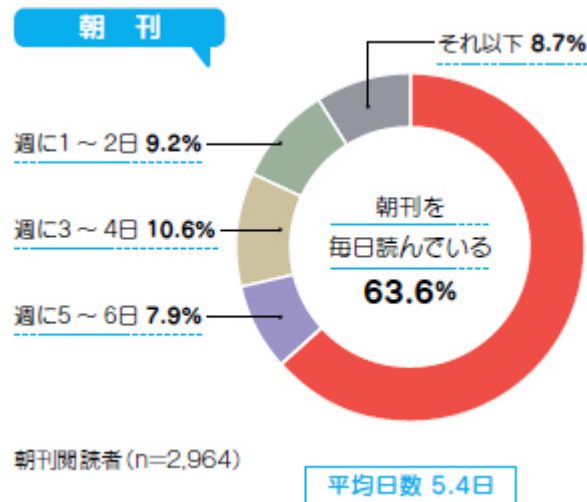
The main Japanese newspapers, morning and evening editions:

Yomiuri Shimbun	9 100 000	2 950 000
Asahi Shimbun	6 800 000	2 200 000
Mainichi Shimbun	3 250 000	950 000
Nippon Keizai Shimbun	2 450 000	1 400 000
Sankei Shimbun	1 600 000	450 000

Total: 31 150 000 daily copies. Legally there are 10 days/year when journals do not appear, but sometimes some journals print newspapers even during the newspaper holiday, usually making big waves and bringing criticism from other media organisations.

These 5 newspapers mentioned are just the tip of the iceberg that everyone sees and think it knows. In fact there are 101 big Japanese newspapers. They are central newspapers, such as the above mentioned five, regional newspapers, prefectural newspapers and town newspapers. The smallest newspaper, a town newspaper, is circulated in 14.000 copies daily. Japanese newspapers are appearing daily, including Saturday and Sunday, with the exception of those not always respected press holidays.

They are brought to subscribers by thousands and thousands small family distribution companies. Usually a distribution company has a contract with only one big newspaper or one big newspaper and other smaller usually belonging to the same newspaper company. Together with the newspaper they distribute all the flyers of the shops operating in or close to their area. Without a journal subscription the Japanese do not get the flyers and it seems that looking out for bargains is worth buying a newspaper for many.



Source: <http://www.pressnet.or.jp/adarc/data/read/data02.html>

The above graph: 63.6% of Japanese adults (20 and above) read daily the morning paper, 9.2% only once or twice a week, 10.6% read it 3-4 times a week, 7.9% read it 5-6 times a week while 8.9% do not read it at all.

These numbers are a bit intriguing for the reader, because everybody has this image of Japanese people going to work with the eyes in their smart phones and clearly one can ask himself/herself if Japanese people do not read like everybody else the news online? How and why are they still paying for the hard copy? Except for the flyers of course.

## 2. 1. Quality of Japanese journalism

The long answer short is the quality of Japanese journalism. Japanese journals recruit their staff such as all other major corporations in Japan largely from the 3rd year university students. In practice are favored certain universities with high standard scores which host the Japan elite of 5 to 10% most intelligent students. The exams are structured generally in 3 different eliminatory sections and the outcome is that, for big journals, only 1 in every 150 candidates is declared successful.

The successful candidate goes on and finishes the university in the 4th year and then starts his/her career as a journalist sometime while doing a 2 year master degree and in rarer cases, afterwards, even a 3 year PhD.

All new journalists are trained on the job, to be efficient journalists and work for the public, for long periods. They receive lessons from seniors, in class room environment, are given tasks and training in the field along senior reporters until they can independently work full time as journalists upholding all the standards of the newspaper that hired them. They will be there for life. Quitting the job in journalism in Japan usually do not open new doors to other newspapers or TV/radio stations. However, very good investigative journalists can land a job on a weekly magazine, but cases are rare.

We see that the journalists and all other personnel in a newspaper is of very high quality. Their product is of very high quality. The newspapers in Japan are the repository of the standard language and, as a result, no mistake is going to be tolerated. In fact, Japanese people believe in kotodama (Toyoda, 1998; Izawa 1999b) the spirit that lies inside every written character. The mission of journalists to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, to inform their public while upholding the highest standards of journalism is very well plied on this kotodama beliefs. They cannot tell lies! Thus the readers keep the newspaper highly and do not think even for a second that the newspaper can somehow manipulate them.

## **2.2. The small presence on the internet of big newspapers**

<http://www.pressnet.or.jp/adarc/data/link.html>: Going to this web address you can find the web pages of all Japanese newspapers that bothered to set up a web page. We already understand that the Japanese newspapers have very intelligent people working for them and it seems that 20 years ago, when the first journals were going online in US and Europe, in Japan nobody wanted to give the news for free and go online! Thus, going to visit some web pages one might find pages containing statistics for readers or advertisers, might find actual news, a short daily selection of the most important ones, or might find nice presentations of the journals. But no one is going to find a web based newspaper like the newspapers from Romania, or like Le Monde, the online edition.

Filistrucchi observed for Italy that "the average approximated long run loss from an own website is estimated to be 26.4%, that from a rival web site in 12.9%" (Filistrucchi: 2008), or it seemed smart for the Japanese media to not want to experiment with new technologies while their industry did not suffer.

Those few journals that put online content such as in social media with links to their actual site are not giving up for free full stories. It is suggested that for the full story one has to buy the newspaper. In other cases newspapers choose to put up on the internet articles that were already printed, thus old, but interesting enough to generate audience from those who buy another newspaper.

### **2.2.1. The ownership of Japanese newspapers**

In Japan, the after war, press laws prevent people or companies to buy stock in newspaper companies the way one can buy stock in newspapers in Romania. In fact no one can hold more than 10% of a journal in Japan, but in reality through various companies there are cases when one person or company can control the majority of the stock. but these are the exceptions and not the rule. However the key word for the Japanese newspaper companies is "closed ownership". No one can sell them so nobody can buy them!

Out of 101 big newspapers 53 have closed ownership with shares held internally. 23 newspapers have more than half of all shares held internally while 25 newspapers are owned more than half by external actors, people or companies. The same laws prevent anyone to establish a new quality newspaper while anyone can start a sports newspaper, yellow journalism newspaper or a magazine.

The newspapers have control stock of several TV stations, including the biggest ones and have shares in magazines, publishing houses, museums, theaters,

other cultural related enterprises. They are so rich that before the digital printing of the newspapers, that let journals printing their editions throughout the country, they owned airplanes with which distributed the journals in areas that were hard to reach by train in a single night.

As a consequence the newspaper industry in Japan is a solid establishment, which enjoys a huge credibility from its readership, despite its very "Japanese" problems such as the press club.

### 3. Romanian press at a glance. Comparison to the Japanese one

Let us look at the circulation numbers of the Romanian biggest newspapers before discussing how big or small they had become.

	2016, 4th quarter	2015, 4th quarter	variation
Click	81323	91400	-10077
Libertatea	45892	53600	-7708
Gazeta Sporturilor	20442	23100	-2558
Evenimentul Zilei	10719	11900	-1181
Romania libera	No data	10.600	-
Adevarul	8047	8800	-753
Ziarul Financiar	3382	6300	-2918
Jurnalul National	No data	4000	-

Source: BRAT, Pagina de media

The trend you can see above is actually affecting all Romanian journals. Many disappeared during the last 10 years and not even the electoral campaigns that used to fill the coffers of printed newspapers could change this downward spiral.

Malin Bot, a Romanian journalist that worked in many media organizations, lastly being fired from Romania libera said while discussing the poor performances of his journal that *"The printed press doesn't vanish. It just reinvents itself and this is not a bad thing either"* and this statement is the alarm signal that I would like to use to show how delusional are the Romanian journalists when they say that "the printed press migrated in online".

In fact, already in late 90's, all Romanian newspapers had established online versions looking greedily towards the emerging online advertisements market. Therefore, if we have to believe Filistrucchi, going online was a very big mistake for all Romanian newspapers, and going online was a mistake that could translate into a loss of 26 to 40% in circulation (I combined Filistrucchi's results for own-web-page/rival-web-page). However, the loss in circulation in Romania was much abrupt. For example, by December 2004, Adevarul, credited above with an average of 8047 copies per issue sold in the 4th quarter of 2016, used to sell 112000 copies per issue! This means that Adevarul lost 50% of its customers, then lost 50% of the remaining customers, and then lost 50% of the remaining customers, and then lost 40% of the remaining customers, all in the span of 12 years!

We argue that the loss of readership is not coupled so tight with the internet usage because by December 2014 only 51.66% of the Romanian

population had internet access! It is therefore imperative to think that by December 2014 Adevarul had to have at least 48% of its 2004 customers if the rest of them were meanwhile linked to the internet and had the possibility of reading the news for free, online!

The claim that the newspapers audiences have migrated towards TV is also problematic, because by 2004 the peak of audiences were around 2 million people/minute, watching Antena1 news, while by 2016 the peak is around 700 thousands only, watching ProTV news. This observation is reinforced by plenty empirical evidence that Romanians are not watching TV the way they used to, mainly because of deontological problems in reporting and extreme partisanship of most of the stations.

At this point we have to ask ourselves, if those who used to buy newspapers are not buying them anymore, why did they stopped if they did not shifted towards neither the internet nor the TV?

We ask this very pointed question because in Japan the internet penetration increased from year 2000 to year 2014 from 30% to 90%, while TV audiences mostly stayed unchanged. This means that in Japan 60% of the population could have gone from reading the newspaper every morning to the online search for news, and we could expect the circulation of Japanese newspapers to have halved at least during this 14 years period. But the problem is that the Japanese continued to read journals while Romanians stopped to! Therefore, we must assume that the reasons for which Romanians do not read newspapers anymore must and certainly be Romanian reasons, even we can understand that the Romanian press was affected by the dissemination of internet and its ubiquitous news sites more or less like any other country in recent years.

### **3.1. From elite and glamour to the physical and intellectual poverty**

Until 1989 journalists were clearly part of the intellectual elite and some of them, by strong connections to the power system, were part of the establishment. The aftermaths of the Revolution catapulted many of the old or new journalists to a fame that was once reserved only for the dictatorial couple. In few years becoming a journalist was the dream of many youngsters and the booming press industry could afford to suck on these seemingly unlimited resources of youth and intelligence.

The capitalism at its wildest made the journalists to compete not only with other journalists from other publications, but within their own newsrooms, for fame and more money. Some could have both, some could have neither. This is an old story new, but in Romania it turned to be quite different than in other countries because it involved... Romanians.

On one hand we got some journalists turned businessman that owned small newspapers but had to socially compete with journalists turned businessman that run big newspapers. They wanted to same cars, the same villas, the same fat bank accounts, and the same holidays. So they turned towards the corrupt politicians for all the money they could not make by selling their small journal. And the politicians happily provided money, by making state companies buy unneeded

expensive advertisement place in those small journals. Or by sharing with these "businessmen" insider information of which they could make fortunes.

On the other hand we got some journalists who could not win professionally because they were incompetent or intellectually poor. They would too go to the same politicians and ask for money or other bribes. In late 90's many got apartments in central Bucharest while others could sign advertisement contracts for their journals for an usual commission of 30% of the contract! It paid to be a journalist!

The result was that many newspapers began to lose credibility. The number of the news about what politicians said started to increase and soon enough the front page of every journal was covered by news about what politicians said or did and an editorial usually petting or destroying a politician. The newsworthiness of some "news" could not be justified by any means and the extreme partisanship of the newspapers made the truth accessible only for those readers that bought two or more competing newspapers and made their own mind while reading through the lines.

In few years many journals vanished. The state advertisement stopped by 2005 and left journals in competition for real advertisements with an editorial structure that continued to report distortedly the reality, with a continuous focus on what politicians said or did, partly because the journalists were now incapable of reporting anything else, being de-professionalized, and partly because the owners had themselves a political agenda that they pushed through their journals. The business sections responsible for bringing advertisement were, after years of being pampered with state commercials, incapable of saving the journals.

The direct consequences were the diminishing revenues for the journalists that did not listen to the political control of their bosses and a constant reorientation of seasoned journalists towards other professions, many jumping in advertisement industry or PR. Behind them was a press populated by a majority of partisans of a party or another, and people that were almost illiterate and could not even write properly. A press of very low quality that could not sell itself to the general public.

### **3.1.1. Comparison to Japanese journalists and Japanese deontology**

Let us assume that the Romanian press was governed by the same rules as in Japan and the Romanian journalists were of the same quality of Japanese journalists. The history would have been much different. First, because in Japan a journal decides for every person it employs if their career is going to be editorial or administrative. Some people pass from editorial to administrative in mid careers, but not the other way around. This means that the director of publication cannot act as a journalist, cannot write and sign articles. This means that the journalists cannot sign publicity contracts and pocket 30% of the lump sums. In Japan in recent months a Fiji TV journalist was fired because he received a car as a present. How about all those Romanian journalists that got cars and houses as presents from politicians? They would have been fired and the credibility of the journals they worked for, restored. However it did not happen the Japanese way. So the best

walked away while the majority that left continued to do an elite job with intellectual resources fit rather for sweeping the streets with a broom at night.

Moreover, if like in Japan, in Romania the journalists turned businessmen that got the shares of their newspapers after 1990 could never do so, with the result that journals such as *Adevarul* or *Romania Libera* were continuously owned by the employees. The money they made could be invested in the expansion of the journals, and the salaries paid could be fairer. By 2017 these two journals could be of extremely high quality, featuring newsrooms hundreds people strong, not a mere two dozens like nowadays. The only problem is that we are not Japanese!

#### **4. The official mantra on the vanishing printed media**

Before turning to the conclusion we have to investigate also the official mantra about this vanished or vanishing press, and start with a delusional statement that looks like a conspiracy theory:

*"Facebook was the fascination that came to fill the need for communication and information of the Romanians. The social network being, in my opinion and the opinion of many sociology specialists, the best exploited means of the System for discreet but effective manipulation. The information verified by a responsible journalist is not the same as the information discarded by anyone on Facebook. Things are mixed, however, and the system's representatives know how to manipulate when they want to. Today all Romanians stay longer on Facebook. Have you ever wondered why is Romania having the fastest internet? Are we stronger than the world's computer scientists? I've been wondering why Germans, French, Austrians, Americans, English, etc, have a net that is rather. I got the answer on a trip to Istanbul, where the net falls when you needed most. Well, in a country where Erdogan's dictatorship is a reality, a lot of newspapers are being printed, both for and against the Ankara regime, and the Turks buy them from stalls or subscription. You do not see them sitting in the cafes reading the press on the phones because, they say, their net drops and gets them annoyed.*

*My conclusion is that in Romania, the system has found that channeling information to the net is a much easier way to control than controlling thorough the traditional press, where the journalist makes his own documentary on the ground and brings to the attention of the public what he has discovered." (Simona Ionescu, editor-in-chief Evenimentul Zilei at the time of this statement)*

Mind-blowing, the "System" made this plan in early 90's to bring in Romania the fastest internet on the planet and destroy all the journals, in order to control via facebook, not invented yet, the Romanians that would prefer reading their news on smart phones, not invented yet! Priceless because this gibberish is delivered by the editor-in-chief of once Romania's biggest newspaper!

A more realistic comment belongs to Gabriel Purcarus: *"Now we have access to newspapers and websites with free information. We do not pay directly to read them. From the point of view of the reader's convenience, it seems OK. But, from the newspaper's point of view, we do not have the same financing strategy. Previously, in order to convince the reader to give a penny, the newspapers had to offer quality content. Now efforts are being made to attract as much money as possible from advertising. The reader is no longer the client of the newspaper. The*

*real client of the modern newspaper is, in fact, the one who gives the ban on advertising".*

Mihai Bacalu, journalist, blames also the publicity factor by pointing towards the incompetence of the administrative departments of newspapers: *"What I do not understand after so many years of press spent in so many national newspaper newsrooms, is how the hack can make that kind of lousy cash, with such huge investments. Street vendors have been complaining for six months that they need new vests with the newspaper's mark, because theirs are rags. The car is broken for one year. Advertising girls sit quietly and wait for customers, instead of going boldly to the headquarters of the capitalists. We do not have a classifieds department while in the West they have an army of directors only for classifieds! Vendors run away with money, no one requires their daily returns. Small newsroom departments can not even read justice files on the Internet. Why can I not I work just when I want to? Why do I have to sit up to dark to look for unique subjects"?* You can sense the furry of professional journalist that has to work in a very unprofessional environment and feels that the administrative section of the journal is not up to the task, but has no power to change things while everyone blames it on him for the meager and diminishing sales.

Adevarul newspapers writes under the signature of Daniel Ionascu that Facebook and Google are the enemies of the press and cites a study done by OC&C that explains the loss in readership in Western Europe: *"Media organizations must directly recognize that they are competing with Google and Facebook for advertising, and their next step is to build brands and online communities where the public comes directly, not through intermediaries. As a comparison: just as Europe is trying to reduce its dependence on Gazprom, so do the media organizations their addiction to Google and Facebook. Also, media digitization does not just mean creating sites or news apps. For example, if 20 years ago the press wrote about real estate trends, now the newsrooms can, besides writing news online, make specialized real estate ads. People who used to buy newspapers to view real estate ads now use sites or specialized applications (Craigslist, Airbnb or Imobiliare.ro, for example). Those who followed car ads have now gone to specialized applications such as Auto.ro; And those who were using the classifieds to sell or buy something, they are now on Ebay, Olx or Okazii.ro. Also, jobseekers now use LinkedIn or BestJobs or eJobs in our country. Likewise, many who wanted the weather forecast now use apps like AccuWeather or Yahoo! Weather. Finally, many of those who "hunted" the pages of jokes or satire and humor publications now read The Onion, have fun on Reddit or use the 9GAG application".*

The problem is that is hard to believe that out of those 112000 buyers of the printed copy of Adevarul newspaper in 2004, December, 104000 bought it for its classifieds or weather reports or jokes. As a matter of fact, at the time, Romania Libera had the classifieds' quasi monopoly and the journal was not famous for its real estate market analyses nor for its jokes. Adevarul was famous for economy reporting and the articles of Dumitru Tinu and Cristian Tudor Popescu. It had a strong international page and seasoned journalists that worked interviews.

A study published in 2008 in Berlin by Konrad Adenauer Foundation stated that *"Romania is still suffering from the effects of the communist era."* The same study cites *"certain legal decisions in Romania, which lead to the restriction of press freedom, such as criminalization of insult and calumny, as well as informal aspects, as the influence of politics in media content"*. The authors of the study also stressed the problem of ownership of press trusts, the presence of some former security informants, cases of persecution of critical journalists, and involvement of media owners in the editorial process. The study signed by Christiana Christova and Dirk Förger underlines also the tabloidization of the Romanian press as problematic for its future.

#### **4.1. Has the press "migrated in online"?**

Maier (2010) argued that the printed newspapers offer "depth and breadth unmatched by the online sites". This is a very interesting observation he made for the US media but we can extrapolate easily it for the Romanian one, because one would expect that the online space, being unlimited, if compared with a fixed number of pages of fixed surface, that can support a fixed number of words, of a fixed size fonts, can host a higher number of articles, with more text, depth and bigger pictures. However, the reality is, in the year 2017, for the sites that are mirroring an actual printed newspaper, that there are fewer articles on the web sites than in the printed edition! And it is difficult to find an article which is longer on the web site than on print, or with more depth. What can be found on most online newspapers are links to other news sites or blogs, but these are not own articles. Another interesting answer to the above question is the one that we get when we look at the number of visitors for the news sites. In the current years most online newspapers prefer to hide this information, because it is difficult to attract advertisement, but from the few that keep it, we can see peaks of several thousands unique readers for one article, but interesting enough, rarely a double digit (!), while the average articles are barely making few hundred accesses. Even more interesting is the fact that sometimes the number of likes on social media is greater than the actual number of people who opened the article to read, so our early conclusion is that the press is not read not even when it is free.

#### **5. Conclusions**

At this point we can conclude that the internet only and the surging in the number of TV stations from the early 90's onwards, could not have impacted the printed press in the way that it almost disappeared from our daily lives in Romania. Clearly, as it happened also in other countries, the wide availability of free information had a role in the shrinking circulation numbers, but the numbers could not have halved almost four times in 12 years. While in Italy the decreasing circulation due to establishing free access sites was somewhere close to 27%, in Japan the circulation only slightly decreased, despite the high internet speed and very high penetration. Thus, the almost 52% internet penetration of 2014 Romania was not the main responsible for the decline.

We see now that the relation between the internet and web journals and the dwindling printed newspapers is clearly not one of causation but one of

correlation. Even if we could experiment by cutting 100% the access to the internet in Romania for one month, at the end of that month we will not have more journals sold! Because the mere existence of the internet is not the cause of the newspapers demise.

The culprits for this demise are, nevertheless, the journalists themselves and their bosses of 90's and early 2000, those journalists-turned-businessmen that greedily run the journals. Ignoring the public and the public interest, the journalists and their bosses transformed the press into an obedient servant, and journalists become merely trumpets for various politicians. As a consequence the public left them alone.

Recent online developments, such as RISE Project, Vice, Casa Jurnalistului and Tolo, are showing that Romanians are ready to return in big numbers as customers of the press. The problem is that at this moment they have no press to return to. The few journals left are as ever, partisan, and they print mostly what politicians say and do, or comments about what the politicians said or did. In order to regain confidence the newspapers have to move from publishing news about politicians to publishing long features, reportages, interviews with interesting-people-not-politicians. But they have to publish them with very high standards. In the same time they should refrain to publish editorials in which currently people are taught how to think. This means that the newspapers need to retrain their existing journalists or to welcome new ones that can work and keep the high standards that are not existing today.

Moreover, adopting the Japanese distribution as a business model will turn out journals stronger and closer to the people they report to.

Further from the politicians, closer to the people, delocalizing the printing and distribution of the newspapers, high standards, dedication and professionalism. These are the characteristics we saw in the Japanese newspapers and did not see in the Romanian one. A revival of the printed media and of journalism has to start from them and not from anything else.

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