

# Mediatizing and Framing the Centennial Year. Comparative Study between Government's Communication and Media's Social Construction of Reality

Mihaela PĂUN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PhD Lecturer, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Sciences of Communication, Romania,  
[Mihaela.paun@fjsc.ro](mailto:Mihaela.paun@fjsc.ro)

**Abstract:** Government's communication and media's social construction of reality should be one and the same and should reflect what is happening near or around us. The Centennial Year was for Romania a very important one that had a special attention from the authorities and from the media. The Centenary meant for the media sadness, circus, pragmatism, the Centenary of Disunity, chaos, incompetency, lack of respect for the country. As through commemoration the government shows how important is the history, in this case, for the people, this research brings into attention the role of the historical memory and mediatizing moments.

The content analysis was used to research the 98 articles and press releases in order to find out how has been presented one of the most important moments from Romania's history. The articles have been selected taking into account the following themes: the main one – the Great Union Centennial, the second theme: legislation and budget.

Romania is part of many international entities such as European Union (2007), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2004) or United Nations (1955), and the legislative, financial or social decisions are related to the policies, rights, responsibilities and procedures of all the transnational agreements and actors implied. In this international context, the Romanian Centennial Year 2018 has a historical significance and might be mediatized in connection with the political shifts from Romanian "government 2.0" to "government 3.0".

As the government has been changed for so many times, so were the decisions, and this is the main objective of this research: to see and to present what has been the significance of the Centenary.

**Keywords:** *frames; Centenary; content analysis; memory; commemoration.*

**How to cite:** Păun, M. (2022). Mediatizing and Framing the Centennial Year. Comparative Study between Government's Communication and Media's Social Construction of Reality. *Journal for Social Media Inquiry*, 4(1), 25-34.  
<https://doi.org/10.18662/jsmi/4.1/24>

## 1. Introduction

In 2018, Romania celebrated the Great Union Centennial, thus 12 months have been known as the Romanian Centennial Year. During this period the authorities organized events in the biggest and in the historical cities of the country, commemorated the year 1918 and its importance. For all these to happen, some decisions have been made. Between 2016 and 2018 the Romanian Government was lead by 5 prime-ministers (1 of them for 13 days), and mass-media name this situation *shifts from Romanian "government 1.0" to "government 3.0"* mainly because of the financial decisions. During this period has been decided, among others, how the Great Union Centennial will be celebrated.

The methodology will imply a comparative and content analysis between the websites with the most read articles in July 2017, November 2017, December 2017 and January 2018 according to the data provided by the most comprehensive Romanian Internet traffic monitor engines ([www.traffic.ro](http://www.traffic.ro) and [www.sati.ro](http://www.sati.ro)), but not exclusively.

In this context, the purpose of present research is to compare the legislative and financial decisions with the approach of mass-media in the context of Romanian's Great Union Centennial, to analyse:

- *How did the Romanian Government communicate the legislative decisions related to the Great Union Centennial in the public space?*
- *Which subject related to Centenary was the most mediatised by the Romanian press?*

The main hypothesis for this research are:

- the Romanian official organisations might communicate only the legislative decisions using an official approach through the official websites or social media;
- on the other side, mass-media might present the governmental decisions through national or transnational financial, social and political implications.

Mass-media have a condition of power manifested through the supervision and monitoring the political system functioning in a democratic state, but also by warning the public about the power excesses (Coman, 2004). In historical moments, mass-media play a very important role mainly because history represents the reality, and mass-media construct the reality so the impact of the frames is notable from economic, historical, social and political perspectives.

The institutions responsible for the events organized for the Centenary have been: the Romanian Government, through the General Secretary, the Ministry of Culture, the Interministerial Department, the Special Commission in Parliament.

## **2. Mediatizing and media's social construction of reality**

What we find in the newspapers or what is transmitted on radio or television is only one part of the reality, the one the pencil or the camera caught it. Thus, what we see, hear or read is the construction of the reality. "The social world is not just a given. We make it, as human beings; it is, in this sense, socially constructed" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 64).

All these can happen through mediatization. We cannot assist to what is around us without media. In this context, mediatization is "a meta-process that is grounded in the modification of communication as the basic practice of how people construct the social and cultural world. They do so by changing communication practices that use media and refer to media" (Lundby, 2014, p. 115).

Mediatization is a concept used "to critically analyse the interrelation between changes in media and communications on the one hand, and changes in culture and society on the other" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 197). Mediatization reveals itself in terms of processes and functions rather than in an essential manner.

There are three well known definitions of the term mediatization. For Winfried Schulz (2004), mediatization signifies a process of social change resulting from the functioning and development of communication media on the basis of extension, substitution, amalgamation, and accommodation. Although it does not stress the explicitly temporal aspect, its definition engages the process-oriented in a specific spatial and temporal context. Advances in mediatization, according to Schultz, are inevitably linked with the media relay function, which refers to the transfer of information combining time and physical distance.

According to Friedrich Krotz's (in Lundby, K., ed., 2014, p. 115) approach, there is a mediatization meta-process, which has separate historical phases, implemented in a specific way in every culture and society. The change occurs as a result of the historical modification of communication as a basic human practice. However, this is not about the dominant role of communication technologies in the process of change, but rather about "the changes in how people communicate when constructing their inner and exterior realities by referring to media" (Hepp and Krotz, eds., 2014, p. 21).

The concept of mediatization based on Kent Asp's (in Lundy, K., ed., 2014, p. 351) approach points to the process in which individual actors and social institutions adapt to the various constraints and formats imposed by the media. This social learning process increases the power of the media over time. In other words, the more individuals and institutions adapt to the media, the more they are mediatized. The greater their mediatization, the stronger the power of the media.

As it can be observed, the definitions present the mediatization as a process for which communication has a very important role.

The explicit notion "mediatization", was introduced as early as 1932/33 by Ernest Manheim using the German term "Mediatisierung" in his book *Public Opinion and its Social Sources* (Lundby, 2014, p. 119).

### **3. Framing**

The framing theory, developed by Gamson & Modigliani (1989, in Reese, 2001) and Entman (1993, in Reese, 2001), has been applied by many researchers. The frames can be used by journalists, the public, PR specialists, or analysts to interpret and assign meanings to everything around us, mainly the events. Thus, frames can be "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001, p. 11).

For Robert Entman (1993, p. 51), framing means "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".

De Vreese (2005, p. 51) proposed two categories of frames that can be identified in discourses: generic frames (the ones that appear in various contexts of communication and address several issues) and issue specific frames (the ones that are relevant for a specific event).

### **4. Memory and commemoration**

Historical moments are brought into public attention mainly through events. "Commemoration, in contrast to history and collective memory, distinguishes events and persons believed to be deserving of celebration from those deserving of being merely remembered. The primary vehicles of commemoration include objects which lift from the historical record those events and persons representing a society's conception of its ideals and depravities" (Hagen & Tota, 2016, p. 11).

Memory means respect for history, respect for heroes, for the past which built the present. Moreover, the “efficacy of commemoration, then, is the way it enables us to come to terms with ending: ‘if it succeeds to the extent that it refuses to succumb to the sheer pastness of the past – its facticity, its “frozen finality,” its severe “It was” – then it must consist in an action of carrying the past forward through the present so as to perdure in the future’. At its most effective, ‘commemoration can be considered the laying to account of perishings, the consolidating and continuing of endings’” (Casey apud Ben Gook, 2011, p. 20).

Mediatized national (re)construction of historical events such as the Centenary means media’s social construction of reality. In this context, „commemorative writing includes eulogies, poems, plays, and commentaries motivated by reverence or enmity” (Hagen & Tota, 2016, p. 11).

“The relations among history, commemoration, and collective memory can now be stated. History’s goal is to rationalize the past; commemoration and its sites, to sanctify it. History makes the past an object of analysis; commemoration, an object of commitment. History is a system of “referential symbols” representing known facts and their sequence; commemoration is a system of “condensation symbols” (Sapir in Hagen & Tota, 2016, p. 11) that simplifies events of the past and clarifies the moral sentiments they inspire” (Hagen & Tota, 2016, p. 12).

## 5. Analysis

The research has been done on a corpus of 98 articles and press releases: 21 press releases and 77 articles. 13 press releases were issued by the Romanian Government and 8 by the Ministry of Culture.

The articles have been chosen from the most accessed articles according to one of the most comprehensive Romanian Internet traffic monitor engine - [www.traffic.ro](http://www.traffic.ro). The websites from the firsts places have been adevarul.ro (with 51), libertatea.ro (with 8), ziare.com (with 12) and antena3.ro (with 6 articles).

The periods during which the press releases and the articles have been published are July, October and December 2017, January 2018 and April 2018. If the question is why these months? Because of the decisions of three governments:

- before July 2017 the Romanian Government was the main responsible for events related to celebration;
- July 2017: the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Culture;

- October – December 2017: Romanian Government decided the events, budgets, attributions, created the Interinstitutional Department;
- January 2018: The prime-minister has been changed;
- April 2018 – The President signed the decree related to the Centennial Law.

The limitations of the analysis were:

- the number of articles published in the chosen period,
- the international and national contexts, political and social legislation,
- the multiple responsibility for the events.

## 6. Methodology

The content analysis was used to research the 98 articles and press releases in order to find out how has been presented one of the most important moments from Romania's history. The articles have been selected taking into account the following themes: the main one – the Great Union Centennial, the second theme: legislation and budget. The steps for the research have been:

1. identify the main themes of the press releases and articles as the main frames;
2. correlate the topics to establish the transversal themes;
3. use a comparative approach to create a map of trends.

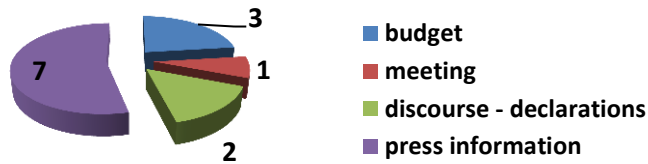
The unit of analysis was the article/the press release and the units of coding were the words and the syntagms. The transversal themes are known as topics that are considered key in the research, and give the perspectives of the results, the conclusions.

## 7. Findings

The research questions for the study were:

1. What were the frames (themes) used by the media and by the two public institutions?
2. What meant the Centenary?

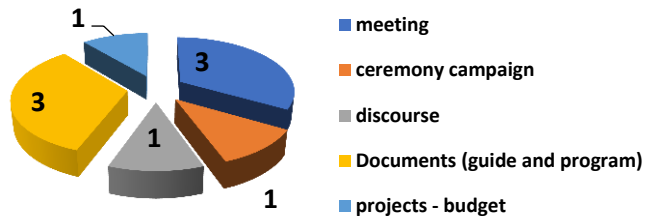
Related to the press releases issued by the Romania Government, only 3 of 13 presented details about the budget, two were about declarations and 7 were information for media – general details about the events.



**Chart no. 1**

Source: Authors own conception

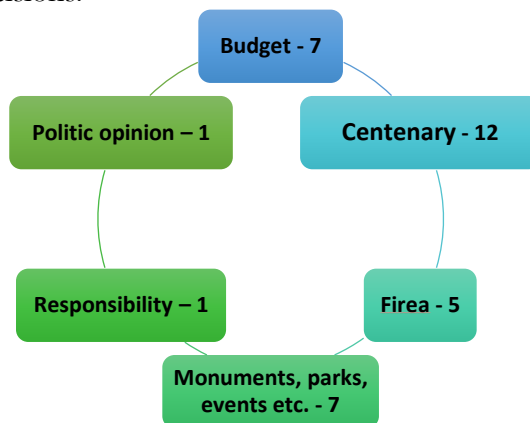
The main themes for the Ministry of Culture were about the meetings for organizing the events for Centenary and the documents necessary for preparing the events. Only in one press release was presented some information about the budget needed for some projects.



**Chart no. 2**

Source: Authors own conception

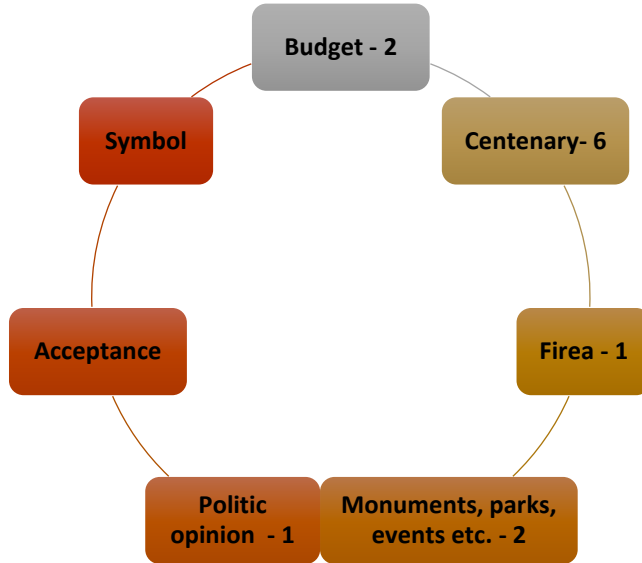
Thus, the frames of the public institutions were about the budget, meetings and discourse or declarations of the public persons responsible for the events or decisions.



**Chart no. 3** - keywords for Ziare.com - 12 articles

Source: Authors own conception

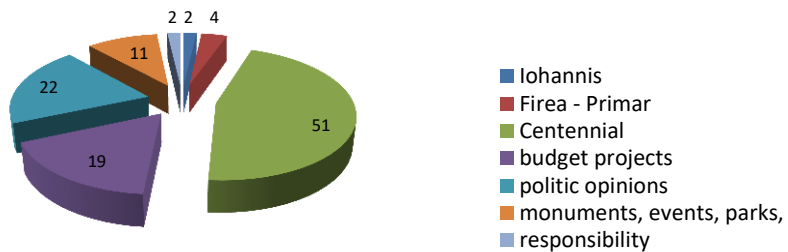
For the media, the most important part presented was about the investments for celebration of the Centenary, mainly monuments, parks or events organized to remembering what happened in 1918.



**Chart no. 4** - keywords for antena3.ro - 6 articles  
 Source: Authors own conception

For the tv station Antena 3, the articles about the Centenary were related to the investments, but also to the budget. According to the titles, the subjects were about the Romanian trains for centenary, some political decisions and cultural activities.

The Centenary was mediatized as a very important historical moment for which have been allocated very much money for the commemoration.



**Chart no. 5** - keywords for adevarul.ro – 51 articles  
 Source: Authors own conception



The publication were appeared the most articles, adevarul.ro, preferred to present the politic opinions about the Centenary and the projects which will be created with this occasion.

Almost all the titles contained the word centenary, in connection with politics, culture – to present the investments or the monuments, or with society, fact which could contribute to the easy identification of the articles for this study.

All the three websites published details about what authorities are going to do for the Centenary, but also how much money will cost each event or monument or park in which something will happen. These are the common themes for the mass-media. Thus, the resemblances were the projects, the budgets, the responsible, history and its significance, political opinions and the memory of an historical event.

The main frames through which the media preferred to present the events of the commemoration were the budget, and everything related to it, the names of the people involved in decisions (the decision-makers), the Centenary itself and monuments or projects. Other themes mediated by the press were: the political opinions.

In the press releases the main theme was also related to the budget, which means the Centenary meant money, politic opinion, different events, but also chaos, responsibility passed from one institution to another.

## **8. Conclusions**

The answers to the main research questions are easily to understand. Thus, the main frames are specific as they present themes related to the celebration of the Romanian Centenary. The study is interesting mainly thanks to the comparative perspectives between the media's and the government's.

Related to the second research question, the Centenary meant for the media sadness, circus, pragmatism, the Centenary of Disunity, chaos, incompetency, lack of respect for the country. The past is buried and the Centenary has two cuts, the helplessness of the Romanians.

For the authorities should have been an occasion for memorising the history, for remembrance of the past and the heroes, but it has been presented as an occasion to spend some money for monuments, building or rebuilding parks and organize some events, not so liked by the people, but for politicians, for their image.

The research highlighted also patterns of media coverage of the Centenary in the Romanian press. The Centennial Year was mediated and framed under the theme budget by the Government and by media. The

other theme used to present the events, the history and the heroes derived from the first one and the social reality meant a construction through events, monuments, projects, decisions, but everything related to the money spent for a commemorative year.

---

## References

---

- Coman, M. (2004). *Introducere în sistemul mass-media*. Polirom.
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Polity Press.
- de Vreese, H., C. (2015). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journalism + Document Design*, 13(1), 51-62.  
[https://claesdevreese.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/devreese\\_2015\\_2.pdf](https://claesdevreese.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/devreese_2015_2.pdf)
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing toward classification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.  
[https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2018/POL256/um/Entman\\_1993\\_FramingTowardclarificationOfAFracturedParadigm.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2018/POL256/um/Entman_1993_FramingTowardclarificationOfAFracturedParadigm.pdf)
- Gook B. (2011). Being there is everything! *Memory Studies*, 4(1), 13-22.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1750698010382157>
- Hagen, T., & Tota, A. L. (2016). *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*. New York.
- Hepp, A., & Krotz, F. (editors. 2014). *Mediatized Worlds - Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lundby, K. (Ed.) (2014). *Mediatization of Communication*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH.
- Reese, S. D. (2001). Prologue—Framing public life. In Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. H., Grant, A. E. (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.