

THE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK DEVELOPEMENT IN PRINT MEDIA

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Abstract: *In this article, we identify the characteristics of the distribution networks in print media and the features of marketing in mass media, emphasising the attempts initiated by the press in the context of the financial crisis. The research was conducted through a case study on regional newspaper, „Gazeta de Sud” The main problems analyzed were decreasing newspaper circulation and advertising. The research taken into account trends and developments worldwide print media as well as print media particularities of Romania, with a focus on identifying factors that contributed to the closure of a significant number of newspapers, or their transition from printed version online format. The paper is mainly focused on some practical issues related to the way of organizing the print media sales networks, the authors elaborating proposals for the implementation of certain measures to increase the circulation, on the one hand, and on the hand, to increase the sale of ad space in the newspaper. Compared with other products, the newspaper has unique characteristics caused by daily changing content, and therefore the product itself. Having a highly perishable, the content of media products should always seen in relation to time, which requires more rapid distribution and continuous production.*

Key words: distribution networks, advertising, marketing strategies, print media

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Introduction: The way in which the economic crisis has influenced the distribution policies differs from one company to another and from one activity domain to another. In order to understand the application procedure of the distribution policy at the level of the media institutions, it is necessary to clarify the content of the media products and of the specific elements that favors or limit the application of marketing concepts, methods and techniques.

One of the main characteristics of the media selling network is the fact that it generates profit, not only by an increase in the number of sold newspapers, but also by an increase in the number of readers, which determines a growth in the newspaper space sold for advertising. Fixing the selling price of ad space depends on several criteria mainly related to audience size and its socio-economic profile. Advertising buyers invest in newspaper ad space in terms of achieving a certain number of users or buyers (Bertand, 2001). Type of distribution networks is different from one country to another depending on a number of features. Thus in France and Italy press is bought mainly from newsstands, in Sweden is generalized newspapers home delivery while in U.S. besides newspapers home delivery are mainly used newspapers vending machines.

The study analyzes the current situation of media products market with special emphasis on the print media in Romania and proposes a series of measures for development and improvement of distribution networks. The importance given to this activity consists in the need for information on the paper available to the readers.

1. Current trends in print media

The economic crisis caused a serious decline in the print media circulation, contributing to a great extent to the dissolution of many important papers, a part of which can only be found online. The print media industry finds itself in a critical moment. In the last few years, the media institutions have tried to develop online products and to find new income sources to provide for the transition from the printed paper to the digital one. Although the access to the Internet is continuously growing, the value of the revenues generated by the Internet newspapers is still very low. According to the data presented on different specialized websites [11] in 2011, in the USA the revenues from advertising in the print media format were still in decline for the sixth year in a row. Thus, according to the study by Amy Mitchell and Tom Rosentiel of The *Project for Excellence in Journalism* (PEJ) the losses generated in 2011 by

the advertising decrease on the print paper were ten times higher than the revenues generated by the online advertising [12]. The situation is as critical in Europe as it is in Romania where a number of papers closed or remained only with their the online version.

An analysis of the Romanian press situation shows that the advertising revenues for the online newspapers are low, despite having registered a sudden improvement lately [7]. Thus, the central papers register a higher income than the local papers, which have insignificant revenues that do not compensate for the revenues obtained from the print version of the newspaper, though more and more readers have access to the Internet [6].

As far as the online market for the local publications is concerned, we consider that the strategy adopted should be differently approached, because the local companies, as faithful clients for advertising, have not been interested yet in online advertising. In addition to this, the integral online version of the paper has an increased number of readers, but reduces the number of print version buyers and therefore decreases the revenues. It is probable that the general tendency of the media is to be published online. But, we should not forget that the online version is not accessible to important categories of the population, at least not yet to the rural population.

From our point of view, the main reasons why the sale of advertising spaces in the online version of the newspaper did not have the estimated results are the following:

a) Firstly, the most important national papers, which impose the trend on the market, have a wrong marketing strategy, offering the online content of the paper to the readers free of charge. At the same time, there is no solution found to financially evaluate the new audience gained on the internet. In other words, by consciously moving the readers from the print version to the electronic/online version, the papers have lost important sums of money.

b) Secondly, the financial crisis has determined a budget adjustment in advertising, which had subsequently an impact on the entire print media in Romania. The important advertising clients have focused only on TV lately, by allocating their budgets to the TV stations as a media vehicle and completely eliminating the newspapers from the marketing mix.

c) Thirdly, another reason for this situation is the fact that, once moved on the internet, the newspapers became direct competitors for the advertising budgets together with the other websites. Before the technological revolution brought about by the Internet, the papers were in competition with the other media (TV and radio stations etc.) . Nowadays, the newspapers compete for the online budgets not only with the other media, but with the entire spectrum of websites, from Google to Facebook and Yahoo.

d) Another reason, as mentioned above, is the distrust of the faithful clients of the local advertising in the impact of the digital version of the paper.

In Romania, the number of publication have dramatically dropped, the audience rates have become half of the 2008 value and the editorial offices have to constantly take measures to reduce costs [5]. The number of employees is continually decreasing, leading to a reduction in the number of quality articles that may be produced. Moreover, the reporters are asked to produce more and to increase the content for all the platforms: print, digital, mobile, but also to promote this content on the social networks. This fact led to a general dissatisfaction among the reporters. At the same time, the revenues from the paper selling and from the advertising spaces in the print version have decreased, and values from the online revenues could not compensate for the difference. A major part of the paper circulation is determined by the distribution costs. The circulation of a newspaper represents the number of copies distributed for a paper edition and it is formed of the papers sold by piece, with subscription, in promotions or for protocols etc.

A new approach in the case of many regional newspapers is to concentrate on the most profitable zones, thus reducing the costs. The marketing strategy is based on the fidelity of the readers and not on approaching new markets.

As opposed to other goods, the paper is a perishable product which is quickly replaced by another one. On account of this, the selling price is low in order to assure its accessibility, a quick selling and implicitly the market clearance for new products. However, the costs are high and the profit share is low under these circumstances. For the production of a newspaper, the producer needs a series of resources, such as: raw material and equipment, qualified workforce and something specialised for the mass media institutions, namely information and cultural creation. Economic crisis determined higher costs for the raw material (especially for paper) and for specialised and well-qualified workforce

The selling price of the newspaper is set taking into consideration the following items:

- the editing cost of the newspaper;
- the printing cost of the newspaper;
- the distribution cost of the newspaper;
- the commissions paid to the media distribution companies, respectively the selling workforce;
- the percentage of the assumed returned copies (the number of printed but not sold copies).

Starting from the data presented above and targeting a certain profit, the selling price is set per piece/copy (the cover price).

Regarding the subscription price, alongside with the editing, printing and distribution prices of the newspaper, we have to take into account the commissions owed to the post office and to the agents and distributors.

Some research studies about the Western European press market show that the investments necessary for launching a publication pay off in 3-4 years. In comparison with other activity domains that assure their profit from the direct sale of the product, the press institutions cannot survive based on the exclusive paper selling activity.

The revenues of the print media institutions are varied and unequal, depending on the type of paper and its impact on the market.

The mass media market is a dual market of the mass-media products as far as the revenues registered in mass-media are concerned. The revenues come from two categories of buyers: the media products buyers and the mass-media advertising buyers (Coman, 2007).

The revenues of the press institutions are obtained from the following types of activities:

- a). the retail or subscription selling;
- b). the advertising space selling for the clients who want to publish their own messages on the support offered by the press institutions;
- c). the selling/renting of the access right on the newspapers websites (advertising on the online version of the newspaper);
- d). the amounts obtained from different sources as sponsorship.

Each type of these revenues contribute more or less to the success of the company's activity and are tightly interconnected and reciprocally supporting.

2. Selling strategies in print press

One source of revenue is provided by the newspaper selling, but the most important source, as we previously mentioned, is the advertising spaces sold.

The advertising is divided in two categories:

- the small ad, which included small sized announcements narrowly targeted to different categories (job offers and demands, selling and buying real estates, vehicles or other products, service provisions, renting offers and demands, commemorations, deaths and condolences etc.) whose price is set according to the number of words, the font and the number of daily publications requested.

- the display ad (the larger ad), which includes those medium or large sized announcements, and can include even a whole newspaper page and whose price is determined by the page position, by the display size, the number of editions, the number of colours used (black or multicoloured). Many of the large ad announcements are commissioned and mediated by the advertising companies.

The advertising advantages in the print media are determined by the fact that this type of media advertising is flexible both in dimension and in price, with opportunities for coloured advertising, smaller or bigger or with different inserts.

So that the profits from advertising to be really relevant for the company owners, it is first necessary to understand that, by attracting a bigger volume of advertising, regardless of its type, is correlated with the paper circulation and audience. The individual persons, but especially the big economic agents and advertising agencies are well aware of the fact that the advertising impact in the newspaper is in direct ration with the number of that paper's readers and when they take the decision of publishing an ad, they analyse very carefully, by comparison, both the tariffs, and the circulation or the number of readers of the papers with the profile and the coverage area they need.

BRAT (The Romanian Office of Circulation Audit) is the authority able to certify the circulation number for a newspaper or a publication for certain audited periods, and SNA (The National Audience Study) is the authority which, on the basis of surveys, measures the audience number of a publication, that is the average number of readers per edition of that publication (in general, a copy of a newspaper is read by 4-5 people).

Taking into consideration the facts mentioned above, it is obvious that a bigger selling volume, even when it does not directly generate profit, brings about higher revenues from advertising, which in their turn, bring considerable profit for the editor.

Thus, the selling objectives of the company become extremely important.

In this study we used a comprehensive approach to examine different aspects of distribution networks in press. In order to achieve the purpose we used as research method the case study of the biggest regional newspaper in the country. Data collection was performed using as investigative tools interviews with distribution and advertising managers, direct observation and also analysis of archival documents and data. The research findings have resulted in measures aimed at developing sales networks in print but also to redress those in free fall due to the economic crisis.

According to BRAT studies newspaper *Gazeta de Sud* from Craiova is the most widely read regional newspaper in Romania, having over 100,000 readers / day and an average circulation number of over 16.000 copies [8]. *Gazeta de Sud* is distributed in Dolj, Olt, Gorj, Mehedinți and Vâlcea counties. The newspaper covers every possible editorial domains specific to a newspaper: local news, social problems, sport events, health issues, education, culinary recipes, TV programmes and recommendations, investigations, economy, culture, events and celebrities' life. *Gazeta de Sud* is a member of the Romanian Office of Circulation Audit.

Gazeta de Sud consists of the editing board and the selling departments of the newspaper (the distribution department that deals with selling the newspaper by using newspaper sellers and the distribution news stands and the subscription selling department). The selling force of the company is supplemented by the advertising selling department which has the role to sell advertising space in the newspaper and in the online version of the paper.

As market competitors for *Gazeta de Sud* in Oltenia we can mention other regional papers, such as *Ediție Specială* or *Cuvântul Libertății*. The average daily circulation numbers of these newspapers, of 3.000 – 4.000 copies

(circulation numbers not audited by BRAT!), are much inferior to the circulation numbers of *Gazeta de Sud*, despite having a selling price and a subscription price lower than the prices of *Gazeta de Sud*.

Among its competitors, we should mention other regional weekly publications, such as *Săptămâna în Oltenia/The Week in Oltenia* and *Expresul de Sud/The Southern Express*, but their circulation numbers do not exceed 2.000 – 3.000 copies.

The content quality of *Gazeta de Sud*, the printing quality, the supplements offered and, last but not the least, the advantage of a very early distribution system and a very well organised complaints solving system greatly favour this newspaper in winning the competition with its local or regional, daily or weekly newspapers. As any other private company, this too aims at obtaining profit as a result of a superior value creation for consumers, satisfying better the consumers' needs.

Based on analysis of data from several local newspapers, it was observed that during this difficult period the press efforts are centred on sales and special offers are created to attract more and more clients for advertising.

The circulation of a publication represent the number of sold copies distributed for an edition and is formed of the copies sold as retail, by subscription, promotions and protocols etc. Part of these copies which are not sold return to the company and represent daily financial loss.

The distribution system of the *Gazeta de Sud* newspaper is presented in the figure below(fig.no.1):

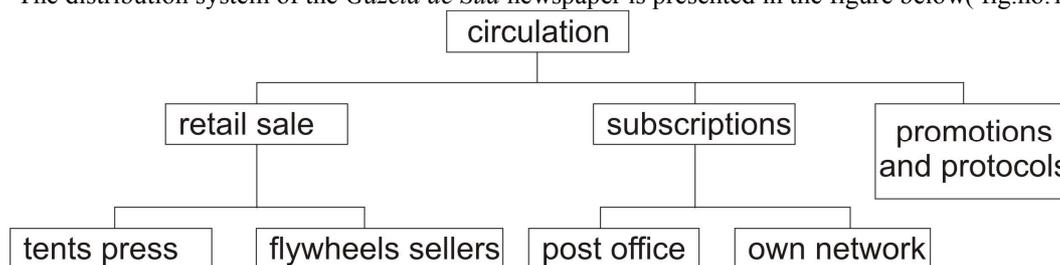


Fig. no1. The circulation components

As observed in the figure above, the selling circuit of print media includes **three main components**, namely the retail selling and the subscription selling.

a) *The retail selling* is divided in:

- the retail selling by the press distribution companies;
- the retail selling by the press distributors;

The retail selling by the press distribution companies is done at the news stands.

The disadvantages of retail selling by the press distribution companies are especially determined by:

- the selling presentation mode of the newspaper – very often illustrating the exclusive preferences of the sellers from the news stand, only certain publications are exposed and made visible to the detriment of other rival publication. In order to avoid this situation, the appointed personnel of *Gazeta de Sud* monitors and permanently assures that the newspaper is exposed at sight, giving the possibility to the clients to easily read the headlines.
- the delayed cash collection from the press distribution companies for the sold newspapers (minus the commissioned charged by these companies)
- the relatively hard collection of return papers (unsold newspapers), which requires material and time resources.

As a main advantage of the retail selling by the press distribution companies we mention the fact that, in this way, the editor benefits from an efficient selling manner of its newspaper, due to qualified personnel and strategic locations placed in the area with intense traffic (the news stands).

The retail selling by the newspaper sellers is an alternative to selling at the news stands, intended not to replace it, but to complete it.

In general, the newspaper sellers are placed at:

- traffic lights crossroads, a situation in which the clients are the car drivers that wait for the green light;
- supermarkets, markets, train stations, bus stations, traffic ways with many shops and open-air coffee shops where there are many passers-by.

The newspaper sellers try to adjust to their potential clients by attracting them into buying the product offered.

If in the case of the news stands, the client is the one heading for the newspaper, in the case of the newspaper sellers, we can figuratively speak about the newspaper that come directly to the client, facilitating and providing a very comfortable sale.

The advantages of selling the newspaper by the newspaper sellers are the following:

- facilitating the newspaper selling process for the client, making it easy, comfortable and quick;
- attracting undecided clients and transforming them, in many situations, in faithful clients of that newspaper seller;
- covering areas where the press distribution companies do not own news stands, thus providing access to the newspaper for a larger number of potential clients;

- prompt cash collection for the sold newspapers;
- minimum returned newspapers, due to very meticulously and well organised daily orders and to the possibilities to supplement the order of a newspaper seller, that is giving to another seller the order left unsold in one area, according to the selling number of newspapers at a certain hour.

As a drawback, we mention the often poor quality of the people willing to accept such jobs, there being situations when the clients were disturbed by the very insisting newspaper sellers (verbal aggression or not receiving the right change).

Another form of retail selling, successfully practised in the United States of America and in many European Union countries is selling by newspaper vending machines.

In Romania, there have been many attempts to implement such vending machines, especially in the supermarkets, given the advantage of eliminating the human intermediary from this distribution chain, whether it is the the news stand seller or the newspaper seller.

However, by eliminating this intermediary and thus the disadvantages specific for these two types of retail selling, other disadvantages became obvious, such as:

- the relatively higher price of the newspaper vending machines;
- the building technique of these machines, which presupposes the opening of a door the moment one introduces the money, giving the possibility to take more than one paper. This does not represent a drawback for the civilised countries, but in Romania, for easily understood reasons, the editors prefer machines that give only one paper at a time. But, there are technical details to take into account here, such as the variable weight of a paper from one edition to the other and from one publication to the other.

b) Selling by subscription

Most of the editors prefer to offer the client this possibility too, that is to get the newspaper by subscribing to the system.

The client's advantages are the following:

- the client's safety that he'll get the right publication, avoiding the risk of not finding the newspaper at the news stands;
- the subscription price is much smaller than the total price paid by the buyer for each item bought individually in a month;
- the paper is received by the subscriber at the address mentioned, without being necessary to go and get it or to waste time doing it;
- for the clients in the rural area, where the news stands are generally missing, it is practically impossible to get the wanted newspaper;

Nonetheless, there are also disadvantages, such as:

- the subscription has to be paid in full in advance, for the entire subscription period;
- the paper is usually delivered at late hours, when many people are already gone to work or to their daily activities, thus losing one of the basic qualities (offering late, up-to-the-moment news and information);
- the newspapers with weekend editions (on Saturday or Sunday) are distributed in the countryside on Monday;
- the mail boxes, especially at the blocks of flats, are generally unsafe and easily allow for getting the newspaper by evil-minded people, which subsequently leads to a general discontent of the subscriber who thinks that probably the newsagent was not delivered.

From the perspective of the press trust, the subscription price, in the case of *Gazeta de Sud*, does not always cover all these costs, but it is an accepted loss because the final profit is targeted and that is advertising (a profit which is direct relation to the circulation number of the newspaper and with the subscription number).

However, the selling on subscriptions targets the fidelity of the clients, increasing the audience and implicitly the selling figures from advertising and much less the profit. Practically, the buyers by subscriptions are encouraged to buy a product at a much lower price per item than that bought daily from the news stands.

Generally, the number of subscriptions represents a significant profit from the total circulation number of that publication. Moreover, the subscribers are usually those faithful clients that assure the safety for continuing to publish that publication and on which the editor bases the future planning. The anticipated payment of the subscription allows the editor to collect in advance considerable amounts of money, that would help organise the activities for the next period.

The subscriptions do not usually generate significant profit for the editor. There are situations when the subscription price hardly covers the editing and printing costs from that publication. The starting idea is that a great number of subscriptions means a an increased circulation number and thus a larger audience, this leading to obtaining more advertising clients from the specialised companies. The advertising companies carefully analyse the data given by the certified institutions, such as BRAT in the case of the circulation numbers, and SNA for audience, and their quantitative and value offer for large advertising is in accordance with the data. Given this fact, the editors do not necessarily target profit from subscriptions, but they calculate the indirect profit derived from advertising, due to the large audience of the newspaper.

Subscribing at the post office is the most used form of subscribing to a publication.

The national company the Romanian Post covers the whole country and on an agreement basis, concludes contracts with the editors and distributes subscriptions to a series of publications.

Another form of subscription, practised especially by several local and regional newspapers, is the subscription through their own subscribing network. Such subscribing networks have been created because the editors wanted to increase the number of subscribers, thus adding up to the subscriptions made through the post office.

Taking into account the disadvantages of the post office subscription method, the newspapers subscription network aims at eliminating these disadvantages and thus earning more subscribers, even those who were initially unwilling to subscribe to these publications, given the drawbacks.

Despite the higher price, the subscribers adhering to this network generally have the following advantages:

- the newspaper is delivered early in the morning, offering the possibility to be read and get in touch with the latest information even before going to work or start the daily activities;
- the paper is delivered even on Saturday, including in the rural areas where the network has collaborators and coverage;
- there is also the possibility the payment throughout the first subscription days, especially for the new clients, to give them the possibility to appreciate the way in which the paper is delivered;
- the claims and complaints are more promptly analysed and solved by the editor's personnel in charge of this aspect.

Creating such subscription networks involves a considerable effort from the editor's side, being necessary to employ new people, both for the contracting part, and for the distribution of subscriptions part for the entire area to be covered. Alongside with these aspects, it is also necessary to have people that would coordinated this activity, that is to distribute newspaper packets in the locations where the subscription distributors come and pick them up and finally deliver them to the clients etc.

c) Promotions and protocols

A part of the total circulation number is represented by promotions and protocols.

The newspaper *Gazeta de Sud*, but other newspapers, too, financially support this activity and have constantly resorted the so-called promotional subscriptions (subscriptions at reduced prices or even awarded free of charge), whose role is:

- to achieve an intensive increase in the number of subscribers in the area where there is a deficit from this point of view;

- to regain the lost subscribers;
- to reward certain faithful readers;
- to slightly raise the audience of the newspaper;

There were many situations when a certain number of copies of a newspaper edition were given free of charge, with the purpose to promote the newspaper on the event of special occasions.

In the case of protocols, these are represented by the newspapers regularly given, free of charge, to several public institutions or radio or television stations which broadcast shows about related to press reviews.

Analysing the data at the end of 2011 the structure of the circulation number is the following:

- 45% represent the subscriptions by the Romanian Post;
- 25% subscriptions by their own distribution network;
- 18% selling the newspaper at the news stands;
- 8% selling the newspaper by the newspaper sellers;
- 4% protocols and promotions;

It can be concluded that 70% of the product buyers are faithful readers of the newspaper and that they regularly buy it by the subscription system, while the retail selling (at the news stands or by the newspaper sellers) provide only 26% of the total circulation number, additionally having the disadvantage to deal with the returned items (newspaper copies left unsold) which represent financial loss for the company.

From the data analysed during 2008-2011 (table no.1), we note that there is a decrease in the newspaper selling figures with 43%, the most influenced being the subscription selling by its own network, which dropped with 76% and could not be compensated by the growth in the subscription rate by the Romanian post office of 36% as compared to 2008.

Table no. 1. The sales evolution during 2008-2011

Year	Subscription by post	Subscription by network	Retail selling at news stands	Retail selling by newspaper sellers
2008	97.436	118.994	1.704.162	200.000
2009	79.634	100.347	1.396.995	175.800
2010	91.429	72.162	1.088.833	94.681
2011	132.694	29.581	963.756	83.804

Source(Internal Report of Organization)

Among the factors that contributed to this situation, we mention:

- the rise of the subscription price as a consequence of rising the price of the raw material and utilities;

- the renouncement to certain distribution routes because of their lack of profitability;
- the decrease of the population income, which made them unsubscribe the newspaper system.

As a result of the data analysis, the greatest part of the population that subscribe to the newspaper are old people (over 55% of the subscribers are retired people) followed by the population of the age group 45-55 years (approx. 30%).

With the purpose of increasing the sale figures and the market quota, the press features may be used accordingly, namely by adopting or allowing for:

- measures to keep the current clients faithful to the newspaper, materialised in flawless distribution, attractive price, gifts, prompt complaints solving of clients unsatisfied with the paper distribution by its own distribution system. The company has to take measures to revise the whole distribution system of the subscribed newspaper so that to improve the acquisition efficiency and the number of subscribers, because the recruitment value and number of subscribers are extremely important factors for the survival and profit generation in a business with a subscription selling strategy component. The reasons for not subscribing, as mentioned above, may become mostly known by surveys. The activity of attracting new clients is much more costly and given this fact new programmes should be created to keep the current clients.

- measures to attract new subscribers by setting up a telemarketing service, through which potential clients are contacted by phone and asked if they are willing to subscribe to the newspaper network, offering, together with other companies, promotional materials for the clients who subscribe for a longer period of time;

- contacting the lost subscribers in order to establish the causes of their refusal to continue the subscription and to try, where possible, to remedy the complaints; there is also the possibility to offer reduced price subscriptions or even free subscriptions for short time intervals to make the client aware that the complaints were solved;

- creating a prize awarding, extremely motivating for the newspapers sellers and the subscription agencies that obtain very good results in their activity;

- giving clients the possibility to subscribe by sending an SMS (the cost for the SMS is the equivalent price for the monthly subscription, and the client is contacted after the SMS in order to obtain all the information necessary for the delivery);

- organising a retribution system for the post workers with good results in their activity to conclude subscriptions;

- organising a system for the so-called promotional subscriptions destined to certain locations where the paper can be read (open air café bars, medical cabinets, notarial offices etc.) a situation in which the client pays the full subscription price and gets other 2-3 free subscriptions.

- entering on a bigger market by a more aggressive advertising campaign;

- improving the quality of the newspaper articles and actively involving the readers in the community life, a strategy that would attract a greater number of readers motivated by their involvement in the daily problems of their community. The company position is, also, seriously affected by the presence of a very high number of information sources and news that contribute to the decrease in the content value, but also to the impossibility of protecting the content;

- rethinking the offer system for the online readers by paying a monthly subscription in order to have access to the content of the newspaper. The new payment model must be reorganised so that the media companies may sell packages of products that include subscriptions to the print newspaper and to the online version. Thus, the subscribers to the print version may have access also to the online version and to the smart phone /tablet version.

This payment structure encourages readers to subscribe to the print edition and subsequently to support the maintenance of the circulation number. Furthermore, the attention of the clients is drawn, from the idea of restriction, to the idea of full access to the information, by any means.

The strategies adopted by the press trusts for overcoming the crisis must be correlated with the resource strategies, especially since the costs for the workforce in this activity domain represent an important part of the final product cost. Given this fact, we consider that the analysis of the company's activity has to be drawn up in direct correlation with the human resource strategy for the selling component.

We claim that the personnel restructuring and the dissolution of the distribution networks are supposed to be the last resort strategy, used only after all the other strategies have been analysed and eliminated, because, once the distribution network is lost, it can hardly be re-established due to higher costs.

Recruitment and selection of the selling workforce in the domain are characteristics determined by the specific activity. When analysing the activity, one have to take into account a series of aspects, namely:

- a). the number of the current publications in the region;
- b). the recruitment and selection of the selling workforce, which is difficult since the revenues obtained from selling the newspaper is low;
- c). the geographical area where the publication is.

With the purpose of winning the market, a series of major investments must be applied and, as opposed to other activity domains, we claim that the most important investment must be made in the human resources. It should not be neglected that a newspaper sells information. Some of the arguments in favour of the opinion that the human resource is the most important component are related to the quality of the newspaper articles, to the research methods

and subject approach and to the manner in which the readers are captivated by the headlines. Another challenge is adjusting to the new needs and reading behaviour of diverse segments of readers, but many did not understand this aspect, despite the market data reports about the focus groups present in each trust.

Overcoming the crisis does not presupposes only restricting the activity. On the contrary, as we mentioned before, it involves the quality improvement of the product.

Another strategy that should be adopted by the local publications could be the identification of new distribution channels and the improvement of advertising offers to attract important clients in need of advertising. We should not forget that the important local advertising clients were the real estate investors, the banks and the auto dealers. Once the crisis was installed, most of the private and public companies have reduced their advertising budgets. Many of these companies limited their activity or even disappeared from the market, others oriented towards different mass media channels: television or radio. Another option to increase sales is to withdraw from the advertising companies in which many newspapers sell their available inventory. These companies get big commissions, and sometimes the publisher gets 5-10% of the advertising list price. The dependence to third parties for advertising selling visibly affects the newspapers performance. Those who already have their own selling teams debate on the opportunity to use the same people both for selling print and online. There are opinions supporting these convergent views, but there are also those who consider that a separate team for online selling would be more efficient. They claim that it is very hard for a sales manager to motivate and train a team that is supposed to have different selling techniques and completely different financial expectations.

Likewise, in order to be complete and functional, the selling strategy presupposes the elaboration of an entire set of specific forms: the report forms, the market reports regarding the competing newspapers, the press monitoring reports, the buffer stock, the monitoring report for the selling agents routes, reports regarding the number of new activity routes or new clients etc.

The marketing and selling strategy of the organisation implies finding solutions to attract clients, not only by offering appealing discounts, but also by providing better articles with a more interesting content, or, in the case of the press trusts that have the opportunity of using several media channels, by offering common packages for clients. For example, those publications that do not abandon their online version of the newspaper have to find new ways to attract advertising clients for its both versions, the print and the online, eventually using these common packages. First of all, a coherent marketing approach should be based on a clear definition of the market and the audience.

When all the departments of a company work together to meet the needs and the interests of the consumer, the result may be a successful one. It implies that the action should unfold on two levels: firstly, it refers to the functional components of the marketing system - the selling workforce, the advertising, the relationship with the clients, the product management, the marketing research that need to work together. Secondly, marketing should be supported, understood and accepted by all the other departments.

To support the team work in a inter-department team, the organisation has to apply internal and external marketing. The external marketing is directed to the audience outside the organisation. The internal one, refers to employing, training and motivating certain capable and talented employees, which will serve the interests and the needs of the clients. The internal marketing precedes the external marketing. For an organisation, there is no point in promising excellent services before being capable to actually offer them. A selling team that is not supported by the strategic marketing cannot successfully accomplish the selling objectives. It is very difficult to build a selling team in print media and it is more difficult to motivate it. The company existence is dependent on the way in which the selling team interacts with the clients.

The strategies for keeping the products on the market should be tailored to meet the new, continuously changing expectations of the consumers. The content quality and the reputation of the publication based on the professionalism of the journalists will be the basis for the future strategies in the media businesses.

3. Conclusions

Should the press trusts want to develop future strategies, they have to be aware of the globalisation effect, of the economic changes and the new technologies and their impact on the entire media industry. It is unnatural to offer common solutions for all consumers, especially under the circumstances brought by the explosion of the Internet. There is the need for separate offers, in accordance with the public segments: traditionalist users, new media users etc.

This segmentation is not easy to realise and all the needs that the publication has to meet should be clearly, honestly and precisely defined. Defining and targeting a clear value for the readers and the advertising clients will help the publication have better chances to resist on the market. At the moment, thousands of papers throughout the world are caught in a fight with the Internet. Nobody knows what will happen, which of them will win the fight, or how the survivors will look like after the final round. On one hand, the new technology has led to an audience increase, and on the other hand the selling figures of the print newspapers have significantly dropped.

Thus, the most aggressive competitor of the traditional selling networks in the print press is the Internet. Despite the fact that the costs for the online version of the newspaper are lower compared to the print version, the editors still don't know or don't understand the online phenomenon and for this new competitor they have to find solutions to reinvent themselves.

In print press, the business model was almost identical regardless of the advertising type: creating and distributing informational content and attaching advertising to that content.

The expenses generated by the printing, distribution and salaries were covered from the newspaper selling (30%) and advertising (70%) [13]. There has never been a profound relationship between the advertising and the articles. The advertising clients had no choice in the matter, lacking alternatives for the promotion of their products or services. Their only requirement regarded the number of sold newspapers and the targeted audience. Under the current circumstances, the Internet development furthers more and more the content of the information and advertising. Practically speaking, we ask ourselves: Which are the reasons for selling a newspaper, given that all the information may be found on the Internet? and What determines the clients to allocate budgets for the print press?

As long as there are readers who want to read the newspaper in its print form, no matter what the fluctuations are, there will be a market for this product and therefore the press trusts will have to find the best methods to survive.

The greater the challenges for the companies management, the more difficult it is to anticipate the future of the press, no matter how many surveys will be carried out. Nowadays, under the given circumstances, the selling teams have the task to find the best solutions to attract advertising clients on one hand, and to find solutions for keeping the distribution channels for the newspaper, on the other hand.

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