

News design and the audience

Assoc. Prof. Ph.D. Elena Abrudan

Department of Journalism
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Email: abrudanelena@yahoo.com,

Assoc. Assist. George Prundaru

Department of Journalism
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Email: georgeprundaru@yahoo.com

Keywords: *news design, marketing, media effects, user-centered design*

Abstract: *This paper aims to analyze the relationship between news design, focusing mainly on daily publications, and the audience which it addresses.*

The study approaches the problem from an interdisciplinary standpoint, from an economical perspective, more specifically marketing, as well as from a social and cultural perspective, through semiotic analyses, and, not lastly, from a graphical perspective. These domains all meet on the common grounds of communication and specifically journalism.

In the first part of the paper the problem is theoretically outlined and later, the theory is the applied in case studies which comparatively analyze two publications that target opposite ends of the market (Cotidianul and Libertatea).

This paper means to attract attention to the role of the design in the decision of buying a publication with direct application to the Romanian market. Although this text is most relevant for daily publications, the majority of elements presented here can

be applied to other publications, with different periodicity and in different formats, such as glossy magazines, monthlies or even almanacs.

The design of a publication has often been regarded as secondary and until recently, with the rebranding of many newspapers, it has been neglected. The change in the importance given to design has been brought about by marketing interests, rather than editorial ones. The marketing approach though, considers only the visual impact, while the journalistic one adds a functional dimension. A newspaper is only an interface between information and those who produce and gather it on the one side and information consumers on the other. That is why design cannot be just a pretty wrapping. It helps to structure information, organize the paper, draws attention to certain articles, suggests a reading order etc. All these do not transpire to the reader and are all the more effective for that.

Newspapers are a relatively linear medium. Although they can be consumed non-linearly, they are produced with a linear reading in mind. An article in a newspaper, for example, must occupy a certain area on the support paper, can only occupy one area (although that area need not be contiguous) and no more than one article can occupy the same space. Thus the surface has to be distributed between all the content. This means that a design must exist and it cannot (or rather must not) be done randomly. Just like photographs and video cannot exist without framing a publication is inconceivable without design, even if those who create it do not take it into consideration, a design will finally exist whatever its source. Because the presence of design is inevitable, it is taken as a given and is rarely questioned (or researched).

Visual communication studies have researched printed publications until now, but the main subject of these studies has been the editorial content, especially news photography. The form has been marginalized, somehow understandably, because it does not have the influence and the direct impact and such a rich meaning ready for analyses as the content does. We chose to pursue this topic to discover what makes design work and what are its effects on the audience. This exploratory study has partially answered these queries.

The issue of design has been approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, connecting the socio-cultural side with the journalistic and the economic one, and, not least, with the domain closer to design, the artistic.

As this is an exploratory study, this paper starts off with certain objective and subjective limitations (of which some could be overcome by potential continuations of this research). First of all we must not overlook the fact that the paper analyses only the form of newspapers and that the marketing data with which this is correlated is taken from other, pre-existing sources. A complete analysis should also look into the editorial content and even undertake its own, personalized, market studies. The interdisciplinarity is also limited by the fact that the authors are not specialists in all of these fields, and so some claims may be inaccurate for this reason. The number of publications analyzed was a small one (and only 2 are compared here), because

of personal limitations. To these the limitations of semiotic analysis is added, which are discussed later on.

To eliminate all confusions, we need to state from the start that when we talk about “media texts” we also include design in the meaning of this syntagm, just like others before have included photographs, or video. “Text” itself is also used for the main copy, titles, sub/intertitles, captions, folios etc. But we hope that the use is clear enough so that where there could be misunderstandings the meaning will at least arise from the context.

Thesis

Every publication has a target market towards which it is specifically oriented. Not everyone in this group buys the same newspaper and others, which are not in the main focus, may also be interested in the product. The model of the typical reader of a publication is a purely theoretical and ideal one. Still, the entire production is directed towards satisfying this reader. Beside the subjective elements, that include the journalists’ personal style in producing stories, and the objective ones, like the technical equipment available, the funds, or, for example, the fortuitous presence at an accident scene, what separates press institutions is the target audience and the methods chosen to attract them.

This effort to synchronize with an audience can be observed in all the departments of a newspaper. The most affected are probably the editorial and marketing departments. The editorial department decides what articles get to be in the newspaper, what the stories are and how they are approached to reach the target. The marketing department tries to assign advertising space so that it reaches maximum efficiency. So, the target audience of the promoted product must overlap as much as possible, if not completely, with the target audience of the newspaper, and, more specifically, of the page where the ad is or even the article by which it is placed.

In Romania there are numerous general publications that address a wide market segment, and rather exclude the marginal areas of society than single out a few categories to aim for. If we imagine the distribution of society on a curve, these publications target the entire middle section, the bulk of society. Most of the national dailies are such publications (e.g. *Adevărul*, *Cotidianul*, *Gândul*, *Libertatea*, *Evenimentul zilei*, *Jurnalul național* etc.). But even if these are all general publications, the spectrum of audience they approach is not situated in the same place on this curve, neither is it the same width, so there are differences between the target segments they address. This can lead to big differences between the extremes leading to situations where the target segments of dailies such as *Cotidianul* and *Libertatea*, both general newspapers, barely meet somewhere in the middle.

At the same time there are numerous specialized publications, with smaller audiences, with very specific interests: economical, sports, technology, classifieds,

humor, women's magazines etc. These periodicals benefit from less competition on their segment but have a smaller outlet.

To be efficient on the chosen market segment, a newspaper must attract readership, tackling problems of interest to potential readers, having a familiar and intelligible presentation and integrating itself in the readers' environment. In other words, the newspaper has to identify its image with the image the person who reads it has of him/herself. But seeing as the market strategy is directed towards an ideal reader that does not exist, the real reader will never fully identify. However, this ideal reader is situated between the press institution and the audience, and its image is also perceived by the audience, even if only subconsciously. Thus, people in the audience also come to identify with the ideal, and this brings them closer to the publication. So, by applying the market strategy according to an ideal model, a publication shapes its readers and sometimes even changes behaviors and mentalities, through what could be (slightly paranoidly) called manipulation.

Although the content is what creates and maintains a faithful reader, what first attracts him to buy the publication off the stands is the exterior aspect, the first visual impression, i.e. the design. This has to subject both to visual rules and to social ones, or any other rules, relevant for each project in part, and to current trends, and fashions, according to studies previously conducted.

Media effects theories

The mass media play a crucial role in the formation and reflection of the public opinion: media connect the world to individuals (and the other way around) and they reproduce the self image of society. Media critics at the beginning of the 21st century suggested that the mass media weaken and limit the capacity of individuals to act autonomously. Sometimes, the influence attributed to media are huge, reminding of the novel *1984*. Empirical studies at the end of the century though suggested more limited effects. Current research shows a much more complex interaction between the media and society, the media generating information from a network of relationships and influences and the individuals generating interpretations and evaluations of the received information and releasing in his turn information outside media contexts. The consequences and ramifications of mass-media are not limited only to the way events that become news are perceived, but also engage a multitude of cultural influences that operate through the media. The media have a strong social and cultural impact. This is because of its ability to reach a wide audience. Marshall McLuhan uses the syntagm "the medium is the message" (**McLuhan 2006**) to suggest that the means of distributing the message is often more important than the message itself.

The media effects theories propose several communication models to characterize the influence of the message on the consumer. Among these are the "hypodermic needle model" conceived by the Frankfurt School in the 60s, a more modern version of this being the two step model advanced by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz. A series

of studies at the middle of the last century gave birth to the theories of uses and gratification, whose main idea is that people use the media to gain specific benefits and satisfy needs (such as escape, social interaction, identification, information and education). The reception theory gives the audience the freedom to interpret the media text according to his/her own cultural background and experience, the meanings of a text being the result of a negotiation between the text and the receiver.

Professor David Gauntlett, from the University of Westminster in tries to tear down all these models (**Gauntlett 2004**). Because no media effects study has given clear uncontested results he advances two possible conclusions: either the effects have not been found because they do not exist, or that until now the studies of these effects have consistently approached the media, the audience and society in general incorrectly.

Some of the issues highlighted by Gauntlett have been solved in the meantime, other can still and will be solved in time. A lot of studies have been invalidated by David Gauntlett's essay, but the fact that the methods used have not always been correct does not necessarily mean that the results are not true. In this paper we do not intend to prove or disprove media effects theories or their critiques. They both contain valid and invalid elements. We will take from them what we consider valid enough to sustain our hypothesis.

Marketing

The mass media market generates an demand and offer system in which the media try to offer what the audience requests (gratifying the user), but also to form the demand, to lead it towards what they are willing to offer. This regulation of the balance between the mass media and the audience could not take place without a common language through which the transfers can take place. This language is supported by a common culture and a common social experience.

The problem in itself is more of a practical than a theoretical one. Each publication must have a design. To be efficient, though, a newspaper must be profitable, or at least come out even. This is achieved by attracting readers, which pay for the newspaper, but most of all, by attracting readers which will be the target for advertisements, space for which will be sold.

Even before coming out on the market, a publication's target audience must be established so that the publication can use a common language to address those who will ensure its existence, attracting readers and maintaining them. For this a marketing strategy is required. The target for this strategy can be either a big volume: a big number of readers means a big pool where the advertisers can place their products. The bigger this pool, the more potential customers the ad can reach and the more efficient it is. In consequence, the value of the advertising space (and the profit of the newspaper) rises along with the number of readers. On the other hand, a quality audience can be targeted, meaning people with large incomes and a high level of education. In marketing terms a person with a large income is worth more people

with smaller incomes because the purchasing power is the same. Bigger incomes are usually a consequence of a high level of education, but there is another advantage: educated people have influence over less educated ones and can further promote a product, indirectly and maybe subconsciously in informal environments.

The profile of the reader must be clearly sketched to maximize the capacity to reach the intended audience and also to give advertisers a clear segment to address. A good reader profile establishes good professional relationships with the advertising market.

The readers, on the other hand, choose the media texts they read according to their personal interests, looking to satisfy their own informational and entertainment needs. These are the needs the publication has to try to answer to. Because every publication addresses a group and not an individual, a set of common characteristics that form the image of the ideal reader need to be extrapolated. From this point of view the individual will never be completely satisfied.

The group which a publication targets is a market segment. A market segment is a subgroup of people or organizations that share one or more characteristics because they have similar needs. A true market segment is separate from other segments, it is homogenous, has similar responses to market stimuli and can be reached by a market intervention. Among the variables taken into consideration in the segmentation there are geographical (country, area, climate etc.), demographical (age, gender, income, education, family size, religion, nationality, language etc.), psychographical (personality, lifestyle, values, attitudes etc.) and behavioral ones (loyalty to a brand, profitability, purchasing disponibility etc.).

The targeting of a product may be selective, as in niche publications, or extensive, with full coverage, as is the case with general interest daily newspapers. After the target audience is chosen, a product that is efficient on that market segment must be created. This is where design comes in, which has to apply the information collected through market studies to contribute to the development of the product according to the characteristics required by the audience.

Michael A. Belch and George E. Belch define the consumers' behavior as „the process and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy their needs and desires” (**Belch and Belch 2007**).

The most widely accepted model of consumer decision-making is that of Engel, Kollat and Blackwell from 1969. It separates the process into five steps, starting with identifying the problem, and continuing with searching for information on the products and services that can solve it, comparing the products on which he has information and making a purchasing decision. To these steps a feedback step has been added: post-purchase evaluation, which influences future decisions.

For the design of a publication the most relevant step in the decision-making is the evaluation of information, and especially its cognitive element in contrast with

the affective one. The aspect of a newspaper rarely affects the buyer directly and consciously. The decision is taken subconsciously, on the basis of social identification with the group which the publication addresses. According to Henri Tajfel and John Turner (**Tajfel and Turner 1979**), each individual has a spectrum of personalities that range from a purely individual one to a total identification with the group. What the dominant personality at any given time is varies according to social context and has a great influence on the process of identifying with a publication.

The characteristics the design must have to be in accordance with the identity of a certain group can be discovered through a complex study of the group, similar to market researches. Seeing that such a study would require various resources which we do not have access to, we have chosen, against David Gauntlett's warnings to approach this problem from the opposite perspective. Starting from the existing publications we will conduct a (mostly semiotic) study of their design, trying to discover as many characteristics that appeal to the target audience of each.

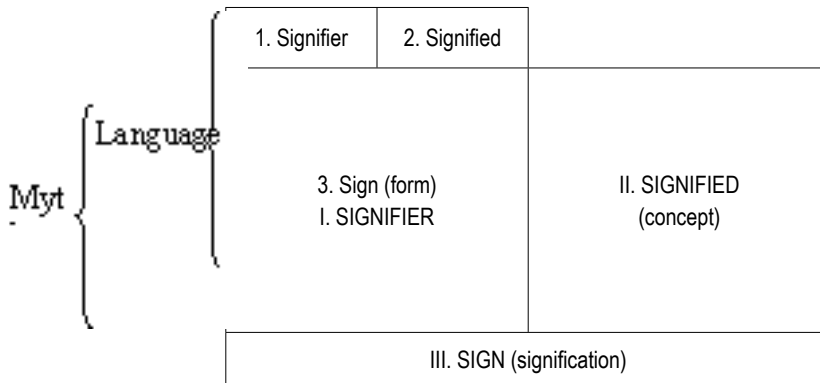
Semiotical approach

For analyzing social and cultural correlations we will use a qualitative approach, based on the mainly on semiotical theories of French structuralists (such as Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, but also Ferdinand de Saussure and others). The analysis operates with a simpler language than that present for example in Barthes' *Mythologies*, rather technical and with a limited number of variables. It will only be a correlation between combinations of graphical elements with general characteristics from the consumer profiles of publications. But considering the socio-cultural origin of these profiles, which creates sociological, cultural, economical and other delineations, we considered the semiotical approach appropriate.

A detailed study should involve both the content and the form of a publication. A paper is entirely directed towards a target, not just the design. A correlation between the editorial content and the audience and between the design and the audience should thus exist. And even between the advertising in a newspaper and the audience. But these studies are beyond the scope of this research.

An official definition of semiotics is the study of "signs and symbols". "It would be just as accurate to say, however, that it is the study of consumer culture and human communications." (**COLOUR SEMIOTICS: How semiotics uses culture to study consumer attitudes, Brand Strategy 2008**) Semiotics starts from people's previous experiences to understand the meanings they attribute to texts, objects, actions etc.

Roland Barthes, in the *Myth Today* essay (**Barthes 1997**), shows how in a myth there are two semiotic systems. He extends Saussure's theory, that concerned what Saussure called *langue*, to refer to language (*langage*) in general, which duplicates itself to form a second system which creates the myth.



Barthes' map of the functioning of a sign

The first level of signification is the denotation. Saussure advanced the idea that our understanding and perception of reality is based on signs (such as words, for example), which have, in his conception, two components. One is the part that extends in the material world (the ink on the paper) called a signifier. The other one is the signified, i.e. the concept which the signifier stirs when perceived. These two cannot exist independently. The meanings of signs are not intrinsic, but are created by society and culture. Barthes added that the „associative total” of the signifier and the signified form the sign. In an example given by him the signifier is a rose, the signified is the concept of a rose, but together they can be a sign of passion.

At this level, in design, a red line (dots of red pigment aligned on paper) is associated with the idea of line and red to signify, for example, the boundary between two articles or two sections of a page.

In the second level the sign becomes a higher order signifier. To make the difference, Barthes called the sign the form and its signified the concept. The sign that results from the form and the concept is the signification. The interaction between the form and the one who perceives it, personal experiences, culture, emotions, ways of thinking, comes in here. The same red line becomes form for the idea of „boundary”, and it can signify the reading order of a page, the importance of an article, a change of topic, the difference between an opinion and a factual article or even a political statement. In Barthes' semiotic terms this can be a myth. The message sent by the myth does not have to be obvious to the one who perceives it, it just needs to be true. The function of the myth is to make certain ideas seem natural. If these ideas seem natural, the users will not oppose them. It does not matter that the reader does not consider that line as an element to guide his lecture as long as he uses it as such.

The models and structures of signs in media texts condition the meanings that can be communicated and understood. The signs are understood in relation to other signs and to other texts, in a social and cultural context. Each medium has its own specific characteristics, which may be shared with other media. The media position

its audience in several fashions, and the audience understands and appreciates this in various differing ways. „Studying the negotiation of meanings between the media and the audience is important to understanding the way we perceive ourselves and our culture.” (Bignell 2002)

A signified can have more signifiers (at both levels of the myth). This leads to the possibility for publications that address the same market segment to have different designs. The same ideas, that need to make the target identify with the publication, can be expressed using different signifiers that, in the end, mean the same thing.

The semiotic analysis discourse requires the adoption of „unnatural” procedures. The text studied (be it linguistic, literary, auditory, visual etc.) is separated from its context, to analyze how its signs operate. More attention than a casual reader will pay is needed.

But to analyze a publication from the point of view of its design we must first define this term and know the basic elements of design, the principles used and the significations they can have for the readers. The implied meanings of design are discovered by placing it in relation with mythical significations and ideological values. They are justified only by the rigor of the analysis and not by other evidence that can ensure the accuracy of interpretation. This does not invalidate the analysis, but its limitations must be kept in view. Even if a study claims to have determined the „true” meanings of a text, that text is not an isolated structure of signs. Its meanings are influenced and modified by the fields of other elements and possible variables in the context.

The Design

Design is an interdisciplinary field that deals with the array of factors that contribute to the aspect and quality of the product. Socio-economical, functional, technical, ergonomical, aesthetic factors are taken into consideration by a designer or a team of designers who make and implement a plan (**Design n.d.**) that is followed in the final composition of each issue of a newspaper.

There are numerous schools of thought on design, but seeing that this paper aims to highlight the connection between the audience and design, the most appropriate approach is that of user-centered design. Still, the standard principles of news design also need to be taken into consideration.

„In broad terms, user-centered design is a design philosophy and a process in which the needs, wants, and limitations of the end user of an interface or document are given extensive attention at each stage of the design process.” (**User-centered Design n.d.**) Thus, a newspaper, as a physical object, can be considered an interface between the reader and the information that has to be transmitted. Most of the responsibility of the efficiency of this interface falls on the designer.

In this case, the entire design process becomes an attempt to solve the information communication process problems as efficiently and attractively as possible, using

accessible means to satisfy the user. This means that the designer must first foresee the way the interface will be used and afterwards analyze how it is actually used. For this a good knowledge of the characteristics of the addressed market segment is required.

The whole press system, from collecting the information, to editing, layout, printing, selling, reading and possibly feedback is a complex system of communication. For an efficient communication, supposing that the data to be transmitted are already available, it is not enough to know the receiver, you also need to know the rules of the medium. This is where news design and its rules come in. „News design is the process of arranging material on a newspaper page, according to editorial and graphical guidelines and goals. Main editorial goals include the ordering of news stories by order of importance, while graphical considerations include readability and balanced, unobtrusive incorporation of advertising.” **(News design n.d.)**

The design process can include a number of standard steps, that are adapted to concrete situations. There are three main phases: pre-production, production and post-production. The actual process, in the case of a publication consists in arranging a pre-existing elements in limited bidimensional space. This elements may be considered variables that reach the designer either as non-negotiable (such as costs per issue, available time, the size of advertising space, and sometimes page size and paper quality etc.), or they can be negotiated by the designer (typefaces, colors, number of columns etc.).

Some of the most common elements are the typography, the colors, the images and the composition.

Most of a the space in a newspaper is taken up by text. Although the message contained by the words represented through graphic signs is most important, the signs themselves, as design elements send the reader more information about the publication in general, or a specific article, an info box, an underlined phrase. The microtypography deals with combining typefaces (serif, sans-serif, script, ornamental and symbols) and fine tuning of letters (alignments, tracking, kerning, emphasis, ligatures, small caps, fractions). These all affect the general feel of a publication, but most of all they affect legibility. The most important choices need to be made for the body typeface, which needs to be optimized for large quantities of continuous text and needs to satisfy functional and accessibility criteria.

Macrotypography deals more with the organizational aspect of the newspaper, with the general construction of a page, like page size, columns, folio, titling, paragraphs and grids. Designers usually create templates based on well established rules, that are then adapted to each page.

Color is in itself a communication tool, but meanings iterated through colors are profoundly subjective. In design every hue must be justified. At least biologically we still respond to colors, even if subconsciously or subliminally, in predefined ways, programmed in our brains, or established by socio-cultural interactions during our

lifetime. There is a general agreement of the significations of colors, but case by case meanings differ. Color use can drastically change the aspect and attitude of a newspaper.

In practice, each publication has its own color scheme, that features recurrently throughout and makes it identifiable. There is usually one main color and other supporting ones that harmonize with the first. Chromatically, news design is simple, with few colors placed in predefined places, taking primary geometric shapes.

Color variation can establish hierarchies in the page, they can direct the eye and suggest a reading order, but can also have other functions. Among the most common is color coding, structuring the newspaper in sections. In a complex visual medium color can facilitate a distinction between different types of information, create links between components of a publication or between issues.

In graphic design images offer countless possibilities: photographs, photomontages, symbols, drawings, paintings and illustrations, caricatures and charts that all have different functions. Images offer a visual counterpoint for text, helping the reader engage in the content. They can help clarify complex information. Images can gain an interpretive layer by juxtaposing text (**Samara 2007**).

The position of all the design elements on the page is decided on a structure, order and hierarchy. The final result has to be a combination of visual comfort, familiarity and a reasonable amount of originality. The blank page is the support for all this. There are three main sizes for newspapers, from larger to smaller, broadsheet, Berliner and tabloid or compact. In most countries larger formats are perceived as having a more intellectual content than their smaller peers, but in the last century a tendency for miniaturization could be noted and the differences are becoming less and less relevant.

Information is systematic. It usually appears as a collection of different parts, each with different functions, for example body text, title, text boxes, captions etc. These parts usually repeat themselves, appear in the same space and support each other. One of the most important problems of a designer is to arrange the information so that it is easy to „navigate” by the reader. The hierarchy of information is based on the level of importance associated to each story by the people with power of editorial decision. The hierarchy differs not only between different articles, but also between articles and advertisement or permanent elements such as folios or section headers, or inside articles (lead, paragraphs, intertitles etc.).

The hierarchy is the result of applying design principles to the entire content of the publication. Studies show that the best areas in a newspaper are the front page, especially the upper half and the right hand pages, especially the upper right corner (**Giles and Hodgson 1996**). Seeing that a hierarchy is inevitable, it has to be conceived for the benefit of the reader. Because the structure of a page is not obvious to a passive reader, the hierarchy of the articles is taken as a given and not contested. From this point of view the layout becomes a subtle means of manipulation, which is that much

harder to control as it is an integral, necessary and hard to notice part of the process of creating a newspaper.

From another perspective, the hierarchy is an efficient mechanism for organizing materials so that the reader's access is easier, more direct and well structured, following criteria that have been thought out for the audience's use. In the absence of a hierarchy the functionality of the publication as an interface between the reader and the information would be lacking. Just as the audience does not have the resources, the disposition or the abilities to gather and process the raw information, they don't have the resources to structure the already processed information either. This job falls on the specialists. The strong points of design should reflect the relative importance of components. So, bigger titles, photographs and bordered articles are not just «gimmicks» for attracting attention, but clear signals about how the page should be read, the way that the relative importance of articles is conveyed to the reader (**Giles and Hodgson 1996**). Besides, it is exactly this hierarchy that makes up a big part of the personal character of a publication. The decision of placing a certain article on the first page may attract a reader, and the layout of the articles on the other pages may keep him loyal. In the end, a reader identifies with the publications he reads, and oftentimes the interests of the individual coincide with the editorial policy of the publications. That is why supporting the content with appropriate design is such a strong marketing tool in the printed press.

Case study

Starting from the hypothesis that the graphic symbolics of news design engages, more or less consciously, the identification of the reader with the social group that is the market segment selected as the publication's target, I have chosen to comparatively study two publications that are at opposite ends of the market: *Cotidianul* and *Libertatea*.

These two publications are both general interest daily newspapers, but they address opposite extremes of the social spectrum. According to *Cotidianul's* 2007 media kit, their target segment is the population aged between 25 and 45, with medium and large incomes. Economically, this corresponds to the middle class and aspiring middle class and socially it includes opinion formers and influencers. The readers of *Cotidianul* are "educated, sick of the non-news in the Romanian media, socially and professionally active people, dynamic, aspirational, very busy, they need intelligent alternatives to specialty publications, which can offer them quick access to information, they need pertinent syntheses and analyses on the evolution of professional areas and correct reference point for the Romanian and international social, economic and political reality" (**Media Kit: Cotidianul 2007**).

An article in *Cotidianul* (confirmed by data from www.brat.ro) shows that it is "leader in what its reader profile is concerned: the newspaper has the biggest percentage of readers with higher studies (35.2%), but also of managers and professionals (34.3%).

Also, *Cotidianul* has the highest percentage of readers with incomes of over 700 euros per household (23.1%)” (**Cotidianul, singurul ziar național care a crescut in SNA 2008**). So, *Cotidianul* addresses the segment of elite readers. In the year previous to these measurements the number of high education readers had risen by 50% and that of readers from the A social category (top management, higher education professionals) by 45%.

Despite these statistics, the number of readers per issue is only 210,000 or a 2.3% share of the market. It is clear that a selective market is targeted, not a volume one.

The editorial concept intends “a new style of press, more modern, direct, tonic, optimistic, future-oriented, for a reader that understands more, has a different agenda and is interested only in the relevant information” (**Media Kit: Cotidianul 2007**). The issues of interest, adapted to the audience, gravitate around the economical (investments, companies, careers, opportunities) and the close social (home, family, security, health).

To put the theory into application, *Cotidianul* uses two medium typefaces, a serif and a sans-serif one, alternatively according to functional and aesthetic needs. The body type is always set in 10 point Photina (the serified font). Photina is a transitional-modern face, with high contrast of strokes, especially noticeable at larger sizes, with long, thin serifs. The x-height is medium, almost equal to that of Times New Roman, a reference typeface in the field, and has a good rhythm resulting in a neutral typographical color. The letters don’t draw attention away from the content. Still, the glyphs maintain their personality, especially the lowercase “f”, “a” and “r” being easily recognizable. Surprisingly, it is the serif font that is used for most of the headlines too.

The sans-serif font is Antenna, a simple face, with constant strokes and a business look. The x-height is above medium and the ratio of space and strokes is rather unbalanced. Overall it is an aired-out face that could also be used in small sizes, but not suited for body type. Seeing as both the body and the headlines are set in Photina, the sans-serif is reserved for special uses. Firstly, Antenna is used for the name of the newspaper on the front page. At over 100 points, this is the text that dominates the front page, and the only element that competes with the photograph of the main story.

Cotidianul.

**The Antenna typeface as it appears in the title of the newspaper
(black, 116 pt.)**

A second function for Antenna is the recurring text: front page information (date, issue, price), masthead, folios, content, section names, column names, TV guide, horoscope and any occurrence of the newspaper’s title, irrespective of its position. The cross-references are also written in this font.

The subtitles and the text-boxes that accompany the main articles are always sans-serif. So are the captions and by-lines and e-mail addresses.

What is surprising is that the pull-quotes are set in Photina, italic, in a larger size (16 pt.), and, on the pages in full color, they are in the newspaper's red.

The uses of the two typefaces are thus clearly defined and separated. The difference is made between content and standard elements. A reader corresponding to the profile outlined by *Cotidianul* could overlook the text set in Antenna without missing vital information. Still, from the point of view of the navigation through the paper, the sans-serif face clearly marks the structure, facilitating the reader's course.

The five-column structure is constant throughout (except for the opinion pages), giving a medium dynamic. There is some variance in the text-boxes, that sometimes ignore columns, and also in the pull-quotes which, even though they are the same width as a column, appear optically narrower. Page names also dismiss columns. Special articles, the mostly appear in the week-end issues, that take up the middle spread also ignore standard columns, generally using a four-column set-up. From this point of view *Cotidianul* is a traditional newspaper, but not overly conservative.

The text is generally justified, except for the leads and pull-quotes (aligned left) and the texts set in Antenna (aligned either left or centered). A traditional use of alignment.

From the newspaper's 24 pages, 12 are in full-color. But this applies almost exclusively to photographs. *Cotidianul's* color scheme only includes one red and a few values of gray. Even so, the publication manages to project a modern and elegant image. A recurring graphic element, very important in the image of the paper, is the red dot that follows the title. It can also be seen, even if gray, in the single-color pages, in most articles and has come to be almost a trademark. Moreover, its function on the front page head is irreplaceable, giving resolution and strength to the newspaper. That graphic element individualizes a generic name such as *Cotidianul* (The Daily), making it recognizable as a brand. A variation of the dot is the red single-quote that marks pull-quotes, that gives continuity to the composition.

The size of *Cotidianul* is the closest to the Berliner format, renouncing the larger size for better ergonomics, still not small enough to risk identification with tabloids by adopting a compact format. This is in accordance with the trend in most "serious" newspapers internationally.

In the media kit, the personality of the newspaper is described as masculine because of attributes, features and orientations of discourse (logical, analytical, argued, critical), rationality (as opposed to emotion), personality (seriousness and irony) and orientation towards business, politics the public *agora*. From our point of view, these characteristics are in accordance with the simple, clear and structured design. The wide use of a serif typeface, the small color palette, the limitation of graphic effects give a modern minimalist aspect, rather than a traditional one. Being a content-centered newspapers, the importance of design was dimmed-down, but because the target is

a young and modern one, it could not be ignored. Overall, the Design of *Cotidianul* is simple, modern and elegant, among the best news designs in the Romanian press that conforms to its audience's requirements.

Libertatea is the newspaper with the biggest number of readers in Romania, with a medium daily print run of approximately 292,000 for the first three quarters of 2008 and a medium number of readers of 1,379,000 per edition (15.4% of the market). Readers are almost equally women (48%) and men (52%), most married (62%), aged between 25 and 34 (24%). The age segments, though, are rather uniformly distributed, the smallest segment being the 55-64 with only 13%. From the point of view of social status (according to ESOMAR categories), most readers are part of the C category (white-collar workers and skilled professionals – 44%), 31% from the D and E categories (high-school graduate workers and lower) and, a high percentage of the publication's profile, 25% managers and specialists (A and B). Still, only 18% of readers have higher education, 36% just high-school, 25% just 10 grades and 10% secondary education or less. Most readers have incomes between 301 and 700 RON, 22% under 300 RON and 16% over 1000 RON. Almost half of the readers are from Bucharest and another 32% from Muntenia and Dobrogea.

From all this numbers it can be seen that *Libertatea* targets an extensive, mass, segment, based on the number of readers, not their quality or even income. Thus, this newspaper is situated at the pole opposite *Cotidianul*. The ways of appealing to the audience are also different, emphasizing the form, the first impression and instinctive reaction.

Libertatea also uses two typefaces, a serif and a sans-serif one, but the sans-serif is the main one here. The criterion was probably their simplicity, eliminating less necessary elements. The sans-serif face, *Lilith*, is slightly humanized. The stroke width varies a little and the terminal are not regularly continued, but slightly curve toward the center of the letter. The characters are condensed, their height is almost disproportionately large in relation to the width, and the x-height is big. The body type uses a more proportional set, but still vertically dominant. The sizes vary from one element to the next, from story to story, and different body sizes can be found in a single headline. We have counted 13 different sizes on a page, not taking into consideration the page head and ads (not even “self- advertisements”) – an exaggeratedly large number, especially considering the low quantity of text.

The serif face is common, medium, very similar to Times New Roman. Its uses are not very clear. It is used in the body of certain articles alternating apparently randomly with the sans-serif face. Probably its sole purpose is to give variety, but it passes unnoticed. Variety is definitely obtained, though, by altering dimensions, colors, weights, adding underlines, frames and other methods of emphasis. Text sizes between 3-4 points and 200 points or even more are used.

From time to time quirky, striking display faces are used, more or less in theme with the articles. The crowding of such fonts becomes annoying and in bad taste.



5 typefaces in a few square centimeters can become too much

The column structure generally alternates between five-column and seven-column pages, but there are also pages that disregard the “rule”. The classifieds page has eight columns, other pages have irregular columns and several grids on the same page. The columns are basically left at the will of the designer so that he can make the page as attractive as possible.

The alignment oscillates just as randomly between flush left and justified. Beside this, word wrap is abused of, a simple artifice that can be interesting and pleasing if used moderately.

It is difficult to differentiate between main stories and text-boxes. Every material is written in different colors, on different backgrounds, in frames with different shapes and strokes. There is no consistent style for body text, text-boxes, pull quotes or headlines. Probably the only consistent element is the folio, hardly noticeable for the congestion on the page.

The headlines follow a hierarchy in the page, being arranged by size, the biggest usually on the upper half of the page. This avoids some of the confusion of the general disorganization and offers a foothold for the reader.

The entire newspaper is in full-color, with a color coverage of over 50%. The main color is a bright, saturated red that inevitably draws attention. The second color in importance and surface is an equally striking yellow. Numerous other colors are used, without any harmonic connection. For headlines red, black and white are used on a red background, with other colors making occasional appearances. A whole different palette can be observed as background to each article or page. The first page especially uses black backgrounds for a greater contrast with the overlying colors. Some articles try to harmonize with the colors in the accompanying photographs, others use the photo itself as background for the text. It is a correct chromatic approach for the target audience, but it sometimes get out of control, becoming exaggerated.

Probably in the idea of humanizing design, irregular shapes, rounded edges and circles, hard to integrate in a rectangular page, are present. These shapes are superimposed in an attempt to give a third dimension to the page. Moreover, because

at the beginning of computerized publishing it was difficult to introduce such irregular elements, it may still seem a technical feat and a mark of quality for some.

With a page size of 39.5 cm × 31 cm, *Libertatea* is closest to the tabloid format, but smaller than the regularly encountered size. This is to amplify the effects of the smaller page: projecting an easier accessibility, to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, especially towards the lower end of the market, where accessibility could be a problem.

Libertatea preferred to choose the high visual impact approach, which seems to have contributed to its indubitable economical success. Taking this direction though, important aspects of news design were neglected. The structure of the newspaper is unclear. That of the page even more so. Except for the big headline on each page the eye of the reader shuttles between all the elements screaming for attention, without knowing where to stop and in what order to consume them. Many elements are redundant or have no specific function (such as the second typeface that appears from time to time with no apparent reason). The final result is chaotic, disorganized, an agglomeration of graphical effects that act according to the same principle as natural warning signs (e.g. the bright colors of poisonous mushrooms) or traffic signs. But because this approach brings profit, its improvement is not yet sought out.

Comparing the designs of the two newspapers, it can be clearly seen that they address different market segments, and even without previous knowledge of the characteristics of each segment, they could be approximately deduced. The fact that both the audience and the design of the two publications are so different can be an indicator of the relationship between marketing and design.

Conclusions

In news design, the main criterion for organizing information is the audience with its needs. But the influence goes both ways. Because the press cannot satisfy each reader individually, a median solution is given. The audience consumes the product and formulates the next needs. A spiral growth happens, with an elimination of the unwanted elements on the way. As a result we can notice the fading of broadsheet format newspapers today, for example. So, studying design can give insights of future evolution and an advantage in marketing.

There is a lot of talk of the imminent disappearance of paper in favor of electronic media. Even if this disappearance is not as imminent as thought, the written press has passed its apex and has now reached a ceiling. To survive newspapers try to emulate certain characteristics of the internet. Among the biggest advantages of the “net” are interactivity and the option to personalize one’s experience. Editorially this has been reflected in the readers’ comments and opinions pages in newspapers. But design is also a way to bring readers closer. Its purpose is to construct an identity that comes as close as possible to that of the consumers and create an identification, or the illusion of a personalized page.

On this limited market, any evolution can mean a big advantage. The difficulty is in finding the space to advance. This paper may suggest some such potential spaces and help maximize their advantage.

Bibliography

- Barthes, Roland. *Mitologii [Mithologies]*. Iasi: Institutul European, 1997.
- Belch, Michael A., and George E. Belch. *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated MArketing Communications Perspective*. 6. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2007.
- Bignell, Jonathan. *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- “COLOUR SEMIOTICS: How semiotics uses culture to study consumer attitudes, Brand Strategy.” <http://www.proquest.com/>. March 7, 2008. <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1442799051&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=65090&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed January 30, 2009).
- Cotidianul*. “Cotidianul, singurul ziar național care a crescut în SNA.” May 14, 2008.
- “Design.” [www.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design> (accessed January 10, 2009).
- Gauntlett, David. “Questioning Effects.” In *Media Studies: The Essential Resource*, edited by Philip Rayner, Peter Wall and Stephen Kruger. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Giles, Vic, and F.W. Hodgson. *Creative Newspaper Design*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 1996.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. London: The MIT Press Cambridge, 2001.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Texte esențiale [Essential Texts]*. Translated by Mihai Moroiu. Bucharest: Nemira & co., 2006.
- “Media Kit: Cotidianul.” www.ratecard.ro. 2007. (accessed June 10, 2008).
- “News design.” [www.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_design). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_design (accessed January 10, 2009).
- Samara, Timothy. *Design Elements - A Graphic Style Manual*. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Rockport, 2007.
- Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict.” In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by W.G. Austin and S. Worchel. Monterey: Brooks-Cole, 1979.
- “User-centered Design.” [www.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-centered_design). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-centered_design (accessed January 10, 2009).
- www.brat.ro.
- www.ratecards.ro.
- www.sna.ro.
- www.wikipedia.org.