



Evaluation of Media Literacy Level in Romania

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Content	
I. Preamble	4
II. Conclusions	6
III. Methodological references	8
IV. Presentation of research data	14
1. General data	14
2. Television consumption	15
3. Radio consumption	18
4. Radio and TV news consumption	20
5. Print media consumption	21
6. Consumers' preferences on print media, radio and television news content	24
7. Internet	26
8. Participative patterns and mass media	27
9. Perceptions on mass media influence	28
10. Knowledge and opinion towards media regulation	33
Annex:	
A. Total sample data	
1. General data	35
2. Television consumption	38
3. Radio consumption	51
4. Print media consumption	61
5. News content	70
6. Internet	74
7. Perceptions on trust in mass media	80
8. Perceptions on mass media influence	81
9. Participative patterns and mass media	88
10. Knowledge and opinion on media regulation	89
B. Young people aged 15 – 20 years old	
1. General data	97
2. Television consumption	100
3. Radio consumption	106
4. Print media consumption	112
5. News content	115
6. Internet	119
7. Perceptions on trust in mass media	121
8. Perceptions on mass media influence	122
9. Participative patterns and mass media	127
10. Knowledge and opinion on media regulation	128
Bibliographic references	130

I. Preamble

by Mircea Toma

Press freedom is a necessary condition for the proper development of a democratic society. For the last decade this nice statement became more of a slogan than a public policy. For instance in Romania the journalist must face more and more enemies of an accurate information process that is in accordance with reality and public interest. Mass media owners' economical interests, political interests and sensational quest change the quality of the information that is transmitted to the public. In different shares, these obstacles affect press freedom in many other countries, and, particularly, at global level, sensationalism seems to stand out as the most aggressive foe of the quality in mass media. Romania became the Republic of Elodia, the topic worthy of feature stories contaminated the most important mass media (a confirmation of this effect is the fact that by reading this name you know who I am referring to). Similarly, the Mailat case – another topic for feature stories - broke the Italian agenda setting, and started there a major anti-Romanian crisis. How much of this crisis is the effect of the distortion induced by the mass media discourse? Would the Italians really have panicked if they had been more critical regarding the journalists' discourse (and politicians' speech)?

The European Union took notice of the threat that uncritical mass media consumption may represent for the quality of the democratic processes. In the last few years, European institutions' interest in promoting education that would develop media consumption skills became more significant. There are in foresight recommendations that Brussels will address to Member States.

The initiative finds Romania in a pole position that advantages it in relation with many other countries of the European Union. For eight years now, an optional course – “Competence into Mass Media” – has been taught in some of our high schools; beginning 2008, within the “Social Studies”¹ course, the 12th grade students as well learn about instruments of critical reading of information transmitted through mass media. In other words, we possess a didactical core that can be an advantage in building a coherent educational system, dedicated to consumption literacy and mass media production. On the other hand, it is important to know that for several years now Germany and France have institutional dissemination centers of media education.

Thus, we witness a race where the educational system tries to balance the public's quest for sensationalism with a rational approach of the media discourse. As in any other competitions, the references are indispensable.

This is how the idea for this research on “critical” media consumption came along, the **first one of this kind in Romania**. It is an investigation that aims to give information to those entities interested in the elaboration of educational strategies for the development of media literacy.

Our research targeted the general public – by a representative sample at national level – but it also paid a special attention to the young generation – by a dedicated sample – in order to identify the possible specific developments. The option was salutary

¹ Both pedagogical initiatives were prepared and implemented by Media Monitoring Agency, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Research.

as it allowed the identification of some major differences in the young generation's approach of mass media. We provide here a couple of the main conclusions of our research.

1. youngsters overturn the trust hierarchy: for them Internet is more credible than television;
2. education lessens the appetite for television; individuals with higher education are less interested in television; in exchange they prefer radio programs, and especially, print media;
3. the process of comparing TV channels / radio stations to validate the news content received is an insufficient instrument: when they discover disagreements just a minority verifies the information with third sources;
4. commercials are considered to be the main aggressor in television;
5. accidents, politics and crimes – are considered to be presented excessively in TV programs;
6. the youngsters vote for Internet and they look primarily for information;
7. the public is not warned about the mass media influence on its own attitudes and behavior;
8. *it happens to others*: this is the paradigm within which the public reads the risk of mass media influence on its own behavior;
9. members of the public understand that media are submitted to political interests; they know that there are attempts towards their own manipulation. Still, the majority believes that press freedom can be censored only in a small share.

II. Conclusions

The access of urban residents to mass media is best represented by the development of the access infrastructure to television channels (99% of the urban residents have at least one television set within the household, and 82% have access to the services of the cable television providers). In accordance with this fact television is also the most consulted mass media (92% of the respondents are watching TV at least an hour during a workday).

In principle, the public's need for information and recreation and spending time determines their media consumption. This fact was proven by the direct answers given by the respondents to the questions asking the reasons why they watch television, listen to the radio or read the print media and by the perspective of the types of programs watched (96% of those who watch TV, respectively, 73% of those who listen to the radio are watching / listening the news shows broadcasted by these two types of media).

From the respondents' point of view, *news stories* (one of the most followed programs both on TV and radio) should mainly present accurate and up-to-date information, should present solutions when they rise problems and should not be controlled by political interests.

During the same day the majority of those who watch TV news watch the informative programs of two or more television channels (70%), from this perspective the news consumption being characterized by *diversity*. In the case of radio news consumption only 16% of the respondents listen to the news of various radio stations in the same day. As for the print media consumption 32% of the respondents read the articles of more than one newspaper during the same day.

When they notice *differences between the information they receive from various television and radio stations or publications*, majority of the respondents ignores them or choose the information provided by the favorite channel or publication. A small percentage of the consumers who notice differences try to verify the information with other sources.

Respondents evaluate their trust in the information received through mass media by the way it interacts with the knowledge they already possessed. The media institution that transmits the information matters more in the evaluation of the respondents' trust in the information than the journalist that delivers it. At the level of the entire sample, the television is the type of media considered to be the one that conveys the most trustful information.

The majority of the interviewed individuals consider that *mass media* might *influence* opinions and behavior of individuals (others than themselves) especially through the violent content present in the news programs and films. Only a small part of the respondents affirmed that they thought of the influence that mass media may have on themselves. In this respect, the young people think that mass media might have an influence on their opinion and behavior especially when it promotes life success stories.

The information received through mass media is often discussed with members of the family. Talks with friends are also important in what concerns the use of the

information from the mass media in social interactions. Many times, social interactions are an important reason for which the respondents read the articles in the print media.

Internet is an important information source especially for the young people aged 15 – 20 years old living in urban areas (almost three quarters of the respondents from this category declared that they browse the Internet almost daily). Actually internet is the most trusted source of information for the majority of the respondents aged 15 – 20 years old.

The media consumers in urban areas know fairly well *the institution that sanctions* infringements of the law operated by televisions and radios, but they do not have a good grasp in what concerns the regulation of the editorial activity in print media. Due to various reasons respondents have not yet developed their practice to notify the authorized institutions when they observe offensive content on the radio and television programs.

The data presented here is so much more relevant for the media education need as only 4% of the total sample of the respondents have taken a course on mass media. Among youngsters, the percentage is even smaller (2,5%).

III. Methodological references

1. Aim of the research

General aim: investigation on public opinion by an enquiry realized on a representative sample for the population aged 15 – 65 years old living in urban areas of Romania.

2. Methodology

Population

Total population of Romania: 21.537.563 (Source: National Statistics Institute, July 2007)

Population aged 15 – 65 years old: 8.971.498 (Source: National Statistics Institute, July 2007)

Application method of the questionnaire

Face-to-face interviews conducted in the respondent's household.

Interviews' realization period: March 28 – April 6, 2008.

The sample:

- multi-stage and multi-stratifying sample, complying with the following procedure:
 - the stratification was made on 11 historical-geographical regions and on 3 types of urban localities chosen by the size of the population;
 - the localities were chosen randomly for each layer;
 - sample locations (voting sections) were selected randomly within localities;
 - the households were chosen by the random-route method;
 - the respondents were selected by Kish method.

- 177 sample locations in 71 urban localities out of which 6 represent districts of Bucharest;
- sample size – 1037 individuals;
- average number of interviews conducted on each sample locations: 6;
- maximum sampling error: $\pm 3.043\%$.

Table 1 presents the structure of the population (percentages on layers) and table 2 displays the structure of the sample resulted from in the field.

Table 1

Population structure %	Type of urban locality²			
Region³	2	3	4	Total
1	5.2%	4.4%	4.4%	13.9%
2	4.3%	1.9%	4.0%	10.2%
3	2.9%	1.8%	0.0%	4.7%
4	3.2%	3.3%	2.6%	9.1%
5	4.1%	1.9%	5.3%	11.3%
6	2.0%	2.1%	5.2%	9.4%
7	0.0%	0.0%	16.6%	16.6%
8	2.0%	1.8%	2.5%	6.2%
9	1.9%	0.8%	2.6%	5.3%
10	3.0%	2.1%	0.0%	5.0%
11	3.1%	3.7%	1.5%	8.3%
Total	31.7%	23.7%	44.7%	100.0%

Table 2

Sample structure	Type of urban locality			
Region	2	3	4	Total
1	5.1%	4.3%	4.4%	13.8%
2	4.6%	1.9%	4.1%	10.6%
3	2.6%	1.5%	0.0%	4.1%
4	3.3%	3.6%	2.7%	9.5%
5	4.4%	1.9%	5.5%	11.7%
6	2.1%	2.1%	5.1%	9.2%
7	0.0%	0.0%	17.4%	17.4%
8	1.6%	1.8%	2.0%	5.5%
9	2.0%	0.7%	2.4%	5.1%
10	2.8%	2.1%	0.0%	4.9%
11	3.2%	3.6%	1.3%	8.1%
Total	31.7%	23.5%	44.8%	100%

² **Type of urban locality:** 2 = urban with less than 49 000 residents; 3 = urban with 50 000 – 199 000 residents; 4 = urban with more than 200 000 residents.

³ **Region:** 1 = Bistrita, Salaj, Satu-Mare, Maramures, Alba, Cluj, Bihor; 2 = Hunedoara, Arad, Caras-Severin, Timis; 3 = Covasna, Harghita, Mures; 4 = Braila, Dambovita, Buzau, Arges, Prahova; 6 = Galati, Botosani, Vaslui, Iasi; 7 = Bucharest; 8 = Brasov, Sibiu; 9 = Tulcea, Constanta; 10 = Ilfov, Giurgiu, Calarasi, Ialomita, Teleorman; 11 = Vrancea, Neamt, Bacau, Suceava.

3. Sample's structure

Table 3

% on column	Frequencies	Percentage
SEX		
Male	495	47.7
Female	542	52.3
AGE		
15 – 17 years old	45	4.3
18 – 29 years old	271	26.1
30 – 44 years old	307	29.6
45 – 59 years old	311	30.0
60 – 65 years old	103	9.9
TYPE OF LOCALITY		
Small town (10 – 49 thousands residents)	329	31.7
Medium town (50 – 199 thousands residents)	243	23.5
Big town (200 thousands residents and over)	465	44.8
REGION		
Transylvania	352	34.0
Muntenia	325	31.3
Moldova	179	17.3
Bucharest	181	17.4
INCOME PER INDIVIDUAL		
Under 315 RON	208	20.0
315 – 500 RON	230	22.1
501 – 750 RON	167	16.1
OVER 750 RON	179	17.2
Undeclared	254	24.5
EDUCATION		
None, less than 7 grades	51	5.0
7 th – 8 th grade (secondary school)	100	9.6
Level I of high school (10 grades)	73	7.0
Lower secondary education	176	17.0
High school	355	34.2
Post-secondary education or college	84	8.1
Higher education	198	19.1
TOTAL	1037	100.0

4. Activity in the field

124 operators in the field, 24 area coordinators and 8 regional coordinators.

The training was realized at IMAS headquarters with the 8 regional coordinators who received detailed information on the MM0308 questionnaire.

The regional coordinators transmitted to the area coordinators all the details regarding the method of conducting the study in the field, including information about: sampling, interviewing conditions, support materials, questionnaire.

In the same way the area coordinators trained the interview operators.

5. Quality control

246 respondents (21,45%) were contacted in order to certify the data.

Urban area respondents: 84 control questionnaires conducted face-to-face or by phone (for the respondents that couldn't be reached at home).

Based on the verifications a number of 11 questionnaires were annulled for not respecting the application procedures.

6. Database weighting

Table 4

Age groups	[Official statistics]			Sample without weighting		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
15 – 17	2.6	2.5	5.1	1.3	1.4	2.6
18 – 29	13.6	13.5	27.1	12.5	11.1	23.6
30 – 44	15.2	16.3	31.6	12.0	13.4	25.4
45 – 59	14.0	15.7	29.7	13.7	17.9	31.6
60 - 65	3.0	3.6	6.6	7.0	9.8	16.9

Table 5

Weighting sample			
Age groups	Men	Women	Total
15 – 17	2.2	2.1	4.3
18 – 29	13.2	12.7	25.9
30 – 44	14.2	15.4	29.5
45 – 59	13.9	16.4	30.3
60 - 65	4.4	5.7	10.0

Weighting factors: age, sex and nationality.

Main reason for the weighting procedure: migration of the workforce determines significant differences between the official data regarding the structure of the population and the real data.

Table 6

Nationality	Official statistics	Sample without weighting	Weighting sample
Romanians	90.6	90.7	90.3
Hungarians	6.5	7.4	6.5
Others	3.0	1.8	3.2

7. Rate of responses

3771 of addresses run through out of which:

- 1147 interviews conducted (1136 valid);
- 205 addresses not inhabited;
- 73 addresses of institutions / companies;
- 402 addresses where nobody answered at any of the three visits made by the operator;
- 19 addresses with an incapacity to answer;
- 979 individuals that did not match the interview criteria (they don't fit in the quotas);
- 843 refusals ($843 \cdot 100 / 3771$): 22,35%

8. Methodology of the extra sample - 15 – 20 years old.

Multi-stage and multi-stratifying sample – 177 sample locations in 71 localities.

- The individuals aged 15 – 20 years old, selected randomly from the national sample were added to the individuals selected for the boost.
- 1 – 2 individuals were selected for each voting section.

The size of the extra sample = 282 individuals.

Interviews were conducted during April 28 – May 6, 2008.

Structure of the sample:
Table 7

% on column	Frequencies	Percentage
SEX		
Male	161	57.1
Female	121	42.9
AGE		
15 – 20 years old	282	100.0
TYPE OF LOCALITY		
Small town (10 – 49 thousands residents)	95	33.7
Medium town (50 – 199 thousands residents)	91	32.3
Big town (200 thousands residents and over)	96	34.0
REGION		
Transylvania	97	34.4
Muntenia	91	32.3
Moldova	54	19.1
Bucharest	40	14.2
INCOME PER INDIVIDUAL		
<= 230 RON	41	14.5
230 > - <= 375 RON	45	16.0
375 > - <= 500 RON	38	13.5
> 500 RON	43	15.2
Undeclared	115	40.8
EDUCATION		
Up to 8 grades	133	47.2
Lower secondary education, level I of high school	85	30.1
High school, post-secondary education	62	22.0
Higher education	2	0.7
SOCIAL STATUS		
AB category (high)	63	22.3
C category (medium)	108	38.3
DE category (low)	111	39.4
TOTAL	282	100.0

IV. Presentation of research data

1. General data

Level of trust in mass media. On a scale with values from 1 to 7 *the average of trust in mass media* is of 4,53 for the entire sample. *Television* holds the highest level of trust as it obtained the best score both in trust measurement on the scale from 1 to 7 (an average of 4,74) and in the hierarchy of the trust that the respondents granted to the four types of media (65% of the respondents placed television on the first rank in the hierarchy of trust).

Radio is mentioned second in the respondents' trust (with an average of 4,35). Print media and the Internet are fighting for the third place in the hierarchy of trust. *Internet* registers an average score of 4,14 opposite to 3,89 *print media* on the scale from 1 to 7.

In this respect, namely the trust in mass media, the above hierarchy is different in the case of the respondents aged 15 to 20 years old⁴. Internet is the most trusted source of information, television the second, radio the third and print media the fourth (see Annex, page 121).

When considering their trust in the information received through mass media respondents relate to the compatibility of the information with what they already knew (75%⁵ of the respondents trust the information received through mass media only if it corresponds to what they already knew). The institution (publication, television or radio station) that transmits the information matters for 65% of the respondents, while the person that delivers the information (the journalist) matters for 48% of the respondents when they have to decide whether to trust or not respective information (see Annex, page 73).

2. Television consumption

The infrastructure necessary to access information broadcasted by television is amply developed in urban areas. Out of the total number of respondents only 1% said they do not hold a TV set in the household. Most of the respondents have one (39%) or two (43%) TV sets in the household. Most of the residents in urban areas receive television programs through cable television services (82% of the respondents).

During weekdays most of the respondents (56%) watch television for one to three hours. A significant percentage is represented by those who watch television programs for four to six hours during workdays (26% of the respondents). 10% of the respondents watch television more than six hours a day while 6% of them watch less than one hour a day and 2% do not watch television programs at all during the week.

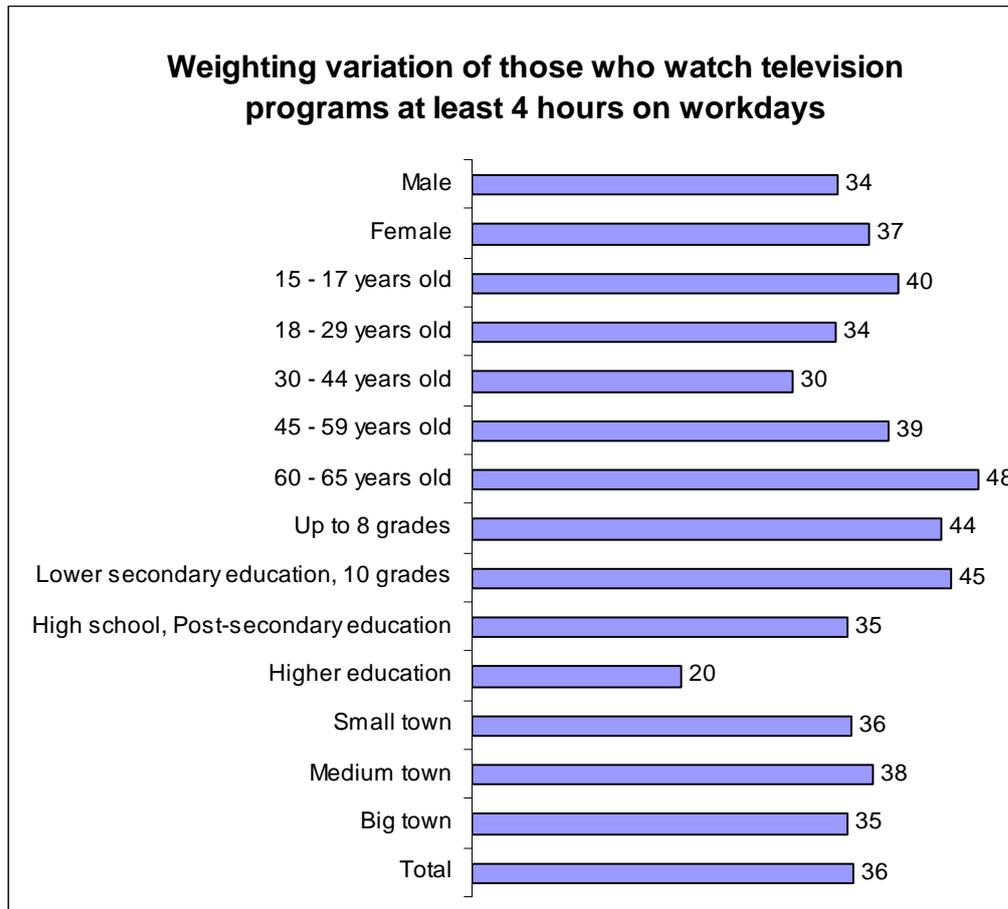
In weekends, amounts change towards longer hours in front of the TV set: 34% of the respondents watch TV for one to three hours, 37% four to six hours while 20% watch television programs more than six hours.

⁴ 282 total sample

⁵ % "values much" + % "values very much"

In order to make an analysis of the weighting variation of those who consume TV programs to a high degree, we chose to set a four hours minimum threshold of TV viewing in a workday. Thus, *the analysis on social categories* refers to those respondents that declared they watch television programs for 4 – 6 hours or over during an ordinary workday.

Graphic 1



Regarding the time allocated to watching television during weekdays, the most visible differences related to social categories were noticed in the cases of those delimited by *education level*. Data gathered revealed that respondents with higher education watch less television during a working day.

The respondents who watch television programs *at least four hours daily* are mainly *unemployed individuals, household individuals and retired people*.

Television remains the main accessed channel for both information and entertainment/recreation. During the week, more than half of the respondents (56%) watch television daily for 1 to 3 hours. During weekends, TV viewing raises (34% watch TV programs for 1 to 3 hours, 37% for 4 to 6 hours).

Why do we watch television? Most of the persons who watch TV programs *prefer* informative programs, films, documentaries and entertainment programs (see Annex, page 41). In fact the respondents said they watch television primarily to *inform themselves* (69%), for *recreation* (54%) and to *spend their leisure time* (41%). We can observe that the latter reason is not necessarily owed to the nature of the programs they watch. It reveals the fact that watching television may be one option to spend time in the detriment of other daily activities.

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. Young people watch television mainly to inform themselves and for recreation (46% information, 43% recreation). When asked about their preferences related to TV programs 84% of the young respondents said that entertainment programs are their favorite.

The participants in our study said that watching TV does not necessarily constitute a reason to spend time with their family. However respondents said that when they watch information and entertainment programs generally family members are around (see Annex, pages 43, 44).

In the same time respondents declared that members of their family are their prime interlocutors when debating information received through TV programs. News programs and political debates are debated mainly with family members. Friends come second in place as discussion partners of those respondents who watch TV programs. Respondents usually comment on political debates, entertainment and informative programs with friends. Sports are the only topic that is *mainly* discussed with friends. Neighbors are less represented among the respondents' interlocutors.

Table 8. People with whom respondents debate on information received through TV programs

	... with family members	... with friends	... with neighbors	... with school / work colleagues
Documentary movies	54	27	3	17
Artistic / serial movies	53	29	6	15
Cultural shows	47	24	4	12
News	64	31	12	23
Political talk-shows	55	34	11	26
Reportages	47	25	8	17
Music / entertainment shows	45	31	6	15
Sport shows	31	49	13	30
Religious shows	47	14	9	7
Children shows	59	14	4	3
Cartoons	48	13	2	3

Reading key: 54% of the respondents comment on the information from documentary movies with family members.

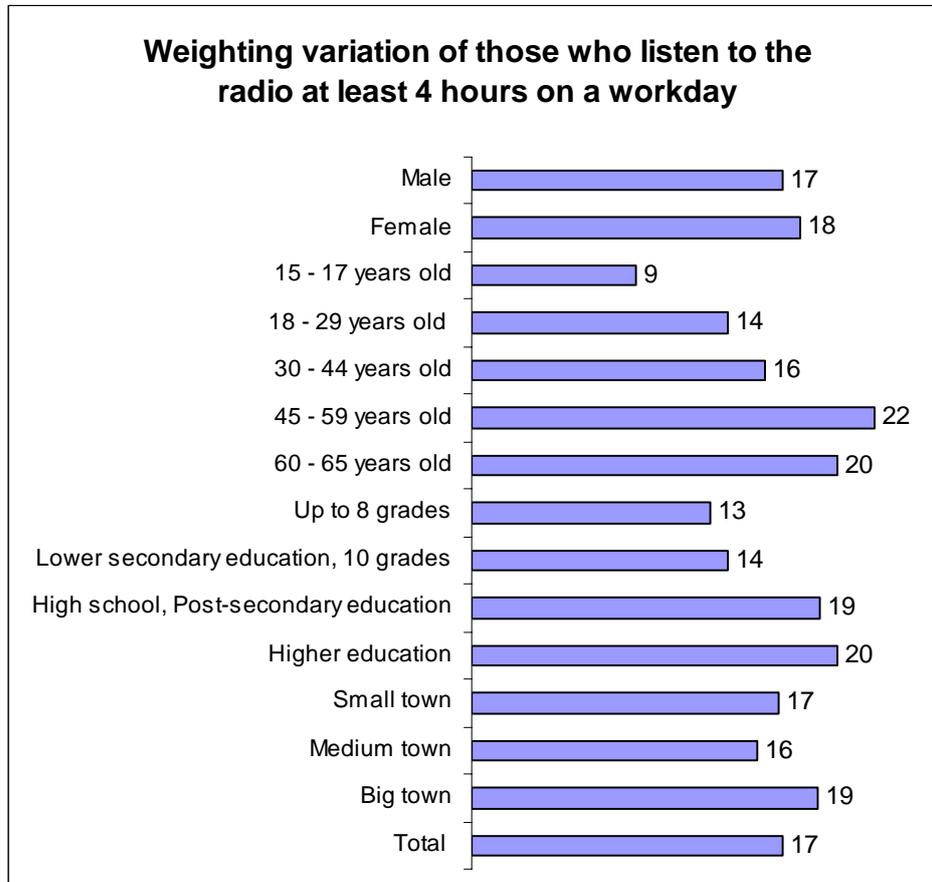
3. Radio consumption

Though less present in the urban households than the TV set, radio is still widely spread. More than three quarters of the respondents (79%) said they own at least one radio within the household.

The largest amount of the respondents (36%) said that *they do not listen to the radio at all* on a workday. 22% listen to the radio *less than one hour* on a workday, while 24% said that they listen to the radio for *1 to 3 hours* on a workday. The smallest amount was registered among those respondents who declared that they listen to radio programs for *4 to 6 hours*, respectively *over 6 hours* on a workday (8%, respectively 10% of the respondents).

In order to analyze the weighting variation of the respondents having a high radio consumption, we acted in a way similar to the one applied to television consumption. We established a four hours minimum threshold of listening to the radio per working day. Thus, the analysis on social categories refers to those respondents who declared that they listen to the radio for 4 – 6 hours or over on an ordinary workday.

Graphic 2



The differences between the categories pointed out here are minor in what concerns the radio consumption. Small variations can be noticed at *age* level (a lower consumption among young people) and at *the education* level (a higher consumption among those with higher education).

Why do we listen to the radio? The first three reasons to listen to radio programs as identified by the respondents are similar to those motivating them to watch TV programs: “to inform myself / to find out new information”, “for recreation”, “for spending leisure time”. The respondents that listen to the radio mainly prefer *the music and entertainment* programs (88%) and *news bulletins* (73%). Most of the listeners listen to these programs alone, and not together with their family or friends (see Annex, page 54).

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. If for youngsters the first reason to watch TV is “information” (admittedly only 3 percentages away from the second reason “recreation”), in the case of radio, the young respondents identified the same reason for the first two places – “for recreation” (53% ranked it on the first place, 34% ranked it on the second place). “To spend leisure time” is the third reason for which the young respondents switch on the radio. However, along the need for recreation, some 34% of the respondents indicated information as the first reason to listen to radio programs (see Annex, page 107).

Family members are the first persons with whom respondents comment on the information received through radio programs, and *friends* are the second category of interlocutors for the political debates.

Table 9. People with whom respondents debate on the information received through radio programs

	... with family members	... with friends	... with neighbors	... with school / work colleagues
Reportages and documentaries	45	24	8	23
Radio drama	31	22	8	17
Music / entertainment	27	23	4	18
News bulletins	48	24	9	24
Political talk-shows	44	33	12	27
Children programs	47	7	2	8

Reading key: 45% of the respondents comment on the information from reportages and documentaries with family members

More than half of the listeners (61%) listen to the radio at home, 17% at work, 11% always when they are driving.

4. Radio and TV News Consumption

News programs are pursued to a high degree both on radio and television. 96% of the respondents who watch TV, and respectively 73% of the radio listeners watch / listen to the news. We tried to find out the criteria on which radio listeners and TV viewers select the news programs they consider useful to them.

Characteristics of the favorite news programs. For 62% of the respondents *accuracy of the news stories* is the main criteria to choose a news program or another. The *up-to-date characteristic of the news stories* represents the second important criteria for 26% of the respondents. The *presentation of solutions* within the materials that report on issues related news stories is the third important criteria for 12% of the respondents. *Editorial independence of the news room* is, at its turn, important for part of the respondents. Furthermore in order to consider a news program useful for them 19% of the interviewed individuals said that *absence of political control* is the second important criteria along with the up-to-date characteristic of news stories.

Diversity of information sources and ability to react to biased information.

Television. 26% of those who watch television pursue the news programs of a single television channel while 70% watch the news programs of two or more television stations. 68% of the respondents that watch news programs on multiple TV channels *noticed differences* between the information presented in the news programs of various

TV channels. However, out of the respondents who noticed inaccuracies, only 27% are active consumers and try to corroborate the information with other sources. The majority of respondents (36%) disregards them or chooses the information from their favorite TV channel (35%) (see Annex, pages 45, 46).

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. A smaller part of the young respondents watch the news programs of two or more television channels (48% up against 70% of the respondents from the total sample who watch TV). 63% of the young people who watch the news on multiple TV channels said that sometimes they noticed differences between the information presented on the news of various TV channels. 28% try to corroborate the information with other sources, 39% disregards them and 33% choose the information presented on their favorite channel (see Annex, pages 102, 103).

Radio. Most of the radio listeners (64%) listen to the news of a single radio station, 16% of two radio stations, and 11% listen to no radio news programs (see Annex, page 58). Half of the respondents that listen to the news of multiple radio stations (50%) noticed *differences between the information* presented in the news programs of various radio stations. 31% of them tried to corroborate the information with other sources. 48% of the respondents disregard them, while 20% choose the information from their favorite station.

Attention paid to the news content. Out of those who watch *TV news programs*, 35% are close to the TV paying full attention to the content of the news stories, they do not engage in any other activity at the same time. The rest of them do something else while TV set is switched on at various degrees: 13% very often, 28% often, 24% rarely. Most of the respondents said they eat (30%), others do housework – cooking (21%), cleaning (19%) or work on the computer (12%). The percentage of those who use the computer while watching news programs increases among the respondents aged 15 – 20 years old (31%). (see Annex, page 104).

Over 80% of those who listen to *radio news programs* develop other activities at the same time (45% very often, 38% often). The characteristic of the radio – that of companion of daily activities – may justify the increased percentage and diversity of activities: “cooking” (20%), “working for office / school” (20%), “driving” (17%), “cleaning” (14%), “eating” (14%), “reading”, “working on the computer”, etc. (see Annex, page 60).

5. Print media consumption

A quarter of the participants in the study said they read print media *almost everyday* (26% of the respondents). Other 25% affirmed that they access print media once or twice a week. 8% of the respondents declared they read newspapers or magazines twice or three times a month while 14% read more rarely than this. A significant amount of the participants in the interview (26%) said they do not read print media at all (see Annex, page 62).

Most of the print media readers consult the *printed editions* of the publications (81%), while 10% of these read the newspapers or the magazines on the *Internet*. 9% access the information in the newspapers equally from the printed version and online.

Even if the percentage of those who read publications in their printed format is high as compared to those who read the press online, the *budget allocated to buy newspapers and magazines* is reduced. 17% of the newspapers readers said that they do not buy any publication, 53% said that they pay up to 10 lei (approximately 3euro⁶) monthly to purchase publications, while only 10% of the readers have a subscription to a newspaper or a magazine.

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. As it was concluded from the young respondents' answers, they tend to access print media in its printed format: 58% of the respondents aged 15 – 20 years old read the publications in print, 21% read it equally in print and on the Internet and 21% read the electronic editions of the newspapers and the magazines.

Why do we read the print media? In principle newspapers and magazines are accessed for *information* (82% of the print media readers ranked this reason on the first place), for *recreation* (50% chose this reason for the second place) and to “*spend leisure time*” (33% of the respondents ranked this reason on the third place). The respondents' fourth reason to read print media is related to their interaction with family members, friends and colleagues. For 30% of the respondents information received through newspapers and magazines constitutes material for discussions with family members, friends and colleagues.

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. The reasons indicated by the young people in reference to radio and TV consumption are more related to recreation and entertainment rather than information which was the first reason indicated by the respondents from the total sample to access radio and TV programs. Regarding the *print media consumption*, the young respondents said they read newspapers and magazines mainly *to inform themselves* (reason ranked on the first place by 78% of the respondents). For 47% of the respondents the second reason to access print media is *recreation*; *spending leisure time* is the third reason for 36% of the respondents (see Annex, page 113).

Table 10. People with whom respondents debate on the information present in the news programs

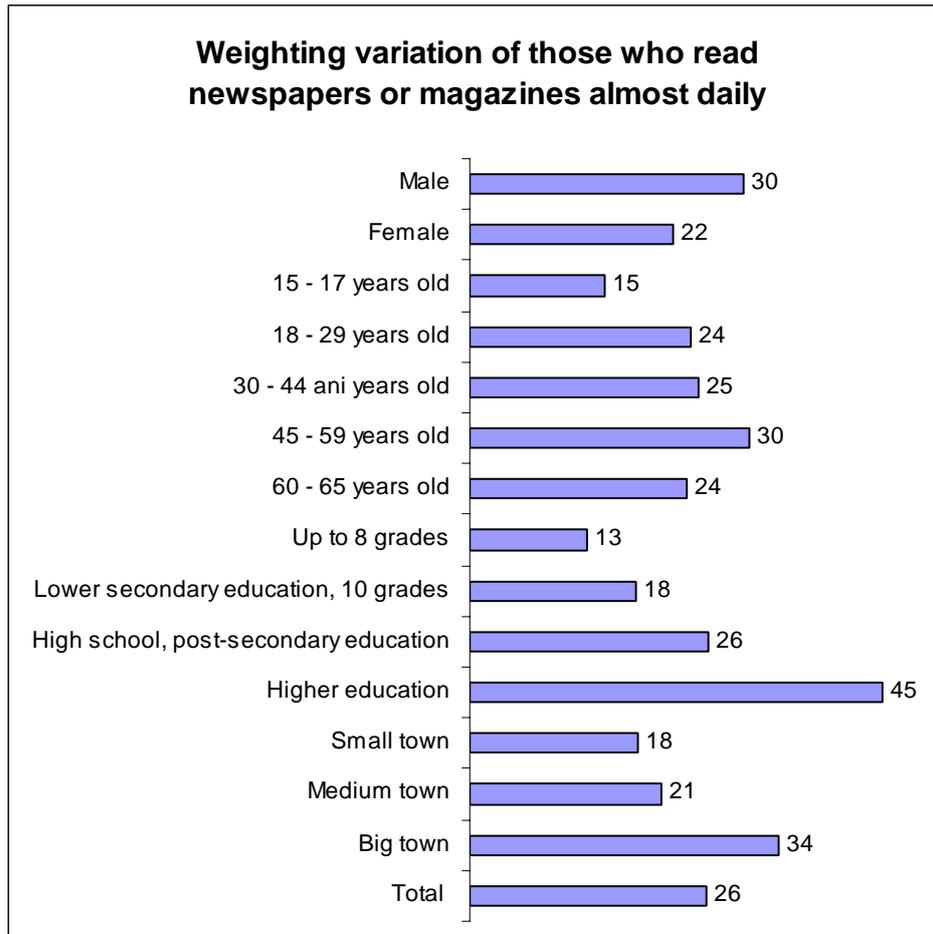
	... with family members	... with friends	... with neighbors	... with school / work colleagues
Politics	27	18	5	19
Social	36	21	6	18
Lifestyle	25	23	4	19
World news	19	15	3	13
Cultural news	18	11	2	10
Sports	16	26	5	19
Useful information	31	15	5	15

Reading key: 27% of the respondents comment on politics with family members

⁶ The average price of a daily newspaper in Romania is 1 leu (RON) = approximately 30 cents

Family members are most often the respondents' discussion partners when it comes to exchanging opinions on the social information received from the media, on daily current events and politics. Information from sports is rather commented with *friends*, while information related to lifestyle is discussed with both family members and friends or school/work colleagues.

Graphic 3



As it results from our study, the print media consumption differs between the social categories that we could mark out by gender, age, education or residential areas. Thus, *those who read print media almost daily* were better represented among men (30% up against 22% among women) as well as among the residents of big cities⁷. The most important difference in this respect is to be observed among the categories delimited by *education level*. Respondents with higher education are better represented among print media consumers (45% up against 13% among those who have graduated up to eight grades).

⁷ Cities were divided in three categories by the number of residents – small towns (between 10 and 49 thousands residents), medium towns (between 50 and 199 thousands residents) and big towns (200 thousands residents and over).

Diversity of the information sources. Most of the newspapers or magazines consumers (66%) read only one publication on an ordinary day. 17% read two publications, and other 15% read three or more publications daily. Small differences in what concerns the diversity of the print media consumption can be noticed between social categories delimited by education level. The print media consumption tends to be more homogenous among the respondents with lower education.

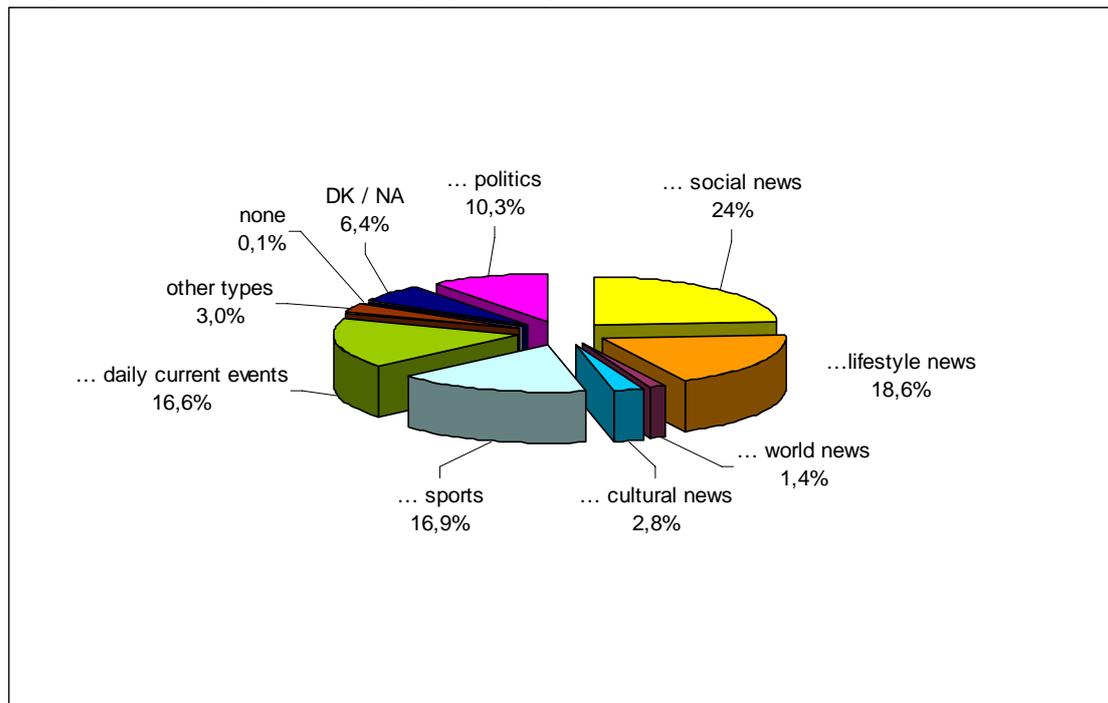
Almost two quarters (63%) of those who read the articles of multiple publications on an ordinary day said they noticed differences between the information published in these publications. This fact does not necessarily stimulate a desire to verify the information that is being contradicted in different publications – 34% of the respondents that notice differences between the information presented in various publications disregard them, and 28% of them choose to believe in the information published by their favorite publication. 37% of those respondents that notice differences said they take action and try to verify inconsistent information with the one published by other publications.

6. Consumers' preferences on print media, radio and television news content

In what concerns their **preferences regarding the print media content** the respondents who read newspapers and magazines said that most often they prefer social information (24%). 19% of the respondents said they prefer the information on *lifestyle*, while 17% prefer *sports* and *daily current events*.

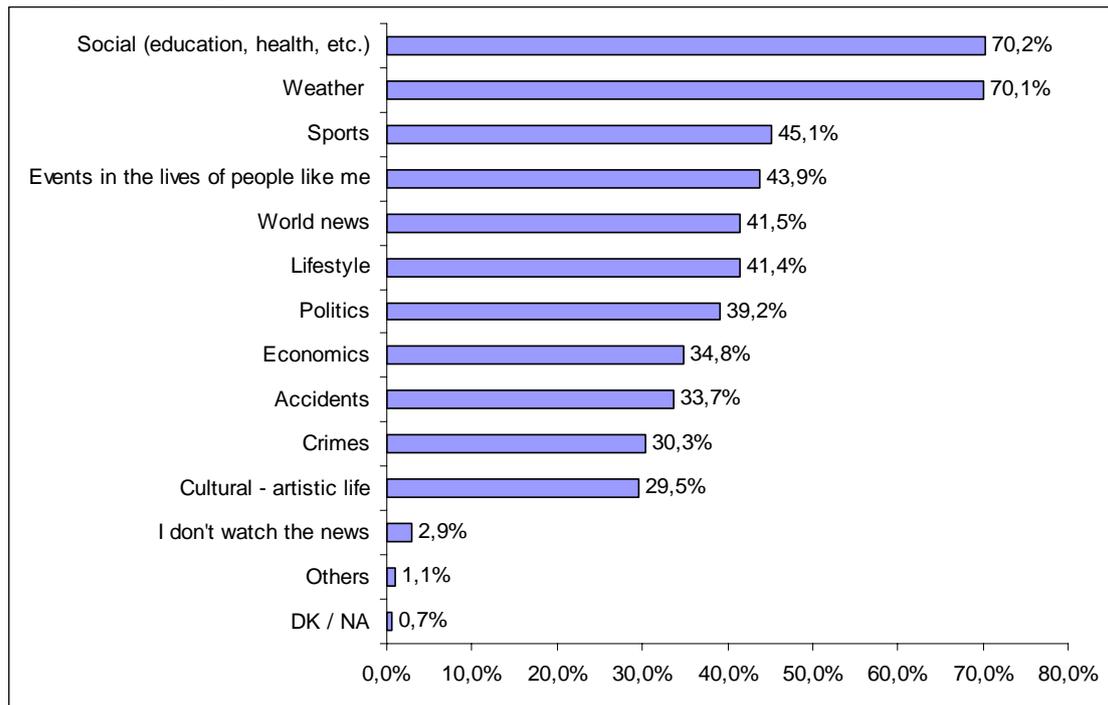
The *cultural* and *world news* were less identified on the preferences list of the respondents.

Graphic 4. Which type of newspaper do you prefer? The one that contains more ...



As with regard to the **radio and television news content** approximately 70% of the respondents said they generally watch *social* news stories (education, health, etc.) and weather forecast. 44% of the respondents declared they look for *sports news* (45%) and *news reporting on events in people's life*, around 41% watch *world* and *lifestyle* news, while approximately 39% of the respondents watch news stories on *politics*.

Graphic 5. By selecting from the types of news stories listed below, which are the ones you usually watch?



Youngsters aged 15 – 20 years old. The young people prefer those publications that include primarily *sports news* (34% of the young respondents), then *lifestyle news* (32%) and *daily current events* (14%). The other types of news (politics, cultural news, world news) are represented in a small degree in the youngsters' preferences, with values between 1% and 3% (see Annex, page 113).

As with regard to *the radio and television news content*, 50% of the respondents aged 15 – 20 years old said they usually watch sports news, other 50% the *weather forecast*. 45% of the young respondents stated they watch news on *lifestyle* and 42% indicated the news stories on social issues (see Annex, page 116).

When asked which **TV content** they find **most “disturbing”** 23% of the respondents indicated the *commercials*. *Violence and aggression* were pointed out in this context by 12% of the respondents while 3% of the respondents said they find disturbing the *news reporting on murder cases*. Sometimes the content of the *political debates* is considered disturbing (approximately 5% of the respondents indicated this content as disturbing for them).

Respondents were asked to evaluate various types of events and information as being presented "too often" or "too rare" in mass media. Below we present a synthesis of the consumption preferences related to the media content as resulted from this evaluation.

Table 11. How often or how seldom do you think the following types of information are present in mass media?

	Too often	Too rare	Neither too often nor too rare
Events related to celebrities' private life	62	4	29
Events in ordinary people's private life	8	52	36
Events in politicians' private life	68	6	24
Events related to the cultural–artistic life	7	39	47
Political events	70	4	22
Events in sports	36	15	45
Economical events	10	28	54
Political events from abroad	18	19	58
Information on public administration's activity	10	39	40
Information on natural disasters	21	20	55
Information on Romanians living abroad	11	39	44
Accidents (cars, work, etc.)	70	5	22
Crimes	64	10	23
Corruption cases	33	39	25

Reading key: 62% of the respondents declared that information on events related to celebrities' private life are presented too often in mass media.

On the one hand, information on accidents and crimes, events related to politicians and celebrities' private life and political events were evaluated by the respondents as being presented "too often" in mass media. On the other hand, the respondents considered events related to the life of ordinary people, information on Romanians living abroad and that on the activity of the public administration to be presented "too seldom" in mass media.

7. The Internet

47% of the respondents that are computer users stated that they have an Internet connection at home. In addition 47% of the respondents said they used the Internet in the last three months. The majority of those who browsed the Internet in the last three months (almost 83%) did it at home. 66% went online *daily*, which shows an advanced consumption among the Internet users. The amount of time spent on the Internet tends to get bigger. Out of the total number of those who used the Internet at least one or two times a week, 29% browse it approximately 1–2 hours per day and 24% browse it around 3–4 hours per day (see Annex, pages 74-76).

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. In what concerns the young respondents, the percentages in this respect are higher. 87% of the young respondents used the Internet in the last three months and more than 70% browsed the Internet on a daily basis. In what concerns the place from where young people accessed the Internet, 81% of the young respondents said they went online at home, 29% in school / faculty and 19% at relatives/friends/acquaintances house.

Getting informed, online social interaction and entertainment (in this order) are the main reasons for which respondents access Internet. This is also noticeable in the types of websites accessed by the respondents in the last three months. The majority of accessed Internet pages have an informative nature (“they contain useful information for various projects”, “they include information from various scientific fields”, “newspapers’ websites”, “websites including useful information”, etc.). Internet pages leading to various forums and discussion groups and websites with access to online games follow to the ones providing information (see Annex, page 77).

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. Young respondents that used the Internet in the last three months accessed mainly Internet pages that facilitate communication between users and the ones that provide online games. Nevertheless, if cumulated, the websites with an informative character hold a higher percentage than the entertainment ones (see Annex, page 120).

The Internet users’ level of trust in online content depends as well on their ability to critically assess the messages they receive online. To what extent does the source (institution/owner), author of the text and/or the text itself matter when people try to evaluate the credibility of online information? The respondents tend to relate to the text itself and less to the elaboration process behind the messages that determines their nature. The author of a message or the owner of the dissemination channel matter to a smaller extent in the evaluation of trust (see Annex, pages 78-79).

Generally, most of the respondents agree to a small or very small degree with *censorship on the Internet* or they consider that it should not exist at all. Cumulated, the percentage of the respondents holding such opinion is of approximately 45% (see Annex, page 79).

8. Participative patterns and mass media

The emergence of the Internet offered media consumers the opportunity to interact with content producers and even to contribute with content. Previous to the advent of the Internet, the interactivity resumed mainly to sending letters to the editorial room or to the practice of calling during radio / TV shows. The Internet contributed to the transformation of the media consumer into an individual who not only receives messages through mass media, but also produces messages in various ways (active consumers on publications' forums, transmitters of messages on online discussion groups, etc.).

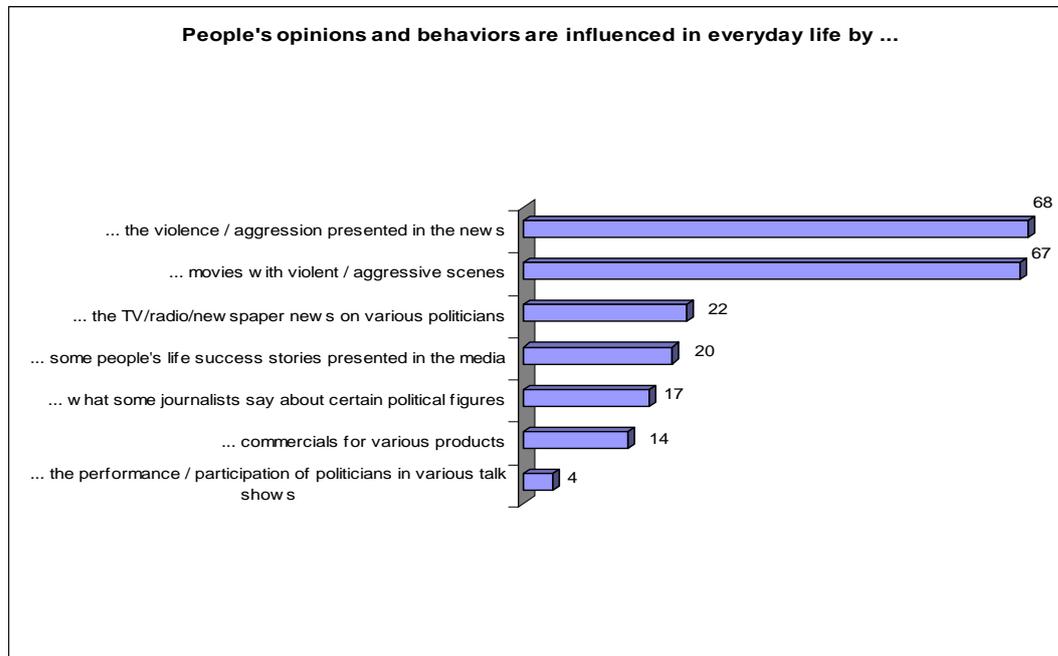
From this point of view we tried to observe the participative pattern of the respondents to our questionnaire. When asked about their own ways of interaction with mass media, 7% of the respondents said they called during a program and 5% declared that they wrote a message on the online forum of a television network. Over half of the respondents (61%) preferred not to answer to this question and 22% stated that they did not interact with mass media in any of the ways mentioned in the multiple answer question (see Annex page 88).

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. According to their answers, young people do not interact with various mass media more than the respondents in the total sample do: 9% of the young respondents wrote a message on the online forum of a television network and 5% called on a show (see Annex page 127).

9. Perceptions on mass media influence

In order to determine a certain level of media literacy and critical consumption of media messages in Romania, we considered necessary to find out the extent to which the public is aware of the influence mass media may have on media consumers. First of all participants in our study were asked on their opinion regarding ***the influence that mass media may have on opinions, attitudes and behaviors of those around them.***

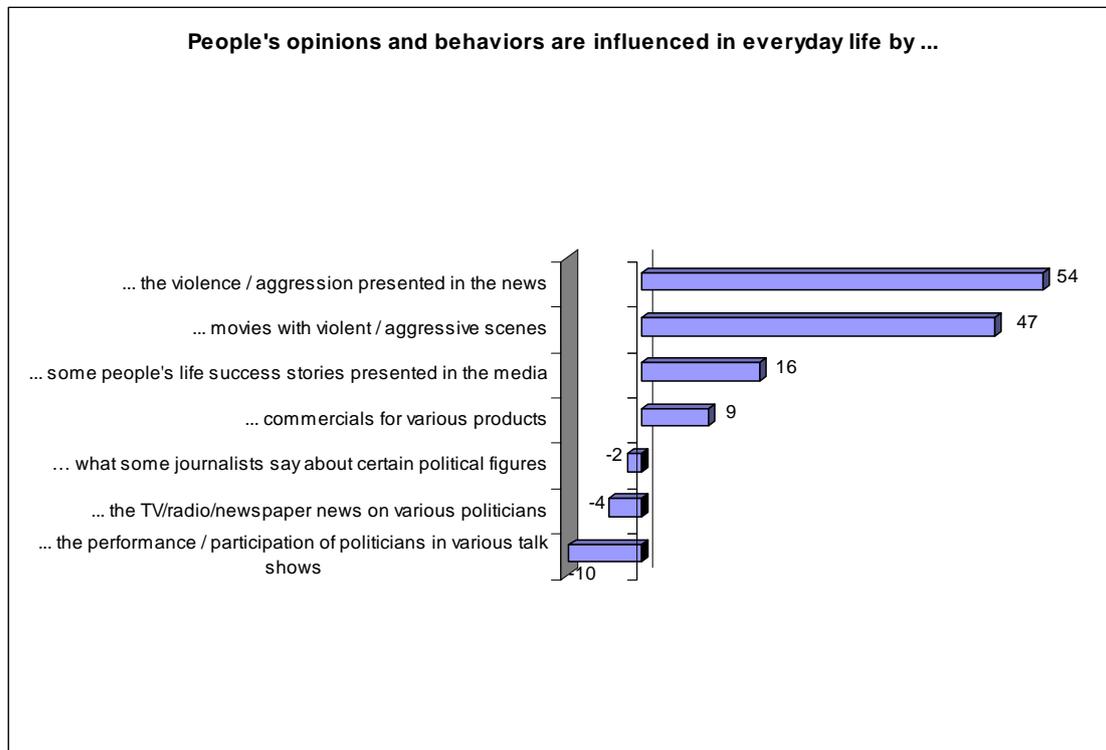
Graphic 6. The perception on the mass media influence (Indices of Dominant Opinion)



Reading key: the data presented in the graphic represent Indices of Dominant Opinion calculated for each item. The index of the Dominant Opinion can have values from -100 to +100, the negative values indicate a rejection of the statement comprised in the item, and the positive ones indicate an approval of the respective statement. The closer the Index of the Dominant Opinion is to a value of +100 the more the respective opinion is shared by the population.

The data presented above show the existence of a great agreement at the reference population's level concerning the influence that *violent content presented in the news programs or in films* may have on the media consumers. In the respondents' point of view, news stories on politicians and journalists' judgments on certain political figures have a smaller degree of influence on people's opinions and behaviors, while politicians' performances in talk-shows are perceived as almost insignificant as related to the influence mass media may have on individuals.

Graphic 7. The perception on mass media influence (15 – 20 years old) (Indices of Dominant Opinion)

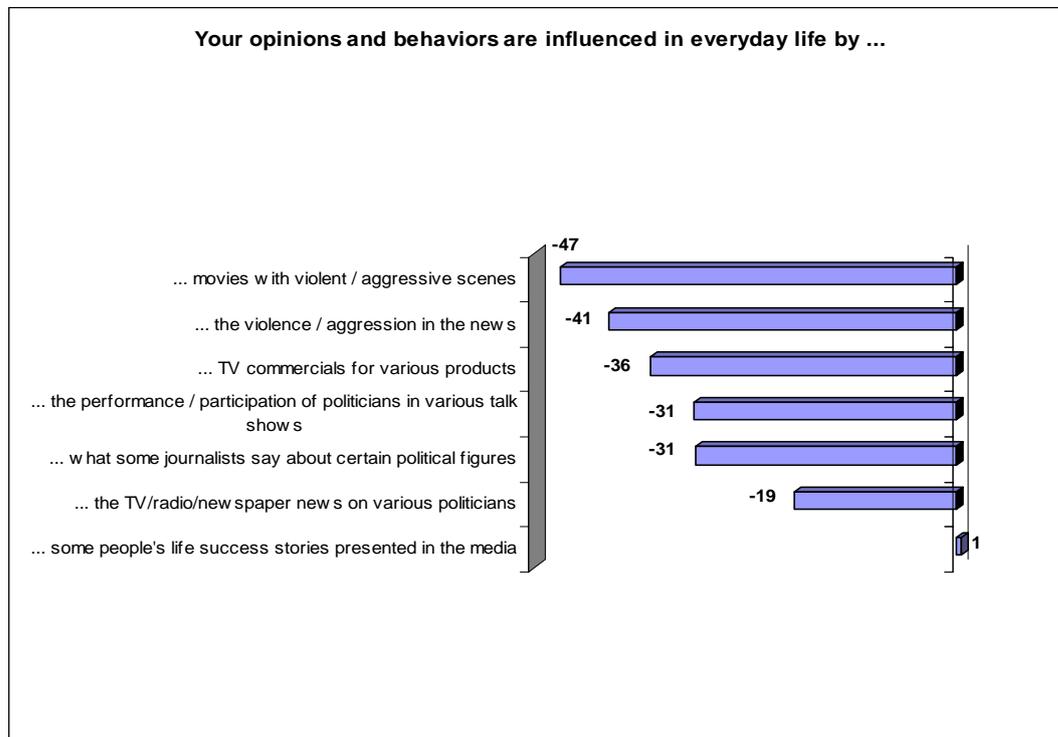


Reading key: the data presented in the graphic represent Indices of Dominant Opinion calculated for each item. The Index of the Dominant Opinion can have values from -100 to +100, the negative values indicate a rejection of the statement comprised in the item, and the positive ones indicate an approval of the respective statement. The closer the Index of the Dominant Opinion is to a value of +100 the more the respective opinion is shared by the population.

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. Among the young respondents, a similar agreement level can be noticed with regard to the fact that violence presented in the news programs or in the movies may have an influence on people. As compared to the total sample opinion, young respondents rather express their disapproval concerning any influence as exerted by politicians' performances in talk shows.

If the respondents perceived a certain degree of mass media influence on other people, they did not have the same opinion when asked about the **mass media influence on their own opinions and behavior**. 74% of the respondents said they had not thought about the influence mass media may have had on their own opinions and behavior. 26% of the respondents that affirmed they have thought about such an influence rather disagreed that any of the content mentioned in the multiple answers question may have an influence on their own opinions and behavior (see table below).

Graphic 8. The perception on mass media influence on respondents' own opinions and behavior (Indices of Dominant Opinion)



Reading key: the data presented in the graphic represent Indices of Dominant Opinion calculated for each item. The Index of the Dominant Opinion can have values from -100 to +100, the negative values indicate a rejection of the statement comprised in the item, and the positive ones indicate an approval of the respective statement. The closer the Index of the Dominant Opinion is to a value of +100 the more the respective opinion is shared by the population.

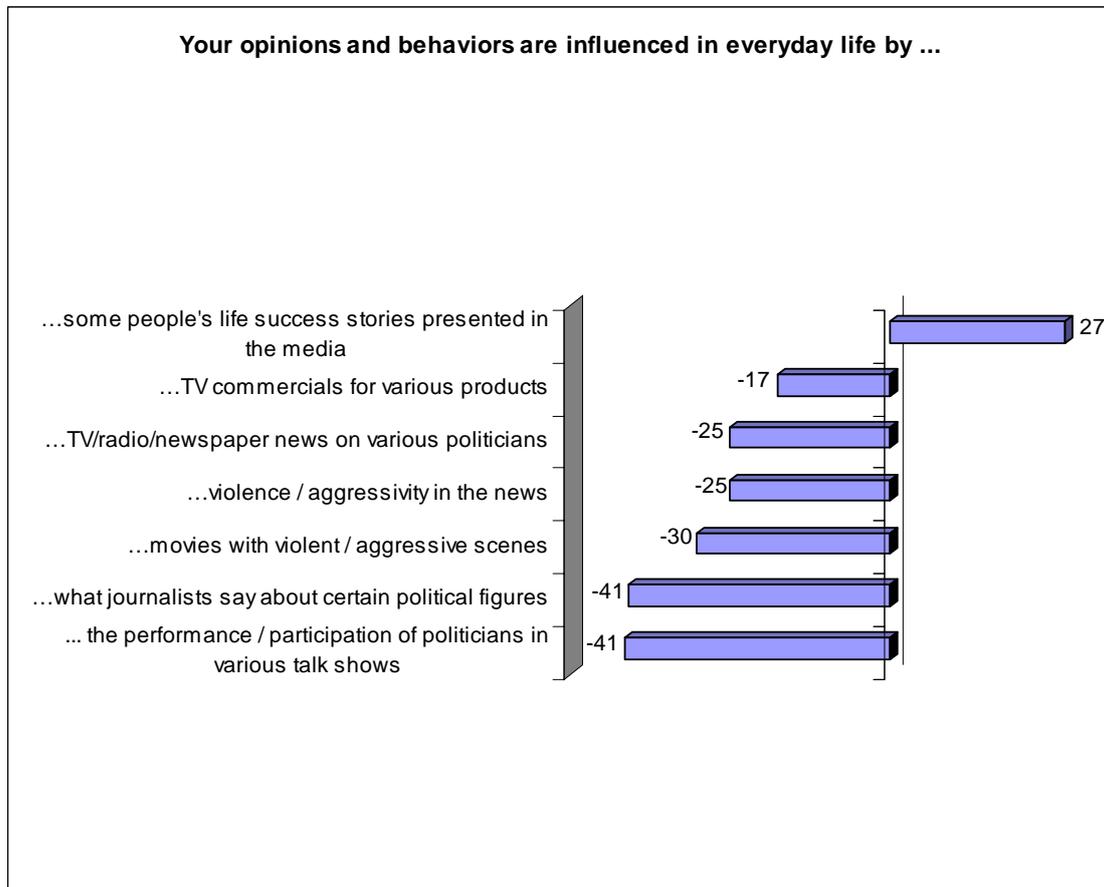
The respondents⁸ rather disagree with the statement that violent content present in the news programs or in the movies may influence their own opinions and behavior. Similarly, respondents disapprove the possibility that TV commercials may influence their opinions in a way or another.

The differences noticed between the two situations (the perceptions related to the mass media influence on people and on respondents themselves) can be explained through the so-called “Third-Person Effect”⁹. Simply put, the principle of the third-person effect affirms that at times when interviewees has to evaluate communication effects on individuals' attitudes and behavior, they tend to evaluate the effects on others as being higher than on themselves.

⁸ 272 cases, those who declared that they thought about the influence mass media might have on their own opinions and behavior.

⁹ W. Phillips Davison (1983) – “The Third-Person Effect in Communication”, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 1 – 15; Stuart Oskamp and Wesley P. Schultz (2005), *Attitudes and Opinions (third edition)*, Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 190.

Graphic 9. The perception on mass media influence on respondents' own opinions and behavior – 15 – 20 years old (Indices of Dominant Opinion)



Reading key: the data presented in the graphic represent Indices of Dominant Opinion calculated for each item. The Index of the Dominant Opinion can have values from -100 to +100, the negative values indicate a rejection of the statement comprised in the item, and the positive ones indicate an approval of the respective statement. The closer the Index of the Dominant Opinion is to a value of +100 the more the respective opinion is shared by the population.

Young people aged 15 – 20 years old. Young respondents¹⁰ as compared to the ones in the total sample agree more to the possibility that *life success stories presented in the media may influence their opinions and behavior*. Even with a limited number of cases available for analysis, this agreement can give us an idea about the possibility of youngsters taking over success models from mass media.

The data presented above reveal that the public do perceive the idea of the influence mass media may have on the individuals' opinions, attitudes and behaviors (of course, more focused on a particular dimension, namely the violent content present in mass media).

¹⁰ 79 cases, those who declared that they thought about the influence mass media may have on their own opinions and behavior.

10. Knowledge and opinion on media regulation

A TV viewer or a radio listener who is aware that he or she has the possibility to report any infringements of the audiovisual legislation that he or she may have observed and acts accordingly they may contribute significantly to a responsible media.

When asked which institution/institutions sanction infringements of the audiovisual legislation operated by TV stations, most of the respondents (85%) identified the National Audiovisual Council (N.A.C) while 8% did not know what to answer.

As related to radio stations 72% of the respondents said that N.A.C. sanctions infringements of the legislation and 13% declared they did not know. As a particularity of the answers, 8% of the respondents believe that the Romanian Radio Public Broadcaster is the second certified authority to sanction radio stations' infringements of the legislation.

Given the fact that the print media is not regulated, to the question "In your opinion who sanctions violations of the law operated in print media?" a quarter of the respondents (25%) said that Media Monitoring Agency¹¹, 21% said the Romanian Press Club, 16% said "nobody". A significant percentage of respondents (29%) said they did not know. (see Annex, page 67).

Sometimes the quality of the media content may depend also on the media consumers' intervention. The audiovisual regulations permit media consumers to take a stand, report violations of the law to the certified authority. 96% of the total sample of interviewed individuals said they *never* made any complaint to an authority in the media field when they noticed offensive/injurious content on TV (see Annex, page 91).

As with regard to the respondents' knowledge on *the financing sources of the public service broadcasters and private radio and TV stations*, the majority made evident that in principle they knew how and where from these institutions receive/obtain the money to exist (see Annex, pages 89 - 90, 92 - 93). In what concerns the private TV stations, 8% of the respondents believe that part of the private stations funds come from the license fee as well.

Regarding the radio stations' sources of finance, approximately 15% of the respondents stated that they did not know who funds either the public or the private stations. The amount of those respondents who think that part of the license fee designed for the public broadcasters goes to private radio stations as well is of 11%, a percentage a bit higher than in the case of television.

Freedom of press. 66% of the respondents rather agree with the statement that generally mass media in Romania is subjected to political interests. However, 41% of the interviewed individuals think that freedom of the press can be limited to a small degree and 22% think that it cannot be limited at all (see Annex, pages 96, 96)¹².

¹¹ Respondents were not aware that the study is conducted for MMA. Respondents probably chose MMA due to the sonority/resonance of the name MMA .

¹² Political pressures are one form of practices to limit freedom of press. According to the Media Monitoring Agency FreeEx report for 2007, in Romania the press is still subjected to political and economical pressures through different practices like postponement of some bills that might give independence to the public service broadcasters, concentration of media ownership, closing of advertising agreements that contain provisions to censor editorial content and others.

In the opinion of 51% of the respondents journalists who publish information that insults/calumniates should be punished with a fine. 28% consider that penalties measures should be applied within the institution ("verbally sanctioned by the management of the newspaper/TV station). 5% of the interviewed individuals proposed rough measures for the punishment of journalists – prison.

An important percentage of the respondents (70%) said that they had at least once the feeling that a certain news story was presented with the intention to manipulate the public.