

**HIGHLIGHTING THE IMAGE OF THE LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN MASS MEDIA BASED  
ON THE RESULTS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Mass media image plays a major role in influencing public opinion. The premise of this paper is that the setting of an agenda represents an interactional process between the mass media agenda, the political agenda, and the public agenda. Therefore, by studying the image of local government institutions in mass media, one can make inferences about the political agenda and the public agenda. This paper builds on the conventional methodological guidelines of conducting imagological analyses and it uses secondary data collected from the local print media to illustrate how various types of mass media image profiles can be built. Firstly, we have operationalized the local mass media image of local government institutions using the following dimensions: formal institutions, informal institutions, (non)political leaders, (non) political parties and associations. Secondly, we have calculated specific mass media image indexes, based on previous content analysis results. Thirdly, we have graphed the mass media image profiles of the local government institutions. In this way, we have illustrated a step by step procedure of applying established image analysis techniques in the study of the local mass media agenda of the local government institutions. The main advantage of this procedure is that it can help predict not only the local mass media interest for particular local public administrative themes, but also the impact of the mass media image of local government institutions (local and central) on the local public.*

**KEYWORDS:** *agenda setting; institutional image; mass media image; administrative institutions; content analysis*

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This article presents a type of mass media image analysis that has been created based on the results of the content analyses of media communication conducted in the '90s and

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previously exemplified (Coman & Deniforescu, 1996; Leah & Ungurean, 1996), as well as an analysis of the readership of the local daily newspapers in Brasov City (Coman, 1998), which was conducted during the same period. The methodological foundation of this paper is represented by the handbook “Images of Organisations Analysis” (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004). The content of this paper is based on a future chapter written in progress by the second author of the present paper (Rezeanu, n.d.) to be published in a forthcoming book, named “Image Analysis and Media Influence”, co-edited by the first author of this paper. The content presented below was synthesized by the first, third and fourth author of this paper from the above-mentioned source. The motivation to present a draft of a forthcoming book chapter in a multidisciplinary academic conference was rooted in the intention of refining and improving, its content so that it can become more useful for students and practitioners in the field.

Starting from the analysis from the present paper, one could gain a more nuanced understanding of the determining role of the agenda settings theory (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Lippmann, 1922) on how public image is built and, implicitly, how the perception of social issues, of the institutional and political actants, of the local government institutions and/or other institutions and organisations are built. Moreover, the paper shows how the results of the analysis can be used to understand how public images are being socially constructed through mass media.

In an academic landscape dominated by the quest for newness, innovation, and actuality, one may doubt the significance of a paper in which a classic imagological analysis is applied to a dataset collected in the 1990s. However, recently, scholars have started to worry about the replicability crisis and the biases in the application of established methods and tools in sciences in general (Baker, 2016; Begley, 2013), and in social sciences in particular (Camerer et al., 2016; Maxwell et al., 2015). They exposed their concerns in mainstream media (Dominus, 2017; Achenbach, 2015) and formulated solutions for the future (Earp & Trafimow, 2015; Wagenmakers et al., 2012). In this regard, there is a need for more studies accurately applying established methods to a variety of samples in order to produce results that stand the test of time. On the other hand, in the field of sociology, there is a recent turn towards the processual approach (Abbott, 2016, p.10), based on “patterns and regularities defined on lineages of successive events [...] moments that will themselves shape the next iteration of events even as they recede into the past”. In accordance with this approach, in an atypical transitional mass media and political context, like the Romanian one (White & Nelson, 2017), the first period after the 1989 Revolution is an important starting point for evidencing the dynamics of mass media image and indentifying long-term tendencies. As the emerging perspective of methodological localism is increasingly defended as an answer to the individualism – holism debate (Asay, 2016; Zahle & Collin, 2014), the local context of Braşov city is very appropriate.

## 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

By taking over the conceptual and methodological framework of the above mentioned authors, if in the content analysis we operate with the concept of “counting unit”, in the imagological analysis the concept becomes *the reference to the counting unit* (thus, we use the notion of “number of references” and not that “number of counting units”).

Hereinafter, we shall use a series of indicators for the mass media image analysis that have been taken from the handbook mentioned herein above and we shall apply them to the results of the previously presented content analyses, which are corroborated with the results of a mass media audience study.

*The mass media image (MMI)* is determined by means of “the analysis of press articles/news, other than politician statements that present the attitude of that particular mass media institution” (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.24). The image is operationalized by splitting it into a system of image sub-indicators that are clearly defined and measurable, whereas the impact of the image is calculated by means of the weight of the sum of said indicators and a specific weighting coefficient.

Various media communication channels and means have different public penetration powers. Therefore, the mass media image indicators must be weighted depending on the audience of the media communication channels and means. Thus, we define the *predicted impact (P<sub>iw</sub>)* as “the weighting of the quantitative values resulted from processing the imagological data with the specific weighting coefficients” (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.34). The weighting is done by using the *impact coefficient (I<sub>c</sub>)*, i.e. the preferences of the population with regard to the exposure to the information broadcast through a certain mass media channel; it has subunit values) and the *market quota (M<sub>q</sub>)*, i.e. the percentage of the total number of people that are exposed to a certain TV or radio program or a certain publication, for a certain period of time (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.34).

*The specific weighting coefficient (SWC)* is calculated as the product between the impact coefficient (*I<sub>c</sub>*) and the market quota (*M<sub>q</sub>*). The *total impact score (I<sub>st</sub>)* is the sum of the specific impact scores (*I<sub>ss</sub>*) for all the monitored mass media channels and means (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.43). In other words, “each mass media institution has its own specific impact score and, by totalling the specific impact scores of all the monitored mass media institutions, we determine the total impact score” (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.60).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to illustrate the procedural stages of the imagological analysis, we shall conduct a secondary analysis using three data sources, i.e. (1) “*Studiu de audiență a presei scrise brașovene*” (*An Audience Study of the Print Media in Brasov*); (2) “*Probleme sociale ale cartierelor brașovene*” (*Social Problems of the Districts of Brasov City*) – the first stage of the research; (3) “*Teme și tendințe în cotidienele locale*” (*Topics and Tendencies in Local Daily Newspapers*) – the second and third stage of the research.

The audience data were collected between November 1 and November 17, 1998 by means of a standardised verbal survey conducted at the respondents’ place of residence. The selection of the sample was made by probabilistic methods using 104 sampling points. Thus, a sample was set of 1066 persons who were aged over 15 and had a stable residence in Brasov City, with a margin of error of +/- 3%. The sample was validated by comparing its features with the stratification of the population in Brasov City, according to the data provided by Brasov County Department of Statistics. The questionnaires were applied by 21 operators, all of which were students at the Departments of Sociology, Marketing, Tourism and Services and International Relations of “Transilvania” University of Brasov City.

The data regarding the social problems of the districts of Brasov City were collected by Student Traian Leah (under the supervision of Mr Ștefan Ungurean) and they were used for the content analysis of the print media in Brasov City between January 1, 1994 and July 1, 1996. For purposes of said analysis, the student selected only the newspapers that had been published in the first week of each month, these representing the unity of the context. It is worthy of note that the first issue of the *Buna Ziua Brasov* newspaper was published in August 1995; therefore, the study period was shorter in this case. Thus the studied material went down to 396 issues distributed as follows: 180 for *Transilvania Expres* – with 6 issues per week, 150 for *Gazeta de Transilvania* – with 5 issues per week (Mondays excluded) and 66 for *Buna Ziua Brasov* – with 6 issues per week (as of August 1995). Then, out of every newspaper issue analysed, the student selected the articles related to social problems in Brasov City. In total, 94 articles were identified and analysed.

The data on the topics and tendencies in local daily newspapers were collected by Claudiu Coman (under the supervision of Alexandru Deniforescu) in several stages, depending on the objects of analysis. For the second stage of the research, all the articles on political topics published between October 9 and October 15, 1995 by three local newspapers (*Transilvania Expres*, *Buna Ziua Brasov* and *Gazeta de Transilvania*) were selected. The week was chosen randomly, but in accordance with the criterion that stipulates that no major events should have taken place in the social, political or religious fields of life.

In what concerns the third stage of the research, the sample included all the articles published by *Buna Ziua Brasov* newspaper on political themes in the following weeks: August 5 – August 13 (7 issues); August 26 – August 31 (5 issues); October 30 – November 4 (6 issues). In both stages of the research, only the articles on political topics were selected and for each article the number of pro and con (which also included the neutral) sentences/phrases were counted. Namely, on the sub-topic of the political parties, the following numbers of articles were identified: August 5 – August 13 (19 articles); August 26 – August 31 (15 articles); October 30 – November 4 (28 articles); for the sub-topic of the formal institutions: August 5 – August 13 (40 articles); August 26 – August 31 (9 articles); October 30 – November 4 (22 articles) and for the sub-topic of the informal institutions: August 5 – August 13 (21 articles); August 26 – August 31 (9 articles); October 30 – November 4 (11 articles).

### 3. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

*Example: Impact coefficient, market quota, specific weighting coefficients and total impact score for the main local daily newspapers of Brasov City*

#### 3.1. The impact coefficient ( $I_c$ )

It represents the subunit value expression of the options of the population for the information broadcast by a certain type of media channel (television, print media, radio) (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.34). The research of the audience showed that in November 1998, the local daily newspapers were preferred by 36% of the 15 year-olds and older people of Brasov City, as compared to other media communication channels. Therefore, at that time, the impact coefficient ( $I_c$ ) of the local daily newspapers of Brasov City was

0.36. Mention must be made that the preference for a certain daily newspaper does not necessarily mean the preference for all the columns thereof; thus, the impact coefficient can vary depending on the column (such a coefficient might be useful for the imagological studies that monitor a certain column of a certain daily newspaper).

*Table 1. The impact coefficients of the columns of daily newspapers of Brasov City*

COLUMN	BZB (%)	GT (%)	TEX (%)
Inquiries/reports	6.0	4.4	5.4
Local governance news	3.6	2.8	5.1
Sports news	4.8	2.3	3.9
TV programs	3.6	2.6	3.6
Opinion articles	2.0	3.2	3.3
Analysis articles	2.0	2.1	4.2
News on social movements, strikes/demonstrations	2.8	2.1	3.9
Book, movie/performance/exhibit reviews	0.0	0.2	2.1
Medical advice	2.4	2.1	2.1
Announcements	0.4	2.6	3.6
Miscellaneous	2.2	0.9	1.8
Offence/crime related news	1.6	1.4	3.6
Horoscope	0.4	1.8	2.4
Editorial	2.2	2.5	5.7
Useful services prices/stock market	0.0	0.9	1.8
Trends/VIPs	1.4	0.2	0.6
News on natural disasters	0.4	0.0	1.2
Entertainment, comics, caricatures	0.2	0.2	0.9
Service offers	0.4	0.4	1.2
Letters from the readers	0.4	0.9	0.9
Crosswords	1.0	0.0	0.6
Games/contests	0.6	1.2	0.3
Information on tourism	0.8	0.2	0.9
Advertisements	0.8	0.2	0.9
Radio channels	0.0	0.2	0.0
Cinema/theatre programs	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	40.0	35.0	60.0

*Source: Coman, 1998*

### **3.2. The market quota ( $Mq$ )**

The Market quota represents the percentage of the total number of people that are exposed to a certain TV or radio program or a certain publication, on a specific channel, for a certain period of time (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.34).

The audience study shows that *Transilvania Expres* had an audience quota of 19%, *Buna Ziua Brasov* of 4.5% and *Gazeta de Transilvania* of 4% (note that the market quota was calculated locally, for the 15 year-olds and older people, in November 1998). Since we do not have the necessary data to conduct an analysis of the entire print media (the media monitoring was only aimed at the local daily newspapers), the audience quotas of the local print media channel become: 69% for *Transilvania Expres*, 16.5% for *Buna Ziua Brasov* and 14.5% for *Gazeta de Transilvania*.

The audience quota can vary depending on the target audience. Therefore, depending on the research objectives, the imagological analysis can also be conducted on the specific audience quotas of the target audience. For example, provided that we want to build the mass media profile of a certain brand, the analysis can only focus on the main target audience thereof, thus using only the audience quota of a certain age segment, a certain professional class, audience with a certain level of education and/or income etc. Moreover, in order to check the impact of an election campaign for the parliament elections (where the senators and deputies promote themselves through the media by providing solutions for the improvement of certain social problems that are specific of the electoral groups that are frequently identified with the districts in the urban area) the monitoring process can only focus on a certain district (representing the electoral group of the candidate whose image is being analysed), in which case we would need the market quota divided by districts.

*Table 2. The market quotas of the main daily newspapers of Brasov City per age category*

AGE categories	Useful audience for support (%)	Useful audience for support (%)	Useful audience for support (%)	A + B = C (%)		
	TEX	BZB	GT	Accumulated useful audience (A)	Uncovered useful audience (B)	Total (C)
15-17 years	30.4	8.6	4.3	43.3	56.7	100
18-24 years	44.8	8.4	7.8	61	39	100
25-29 years	51	14	3	68	32	100
30-39 years	44	16.4	10	70.4	29.6	100
40-49 years	48.5	14.7	9.2	72.4	27.6	100
50-59 years	40.2	10	12.2	62.4	37.6	100
60 years and older	27.7	7.4	21.6	56.7	43.3	100

*Source: Coman, 1998*

The market quotas of the main daily newspapers of Brasov City can also be presented per professional categories, level of education, income class and district of residence of the subjects.

### 3.3. The specific weighting coefficient

$SWC = Ic * Mq$ , Where:  $SWC$  = specific weighting coefficient;  $Ic$  = impact coefficient;  $Mq$  = market quota (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.42).

Table 3. The weighting coefficients of the main local daily newspapers

Media channel	Means of communication	Impact coefficient ( $Ic$ )	Market quota (%) ( $Mq$ )	Specific weighting coefficient ( $SWC = Ic * Mq$ )
Local print media of Brasov City	TEX	0.36	69	28.84
	BZB		16.5	5.94
	GT		14.5	5.22
Total	-	-	100	-

Source: secondary analysis of the results obtained during the first stage of the content analysis (Leah & Ungurean, 1996)

The weight of the predicted impact ( $Piw$ ) is calculated for each image indicator/sub-indicator or for each mass media institution by comparing the specific impact score ( $Iss$ ) of the analysed media institution to the total impact score ( $Ist$ ) (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.43). Said weighting is relevant only if the study aims to make comparisons between several means or channels of media communication. To do the weighting, it is necessary to calculate the specific impact scores and, by adding them up, we determine the total impact score ( $Ist$ ). The specific impact score is determined by means of the weighting of the number of references and the specific weighting coefficient.

### 3.4. The impact score

The specific impact score is the product between the number of specific references and the specific weighting coefficient, whereas the total impact score is the sum of the specific impact scores (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.60).

Table 4. The impact score of the references to "provision of public services" in the local daily newspapers of Brasov City

Means of media communication	Number of references (specific, total)	Weighting of references
	$R_s$	$W_r = R_s * 100 / R_t$
TE	19	55.88%
BZB	3	8.83%
GT	12	35.29%
Total	$R_t = 34$	100%

One reference = one article in the local print media;  
Source: secondary analysis of the results obtained during the first stage of the research (Leah & Ungurean, 1996)

Thus, the theme regarding the “provision of public services” presented in the local written press of Brasov City has the biggest impact on the public (56%) in *Transilvania Expres* and the smallest impact in *Buna Ziua Brasov* (9%).

### 3.5. The predicted impact weighting

The predicted impact weighting is obtained by weighting the impact score.

We might had predicted that the fact that the exposure of the “provision of public services” topic in the local print media of Brasov City would have had the greatest impact upon the readership of *Transilvania Expres* (TE) and, respectively, the smallest impact upon the readership of *Bună Ziua Braşov* (BZB).

*Table 5. The predicted impact weighting of the references to “provision of public services” in the local daily newspapers of Brasov City*

Means of media communication	Impact coefficient	Market quota (%)	Specific weight coefficient	Number of references	Weight of references (%)	Impact score
	$Ic$	$Mq$	$SWC = Ic * Mq$	$Rs$	$Wr = Rs * 100 / Rt$	$Iss = Rs * SWC$
TEX	0.36	69	28.84	19	55.88	547.96
BZB		16.5	5.94	3	8.83	17.82
GT		14.5	5.22	12	35.29	62.64
Total	-	100	-	$Rt = 34$	100	$Ist = 628.42$

*One reference = one article in the local written press;*

*Source: secondary analysis of the results of the first stage of the research (Leah & Ungurean, 1996)*

As the institutions are complex, the operationalization of their image usually entails the definition of multiple indicators and sub-indicators that will subsequently be subjected to the imagological analysis. Based on the imagological analysis, multidimensional image profiles can be determined. The image profile is “the graphic expression of the value calculated for the image indicators and sub-indicators” (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.47) and the number thereof is equal to the number of the image indicators plus one. The image profile can be built by weighting the reference value of each image level ( $V = Vr * 100 / R$ , where  $V$  is the value calculated for each image level,  $Vr$  is the reference value of that particular level and  $R$  is the frame of reference). Herein under we are providing a classification of the image profiles typologies (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.86-87).

Table 6. Types of mass media image profiles

Types of image profiles (V)		Reference value (Vr)	Frame of reference (R)
PRIMARY (reflects the interest of the media means/channel for a certain theme, person, institution, event etc.)	cumulative	The number of references to each image indicator or sub-indicator	The total number of references to the system of image indicators or sub-indicators (total number for all the dimensions)
	dichotomous	The number of positive or negative references to each image indicator	
	binary	The number of positive or negative references to each image indicator or sub-indicator	The total number of references to the image level (total number for a particular dimension)
WEIGHTED (reflects the image that reaches the target public)	cumulative	The impact score of each image indicator or sub-indicator	The total impact score of the system of image indicators or sub-indicators (for all the dimensions)
	dichotomous	The positive or negative impact score of each image indicator or sub-indicator	
	binary	The positive or negative impact score of each image indicator or sub-indicator	The total impact score of the Image level (total for a particular dimension)

*Source: summary from Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.86-87*

Table 7. Values calculated for the imagological analysis of the social problems that are part of the agenda of the print media of Brasov City (one reference = one article in the local printed press)

Social problems	Means of media communication	Specific weight coefficient	Gross values		Calculated values		
			Number of references	Impact score	Weight of references (%)	Predicted impact weight (%)	
			$SWC = Ic * Mq$	$Rs$	$Iss = Rs * SWC$	$Wr = Rs * 100 / Rt$	$Piw = Iss * 100 * / Ist$
Provision of public services	TEX	28.84	19	547.96	20.21	33.47	38.38
	BZB	5.94	3	17.82	3.19	1.09	
	GT	5.22	12	62.64	12.77	3.83	
Heating of dwellings	TEX	28.84	2	57.68	2.13	3.52	5.61
	BZB	5.94	4	23.76	4.26	1.45	
	GT	5.22	2	10.44	2.13	0.64	
Market managem	TEX	28.84	2	57.68	2.13	3.52	4.57
	BZB	5.94	2	11.88	2.13	0.73	

ent	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Water supply	TEX	28.84	7	201.88	7.45	12.33	14.37
	BZB	5.94	3	17.82	3.19	1.091	
	GT	5.22	3	15.66	3.19	0.96	
Public peace order	TEX	28.84	6	173.04	6.38	10.57	11.61
	BZB	5.94	2	11.88	2.13	0.73	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Cemeteries	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	2.08
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Churches	TEX	28.84	2	57.68	2.13	3.52	3.84
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Home-owners' associations	TEX	28.84	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
	BZB	5.94	1	5.94	1.06	0.36	
	GT	5.22	2	10.44	2.13	0.64	
Access to dwellings	TEX	28.84	4	115.36	4.26	7.05	7.68
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	2	10.44	2.13	0.64	
Green areas	TEX	28.84	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.68
	BZB	5.94	1	5.94	1.06	0.36	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Street maintenance	TEX	28.84	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.04
	BZB	5.94	2	11.88	2.13	0.73	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	
Play-grounds	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	1.76
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Abandoned children	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	1.76
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Floods	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	1.76
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Public lighting	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	1.76
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Culture	TEX	28.84	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	1	5.22	1.06	0.32	

Recycling	TEX	28.84	1	28.84	1.06	1.76	1.76
	BZB	5.94	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	GT	5.22	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	total	-	$Rt$ = 94	100	$Ist$ =1637.4 0	100	100

Source: secondary analysis of the results obtained by Leah & Ungurean, 1996

The previous table suggests that the results of the content analyses represent the primary mass media image. Hereinafter we shall use the example that has been presented previously, but with more data, in order to illustrate how various typologies of image profiles are built.

Example: Image profiles of social problems on the agenda of the print media, built on the basis of the results obtained during the first stage of the content analysis "Social problems of Brasov districts".

We aim to analyse the interest of the local print media in various social problems of the community in Brasov City (by building primary image profiles) and to identify the extent to which the image of said mass media agenda reaches the target audience of Brasov City (by building weighted image profiles).

### 3.5. Operationalization of the image concept of social problems

Based on the content analysis, the mass media image of the agenda of social problems of Brasov City can be operationalized using the media references to the following social problems as indicators: (1) provision of public services, (2) heating of dwellings, (3) market management, (4) water supply, (5) public peace/order, (6) cemeteries, (7) churches, (8) homeowners' associations, (9) access to dwellings, (10) green areas, (11) street maintenance, (12) playgrounds, (13) abandoned children, (14) floods, (15) public lighting, (16) culture, (17) recycling.

### 3.6. Primary cumulative image profiles

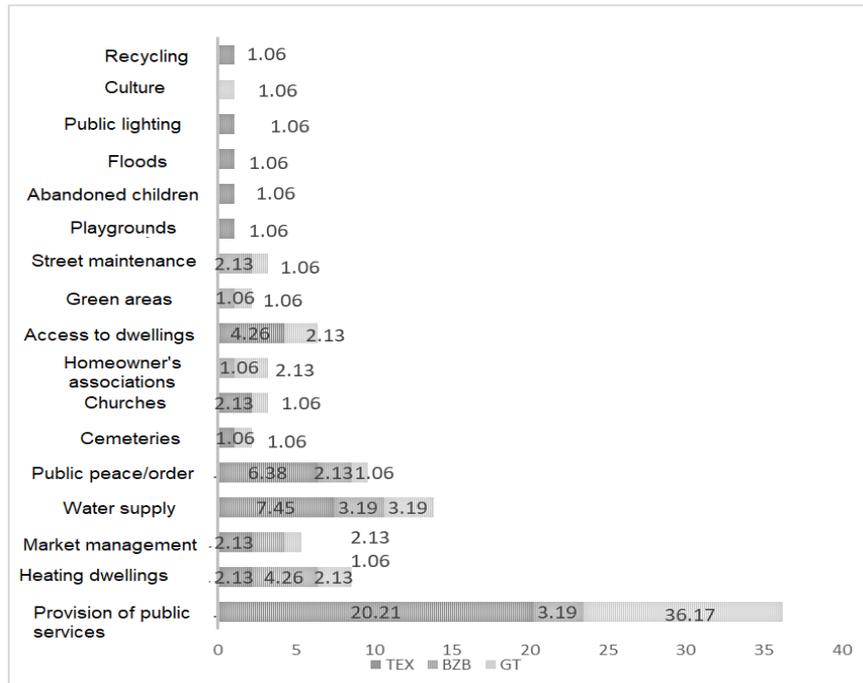
Based on the image profiles that were built in the '90s, a series of forecasts could have been made about the contribution of the local print media (by means of the articles published between 1994 and 1996) to the image of the social problems in Brasov City:

- in what concerns the readership of the three daily newspapers, a forecast could have been made of the maximum impact of the aspects related to public services upon the image of the social problems
- in what concerns the readership of the three daily newspapers, a forecast could have been made of the minimum impact of the aspects related to culture on the image of the social problems.

The comparison of the weighted image profile with the primary one suggests that:

- although the weight of the references was minimum in relation to the green areas, the predicted impact shows that the cultural aspects were in fact the ones predicted to have the smallest impact on the image of the social problems of Brasov City

- in what concerns street management, a smaller impact could have been predicted than the one of the topics related to recycling, public lighting, floods, abandoned children, playgrounds (contrary to the hierarchy of the problems based on the weight of the references).



*Figure 1. The primary cumulative image profile of the social problems on the agenda of the local printed press*

In the previous examples, we have only operated with indicators that reflect a single dimension of the image and that measures only the total number of references (without taking into account the favourable or unfavourable references). Said image profiles are called “cumulative”. Nevertheless, the empirical reality suggests that the mass media images are much more complex, because they can be operationalized as multidimensional, each dimension consisting of other sub-dimensions that are measured using various sub-indicators. Said image profiles that are operationalized in a complex manner are called “structural”. Moreover, in the practice of imagological research, the impact of negative or positive references can also be analysed (this category includes dichotomous and binary image profiles).

According to the same source, the interpretation of the primary and weighted structural image profiles is made in order to highlight the importance of certain image sub-indicators in the structuring of the indicators, thus facilitating the identification of certain imagological vulnerabilities (Halic & Chiciudean, 2004, p.114).

Based on the values calculated in the `90s and presented in the table herein above, the following predictions could have been made with regard to the contribution of the printed press of Brasov City to the image of the political life through the articles published during the analysed period:

- The readers of the three daily newspapers were exposed to a predominantly positive image of the political life
- The readers of the three daily newspapers were exposed to a predominantly positive image of both the dimension of the political parties and the dimension of the political leaders. Mention should be made that the dimension of the political parties was clearly presented in a favourable manner, whereas the dimension of the political leaders attempted to balance the favourable and unfavourable presentations.

### 3.7. Conclusions

The calculation of the impact coefficient has revealed the fact that the gross results of the content analyses show only part of the impact of the local mass media image on the audience of Brasov City. If content analyses made for the same period of other local media communication channels (television, radio etc.) had been available, we would have had a more complete image. Nevertheless, even in this case, the analysis of the impact of the mass media image would not have been complete, because the citizens of Brasov also expose themselves to various national means of communication. Therefore, we must take into account the fact that the impact of the mass media image created by the local print media represents only a percentage of the impact that the mass media image has on the audience in Brasov City.

By corroborating the results of all the content analyses used in this study, we can conclude that in the `90s, the image of the social and political life presented by the printed press of Brasov City was structured into the following dimensions and sub-dimensions:

#### 1. *The image of the mass media agenda of the social problems*

1. Provision of public services
2. Heating of dwellings
3. Market management
4. Water supply
5. Public peace/order
6. Cemeteries
7. Churches
8. Homeowners' associations
9. Access to dwellings
10. Green areas
11. Street management
12. Playgrounds
13. Abandoned children
14. Floods
15. Public lighting
16. Culture
17. Recycling

#### 2. *The image of political parties, associations and coalitions*

1. PD - *Partidul Democrat* (Democratic Party)

2. PL '93 - *Partidul Liberal '93* (Liberal Party '93)
3. PDAR - *Partidul Democrat Agrar din România* (Romanian Democratic Agrarian Party)
4. PAC - *Partidul Alianței Civice* (Civic Alliance Party)
5. PDSR - *Partidul Democrației Sociale din România* (Romanian Social Democracy Party)
6. PUNR - *Partidul Unității Națiunii Române* (Romanian National Unity Party)
7. UDMR - *Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România* (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania)
8. PNL - *Partidul Național Liberal* (National Liberal Party)
9. PRM - *Partidul România Mare* (Greater Romania Party)
10. PNȚCD - *Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat* (Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party)
11. CDR - *Convenția Democrată Română* (Romanian Democratic Convention)
12. PS - *Partidul Socialist* (Socialist Party)
13. UNORD '89 - *Uniunea Națională a Organizațiilor Revolutionare din Decembrie 1989* (National Union of Revolutionary Organisations from December 1989)
14. USD - *Uniunea Social Democrată* (Social Democratic Union; PD, PDSR)
15. PSM – *Partidul Socialist al Muncii* (Socialist Party of Labour)
16. PP - *Partidul Pensionarilor* (Retirees' Party)
17. FRR - *Forumul Reprezentanților Revoluționarilor* (Revolutionaries' Representatives Forum)
18. The Foundation *Un Viitor pentru România* (A dream for Romania)
19. The Ligue *Ardealul de Sud* (South Ardeal)
3. *The image of political leaders and of the leaders of political views*
  1. Oliviu Gherman
  2. Ioan Ghișe
  3. Ion Iliescu
  4. Gheorghe Funar
  5. Nicolae Văcăroiu
  6. Corneliu Vadim Tudor
  7. Corneliu Popa
  8. Paul Cheler
  9. Ioan Cioabă
  10. Gheorghe Tinca
  11. Doru Ioan Tărăcilă
  12. Caius Traian Dragomir
  13. Dumitru Buțan
  14. Dorin Lazăr Maior
  15. Ion Solcanu
  16. Silviu Brucan
  17. Nicolae Cerveni
  18. Iulian Mincu
  19. Romulus Vonica
  20. Petre Roman
  21. Nicolae Iorga

22. Ion Manolescu
23. Viorel Sălăgean
24. Sergiu Cunescu
25. Florea Danciu
26. Ștefan Casapu
27. Virgil Măgureanu
28. Teodor Meleșcanu
29. Gavril Iosif Chiuzbaian
30. Corneliu Coposu
31. Petre Ninosu
32. Vasile Văcaru
33. Horia Rusu

4. *The image of the formal political and administrative institutions*

1. Government
2. City Hall
3. Local Council
4. County Council
5. Parliament
2. The image of the informal institutions of political and economic power
  1. The power in general (not nominated)
  2. The power of the private initiative during the transition period
  3. The power of owners and managers during the transition period.

If the study had only focused on the mass media image of the social problems, we could have predicted that this agenda would have been dominated by the problem of the provision of public services. If it had focused only the dimension of the mass media image of the political parties, associations and coalitions, we could have expected a greater impact of the articles about the Democratic Party (PD) or the Forum of the Revolutionaries' Representatives (FRR). In what concerns the mass media image of the political leaders, we could have predicted a greater impact of the positive articles about Ion Iliescu, the President of the country at that time, or about General Paul Cheler (a conservative nationalist and a crony of Gheorghe Funar who stood out during the analysed period due to his criticism of the reform of the Romanian armed forces according to the NATO criteria and the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation). If the study had focused mainly on the mass media image of formal political and administrative institutions, we could have expected a greater impact of the favourable about the Municipality and of the unfavourable articles about the Government. By analysing the mass media image of the informal institutions of the political and economic power, we could have predicted a greater impact of the favourable articles about the power of the private initiative during the period of transition towards the democracy and the market economy.

#### 4. LIMITS OF THE ANALYSIS

As it is the case with any secondary analysis, the limits and potential errors of the primary research are transferred to the secondary one as well. More precisely, in the absence of up-to-date information for which the researcher could have checked the scope of the research, the operationalization of the concepts, the collection and analysis of the

data and the secondary analysis were done using some data that had already been processed, which could raise certain concerns to a rigorous critic.

Firstly, the primary data was not collected for the purpose of an imagological analysis of the social and political life in Brasov City (the scope and objectives varying for each of the used researches). For this reason, there were instances in which we were unable to comply with all the indications and procedural stages recommended by Bogdan Alexandru Halic and Ion Chiciudean in the handbook mentioned in the Introduction. Such deviations have occurred due to the attempt to reach a compromise between the lack of required data and the desire to exemplify, by means of empirical data, the process of building mass media image profiles, in order to help the students and practitioners in the field of communication to build and assess mass media image strategies. Nevertheless, this approach reproduces the empirical reality of mass media image management, because specialists do not always have all the data they need for the imagological analysis and all the resources they necessitate to collect said data.

Secondly, although it would have been desirable to have monitored the media for longer periods, which would have enabled a more complex operationalization of the mass media image, this analysis is limited to the data collected by means of short-term media monitoring and it cannot verify any potential errors in the selection of the units of analysis, in the creation of the category grid, in the encoding or the construction of the tendency indexes (the gross values of the indicators that compose said indexes not being available in the reports used).

Thirdly, since the data come from multiple researches (each with its own sampling scheme), the corroboration thereof for the operationalization of the mass media image of the social and political life of Brasov City might seem artificial. This step was taken mostly in order to highlight the multiple dimensions and sub-dimensions of the mass media image, and the proposed operationalization may inspire future research that should test its viability. Therefore, another downside of the analysis is that a weighted cumulative profile of the mass media image of the social and political life of Brasov City could not be created and, as a consequence, no conclusion could be drawn about the sort of impact that each of the five dimensions has on the audience.

## **5. GROUND FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Beyond these limits, the aim of this paper was to outline a replicable example of mass media image analysis that the students and practitioners in the field may follow sequentially in the attempt to build and assess mass media image strategies. The main point of this endeavour is that, in the mass media image analysis, the gross results of the content analysis are insufficient and, therefore, they must be used to calculate the impact scores and the weight of the predicted impact, based on which the weighted image profiles can be built.

The previously presented approach can be useful as a first stage of the mass media image strategy (in order to direct it towards the media communication sources that are predicted to have the greatest impact on the target audience), as well as a last stage of the plan of imagological actions (in order to assess the impact of the communication sources used to send the message of the image campaign). In other words, during the time that precedes the image campaign, the imagological analysis facilitates the selection of the

means and channels of communication that are predicted to have the greatest impact on the target audience, whereas during the time that succeeds the campaign, the analysis enables the prediction of the extent to which media references to the theme/concept of the campaign will have the greatest impact on the target audience of the campaign.

The mass media image analysis procedures can become significant instruments of critical analysis of the manner in which mass media reflects the social reality and of quantifying the impact of media manipulation. Various tactics of resistance to mass media images can be created by using this kind of analysis. There are many cases in which a certain television channel or a certain daily newspaper presents a distorted or unjustifiably denigratory image of a certain underprivileged social category or of a social minority group. In other cases, certain means of mass media communication broadcast stereotypes that legitimise the discrimination of certain social categories or groups. There are also more subtle types of manipulation, which are implicitly harder to highlight, such as the exclusively favourable presentations of the ideas of certain interest groups that are in powerful positions through selective references or apparently unintended omissions etc. In all of these cases, image profiles can be built that predict the impact of the media references upon the image of the social category, social group or social phenomenon that represents the scope of the study. For instance, imagine that a public figure makes a statement that could have a negative impact upon the image of a certain social category/group/phenomenon and that said statement is broadcasted by various means and channels of mass media communication. In this case, the imagological analysis would enable us to predict the extent of the impact by comparing the impact scores of the negative references during the time that precedes said statement with the impact scores at the time the statement is broadcasted by the mass media.

Apart from these suggestions on the use of the imagological analysis (which are far from covering the wide spectrum of applicability thereof), it is important to remember that the content analysis should not come down to interpreting the frequency of media references, but rather take into account the fact that their impact is amplified by the preferences of the audience for various channels of communication and the audience quotas of the means of communication that are monitored. By clarifying the methodological guidelines of conducting imagological analysis, we aim to contribute to the reduction of replicability crisis in social sciences. Nonetheless, the methods and results of the present paper could become the starting point for future local trend analysis based on longitudinal data in order to endorse future studies based on methodological localism and processual approach.

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