

## **AUTHENTICITY AND DRAMA, LIMITS OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, we aim to analyse the notion of "media authenticity", that might be slightly in contradiction with the message type, which is transmitted, mediated, resumed, and even retold. We will highlight that media authenticity does not mean "reproduction as realistic as possible" of an event, but refers to the way in which the meaning of the event is assimilated and communicated by the journalist.

**Keywords:** authenticity, message, circumstance, media

## **Introduction**

Professional communication (journalism, public relations, advertising) means a field that has its limits in modernity. Nowadays, the context of communication is defined, more insistently, by social media, by personal communication, as well by self-communication (Voinea et.all, 2015). We can find this idea also in the observations of the researchers in communication. The changes of logistics paradigm have been defined by communication researchers as a shift from broadcast code to narrowcast code.

The type of many-to-many communication generated by the logistics of the digital age also means developing the subjective discourse, the personal perspective, the individual perspective that communicates and seeks its own answers and echoes in the external communication environment.

Thus, we are talking about a communicative environment of subjectivity, of the personalizing rhetoric. The resulting polyphony is the environment, the circumstance in which the institutional communication must function (producing and achieving its goals).

In this study we aim to engage in a discussion about the rhetoric of authenticity in which we see a possible response to the challenges of institutional discursive construction in the context of the contemporary communication polyphony.

### **From polyphonic communication to authenticity**

The media writing has as discursive rules: fluency, coherence, orality, colloquiality, authenticity, credibility. However, it seems that it does not insisted too much professionally on cultivating authenticity. Authenticity is/can be, from our point of view, the answer to the competition of the polyphonic communication on the democratic market.

Professional communication can slip quite easily on the slope of too rigid procedures, which are based on rules generated by redundancy, rules that

depend too much on circumstances and which involve an externalization of discourse and not an assimilation of it. This turns communication into a set of repetitive, redundant, predictable, finally catachrestic statements, so it is more difficult to identify a partner willing to negotiate/trade a message. We should not forget that the receiver pursued is also an actor on the same polyphonic market and this removed it even from the classic profile of the recipient of the media message: who is bored, hurried, and demands to understand quickly and be amazed.

The intermediate response from the media institutions was I-journalism or citizen-journalism (Voinea, 2017), but, from our point of view, the messages constructed in this context covered the amazement and sensationalism, but they could not pass to the level of communication hard messages, with impact on mass communication. Also, the degree of narcissism and the implosive effect cannot be ignored. The citizen-journalist transmits his own message, according to his own interests and needs, without taking into account other sources of reception, which a professional communicator thinks about (Voinea, 2015). Under these conditions, it is quite difficult to follow the professional protocol of the journalist (verification, selection, ranking). Instead, the professional, institutional message of the journalist competes with the explosion of subjectivity, personalization, meaning authenticity, of some mediated messages like any other journalistic message (Vlad, 2018). However, the correct information is the professional responsibility of the journalist, not of the citizen.

How the message of the journalist can be distinguished in this context of subjectivities? How should journalistic communication be positioned in the conditions in which its voice must be heard in the sea of personal voices, assumed as such?

### **Authenticity, a very old discursive concept**

One answer can be authenticity. The institutional authority of the journalist doubled by a stylistic of authenticity. Several researchers from different fields have analysed this concept. We talk also about authenticity in history, in anthropology, in ethnology, then in art, and literature. There were debates about authenticity in genetics, but also in terms of ethics. Etymologically, authenticity refers to the idea of control, of domination of meanings and facts. From our point of view, in the context of digital openness and postmodernity, authenticity is a response to the weakening of concepts such as truth and sincerity. The researchers delimited the two concepts from the perspective of subjectivity and intentionality. Thus, authenticity is defined in terms of self-referentiality. Sincerity is a way (subject to rational and assumed decision) of response to an external stimulus (Erickson 1994, 1995; Vannini, Franyese, 2008). From this perspective, authenticity is a form of self-manifestation. According to Anton (2001), the self presupposes four dimensions: the embodiment, physical side, the self delimited by social conditions, the self of symbolic capital and the temporality of the self. (Vannini, Franyese, 2008, p. 1625).

Taking into account, unlike sincerity, authenticity presupposes, according to researchers, a high emotional load, implicitly less (self) control. We bear in mind that a discourse of authenticity includes several indices of the manifest subjectivity. In this point, we move away from theories that see authenticity very close to the irrational and which observe a social danger in the constant manifestation of authenticity (Strauss, 1978). This is a radical vision. The social and the authentic are not mutually exclusive. Adopting socially harmonious codes does not exclude a honest self-expression.

Self-control can be a form of dosing and balancing the emotional that feeds the true self. In fact, some researchers (Vannini, Franyese, 2008) have defined authenticity as "fidelity to oneself." In the issue of authenticity, the

two cited researchers say that it should be taking into account both the way in which the individual/public relates (emotionally) to the idea of authenticity, but also the degree of self-knowledge (Vannini, Franyese, 2008). This is why we subscribe to the idea of the two researchers of authenticity that this concept is an item of communication dynamism, and the control of the emotional we mentioned above is based on gestures more related to dramatization, controlled movement in order to catalyze an existing meaning (Hughes, 2000 ; Peterson, 2005; Vannini, Franyese, 2008, pp. 1632). These theories continue analysing interpretations and representations of Erving Goffman (1959).

It is the same performative perspective highlighted by Auslander (1999). As the dramatic and the dramatization presuppose the assimilation not the imitation of some actions and their meanings, the authenticity, the dynamic communication of the self means the creation of some passages of direct emission between itself and social. The success of the authentic speech can also mean the use of right codes/passages, suitable to convey meaning. But we are talking about a kind of control different from the case of sincerity. The relationship between codes and meaning is constantly changing, as a manifestation of the adaptability of the self and meaning to the circumstances of communication.

Media authenticity can mean:

Speech personalization - the sender appropriates its message, information, the story it has to convey. It assumes an implicitly subjective perspective and does not hide the fact that information is filtered through its own intellectual and spiritual filters.

The speech is clearly detailed in space and time, without astonishment. In order to show, to prove what is often said, journalists try to reproduce the circumstances in which the event they report took place. For example, to report an event with medical implications, an accident resulting in injuries or arrests, the reporter creates together with the so-called source the

atmosphere by starting the sound and light signals of an ambulance or police car. Through this dramatization, however, one can only prove the artificiality of the journalistic story, because both the sender and the receiver know that that ambience is built, it is not spontaneous. The authenticity of the circumstance does not presuppose scenographer skills, but the recognition by the reporter of those elements eloquent for the facts and which can constitute by themselves the framework/circumstance of the communication.

The reporter assumes the act of communication, not the role of reporter himself. The act of communication implies the care from the issuer that his message, which he catalyzed, contains all the verbal and nonverbal elements, all the explanatory crutches that lead the meaning in the best conditions for reception. Therefore, gestures, mimicry, temperate phrasing and a balanced semantics are supporting elements for a path as direct as possible to the receiver.

### **Conclusions**

Authenticity may seem like a paradoxical requirement in the context of media communication. However, as we have shown above, authenticity has become a structuring principle in media communication. In order to build, maintain, rebuild the receiver's trust in the media institution, the reporter is the first to go beyond the limits of professional conformity and he has to focus on the message he has to convey. The ostentatious assertion of the institutional framework, the issuer's tendency to fit within the predefined limits of a context related rather to the bureaucracy of media communication, not to its realization, it means many ways of falsifying the message, crediting the form, not the content. Therefore, we believe that media authenticity does not mean re-creating a reality, an event, a meaning, a story, but revelling and transmitting the meaning of that reality, as it was received by the reporter.

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