

# The Persuasive Potential of *Storytelling* in the Professions of Contemporary Communication

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## I. The appeal to emotions, the efficiency of a sustainable strategy

The sinuous social “story” that we intend to present may start from Gustave Le Bon’s earlier writing in which the renewal of civilizations is conditioned by essential changes in beliefs, conceptions and opinions<sup>2</sup>, in the same paradigm of the significant weight held by the “hereditary fund of the feelings of a nation”, a fund that the decision makers, the good connoisseurs of mass psychology exploit consistently in their strategies of domination of the public. Note a “detail”: among the attributes of a civilization, apart from culture, rules, discipline, the author includes “the passage from instincts to reason”<sup>3</sup>, which, as it can be seen today, no longer represents the royal path in the mechanism of “digesting” messages. The combination of reason (at least as desiderate) and “soul of the crowds” still echoes, although one can often see how the “precepts of pure reason”<sup>4</sup> are overlooked in favour of impressions and suggestions cultivated by professionals in the art of leadership.

The concern of some philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, writers, psychiatrists (G. Le Bon, G. Tarde, M.-L. Rouquette, S. Moscovici, E. Canetti) for the human behaviour in hypostases that have become classic for the individual and group “social dissection” reveals “portraits” that we see perpetually reproduced in our existence as a

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<sup>2</sup> G. Le Bon, *Psibologia multîmilor* [Psychologie des foules] (Bucharest: Anima, 1990), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 11.

species. Surprisingly revolutionary at the time of their launch, the authors' ideas regarding the differences of mentality and action of the individual as such vs. the same individual found in a psychological crowd received validation in an age of masses, of popular culture, of blossoming media, when concepts such as "quantity" and "number" not only gained ground over concepts such as "quality" and "elite", but they have come to represent "the only logic of history" (G. Le Bon). The socially validated qualities and actions of the individual as seen outside of the crowd instantly disappear when he is included in a large group. In exchange for betraying attributes such as morality, critical thinking, or non-obedience, the man who finds himself in the indistinct mass will acquire the feeling of power (with the mention that "the masses rule, but do not govern"<sup>5</sup>) doubled by the lack of assuming a personal responsibility. The comfort, security, and force transferred to the individual by the "umbrella" of the number preserves on the long-term the rule of the majority in the modern democracies and, for the most part, in an era of multiple identities, of the image, of the information-merchandise<sup>6</sup>.

We are experiencing the full affirmation of sensational journalism, in which "thrilling and dramatic stories" also include the illustration of apolitical topics that have an impact on the consumer public: sports, technology, various facts, fashion, etc<sup>7</sup>. The commentary and the polemics become "areas" of efficiency and emotional involvement in journalism (L. Daudet), defying in some European countries the Anglo-Saxon model of neutrality expressed through the famous formula (and warning) "Facts, not words!" (C.P. Scott, editor for *The Guardian*), or, in another phrasing, "Facts are sacred, comments are optional".

According to A. Schäffle, the obvious journalistic virtue is the solidity of beliefs, hence the self-assessment of media professionals as providing a neutral and precise account of the events. The inventiveness and the spirit of observation beat, by far, the erudition of the journalist<sup>8</sup>, although, for a long time, the profession of journalist has been thought to belong to the "territory" of intellectual occupations, and the servant of this vocation has been downright seen as an intellectual! (However, P.

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<sup>5</sup> S. Moscovici, *Epoca maselor (L'âge des foules)* (Iași: Institutul European, 2001), 285.

<sup>6</sup> D. Kellner, *Cultura media* [Media Culture] (Iași: Institutul European, 2001), 13.

<sup>7</sup> J. Requate, "Jurnalistul," (The Journalist), in *Omul secolului XX (Der Mensch des 20. Jahrhunderts)*, ed. Ute Frevert, H.-G. Haupt (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 121- 124.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 131.

Bourdieu deems it exaggerated that journalists “often enjoy disproportionate consideration in relation to their intellectual merits”<sup>9</sup>). Two sources reinforce this belief. First, a definition belonging to the head of the French newspaper *La libre parole* (E. Drumont), according to which being an intellectual means “having a correct and profound conception of the world, a higher conception of the social order, a clear notion of the role that each individual plays, according to their type and position (...) to have the courage to say things upfront”<sup>10</sup>. One may also notice the German “image” of the intellectual, a social actor who is “in free suspension” – by means of his acquired culture, his perspective on the whole, his distance to the various ideologies and classes, his attitude of “vigilant guard in a dark night”<sup>10</sup>; the intellectual is often a loner, but in a “supervising position”, having a strong voice and defending “the breach of justice, truth, freedom and human dignities...”<sup>11</sup>. These “overseers” understood the twilight of “great stories”, seen as mythical-utopian projects (J.-F. Lyotard), and instead started paying more and more attention (and publishing space) to narratives of reduced complexity, but which are coherently and convincingly presented from an emotional point of view, in an age of infinite information and merchandise accessible at any time, of diminishing “value discrimination in the old moral way”<sup>12</sup>. We live in a century that privileges, from the perspective of the media, the star (who is charismatic, affirmative, subversive), but not as a hero or an idol, but as a bearer of values belonging to the message-consuming public<sup>13</sup>, as a “point of crystallization and identification” in a time of “global pluralization and trends of social differentiation”<sup>14</sup>.

## II. The postmodern logic of consumption. The integrative stake

Despite the opposition to the North American model of consumption, after more than half a century in which consumption was granted more

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<sup>9</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Despre televiziune (Sur la television)* (Bucharest: Grupul editorial ART, 2007), 76.

<sup>10</sup> D. Bering, “Intellectualul” [The Intellectual], in *Omul secolului XX* [The Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], 183.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 185.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 194.

<sup>13</sup> R. Strobel, “Starul” [The Star], in *Omul secolului XX* [The Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], 72.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 73.

attention than the consumer<sup>15</sup>, who was rather regarded as the recipient of marketing strategies, we could easily distinguish the image of the consumer who is manipulated by communication professionals. The last three decades of the past century came with optimistic theories regarding the postmodern consumer. J. Baudrillard, for example, associates consumption with the formation of taste, if only by virtue of the value that the goods (of any kind, from any psychosocial category) contain<sup>16</sup> and which shapes the life of the individual as owner and user of the value-objects. (The same point of view is found in P.-A. Pontoizeau, who attributes to the product, structurally speaking, a cultural value that attracts “uses, habits, consumption, tastes, satisfaction”<sup>17</sup>). In P. Bourdieu, mass consumption can generate social differentiation through the consumer goods themselves that are found in possession and use. Overcoming the stake of individuals’ uniformity, consumption acquires an integrative role. The beauty, however, lies not in one being different in relation to the ordinary surroundings, but in differentiating oneself in a special way. Perhaps some public voices would contradict the pluralization of the possibility of consuming, in a society of mass consumption (of consumerism), but taste and consumption - now dependent on residence, income, gender, etc. – are no longer attached to the social class. The self-presentation of the postmodern individual and the social delineation have consumption itself as a vehicle<sup>18</sup>. Particularly after the 1968 cultural revolution, the foreground will be “honoured” by “the entertainment industry, the terror of consumption and the borderless event-culture,” D. Bering considers<sup>19</sup>.

How can the contemporary consumer (user) be a prisoner of efficient communication strategies? By following a communication contract based on the credibility of the issuer (journalist, PR specialist, political adviser, etc.)<sup>20</sup>, but also by virtue of a narratological approach to any proposed topic. The ability for diegesis regarding the elements on the agenda of

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<sup>15</sup> H.-G. Haupt, “Consumatorul” [The Consumer], in the *Omul secolului XX* [The Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], 260.

<sup>16</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Societatea de consum. Mituri și structuri (La Société de consommation)*, (Bucharest: Comunicare.ro, 2005), 66-69.

<sup>17</sup> P.-A. Pontoizeau, *La communication culturelle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 153.

<sup>18</sup> H.-G. Haupt, *Omul secolului XX* [The Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], 273-274.

<sup>19</sup> D. Bering, *Omul secolului XX* [The Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], 190.

<sup>20</sup> D. Zeca-Buzura, *La taclale cu idolii (Speaking with the Idols)* (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 34-35.

professional communicators (one should not forget that we “failed” in communication journalism ever since 7-8 decades ago...) stimulates and maintains a dialogue with the public. This happens not only in order to enlighten on a reality that is interpreted through the various grids of communication professions, but also (or especially) in order to transform users into content generators, message critics, participants in the social “game” through networks, lists, discussion forums, “street meetings” in the form of groups with an actual civic stake.

In fact, for any means of expression that aims to conquer a numerically important public, there functions an exigence which consists in “losing asperities”, in removing what might frighten, in “dividing and excluding”<sup>21</sup>. More profitable (as proven since the ’90s) is to flatter the tastes of the public, to offer “slices of life, curtain-free exhibition of lived experiences (...), able to satisfy a certain form of voyeurism and exhibitionism”<sup>22</sup>. Before wishing, like Narcissus, to mirror himself in the captivating “waters” of the public space, the communicator eager to appear in the media field should, believes as a sociologist such as Bourdieu, ask some questions: “Is what I have to say meant to reach everyone’s ears? Am I prepared to proceed so that my discourse, in its form, is understood by everyone? Is it worth being heard by everyone? (...) Must it really be heard by everyone?”<sup>23</sup>.

B. Miège agrees with an augmented and fragmented public space, but also united through the coexistence of microspaces, of “partial public spaces”, due to the multiplication of communication devices. Although wondering about the social atomization that happens through the “parcelling” by the media, Miège strongly believes in the public sphere, “the one of expertise, debate and reasoning”<sup>24</sup>. Embodying the “public agora” (J. Dewey) by facilitating conversation, debate and exchange of opinions, the media bears a significant pressure, given P. Gross’ question mainly regarding “new media”: do they succeed in re-socializing consumers from former communist countries, by “stimulating citizen

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<sup>21</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Despre televiziune (Sur la television)*, 72.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 78.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 16.

<sup>24</sup> B. Miège, “Spațiul public: perpetuat, lărgit și fragmentat,” in *Spațiul public și comunicarea (L’espace public et l’emprise de la communication)*, ed. Isabelle Pailliat (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 167-178.

participation”<sup>25</sup>. Although fragile, unconsolidated and politicized, the elements circumscribed to civil society can have forms of expression varying between private initiatives, associations, clubs, up to social movements<sup>26</sup>, ensuring, according to J. Habermas, “a precondition of the public sphere”. Within civil society, the media permanently establish the necessary contacts (B. Miège) and demonstrate, along with the advent of *infotainment*, “the increasing permeability (...) towards all social stakes, crossing various frames of public debate and of understanding the world”<sup>27</sup>. In this logic, the dream of “contact between all, with or without anonymity”, fulfilled by Internet as a “supermedia” confirming electronic democracy, accomplishes more than the “general gathering” of those connected. It brings interactivity to quotas that are impossible for traditional media and “signs” the birth of the “network society”, with its great victory - the prolongation of face-to-face sociability, despite the threats (and proven examples) of isolation caused by the virtual environment<sup>28</sup>. The cyber-democracy of the last three decades can be translated as information wealth, freedom of expression, cancellation of hierarchies, rapid mobilization, de-massification and multimedia culture (M. Castells).

The public cyber-sphere also means an “own virtual life”, often far away from the classical (real) places of participation in the discourse of mass communication, due to the characteristics of the virtual environment as open, changing, separated from the “author’s era”<sup>29</sup> - G. Lovink considers. “The internet becomes the environment of the crowds”<sup>30</sup>, and “Postmodernity is no longer a strategy or a style, it is the natural condition of nowadays’ network society”<sup>31</sup>. This happens because virtuality certifies freedom of expression without borders (sometimes, without taking responsibility), because sharing is faster conjugated in the digital environment, and, why not, because the ideal of the individuality that is characteristic to postmodernity is not afraid of electronic

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<sup>25</sup> P. Gross, *Mass media și democrația în țările Europei de Est* [Entangled Evolutions: Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe] (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 187.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 193-195.

<sup>27</sup> É. Maigret, *Sociologie de la communication et des medias* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007), 167.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 249-255.

<sup>29</sup> G. Lovink, *Cultura digitală. Reflecții critice* [Digital Culture. Critica lReflections] (Cluj: Idea Design &Print, 2004), 114.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 165.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, 132.

loneliness in a flashy social “show”<sup>32</sup>. The era of cyber-technologies signifies rethinking “social convergence”, as well as openness and belonging, protection and freedom, appreciation and feedback through participation (feelings and experiences that create energy and establish the necessary directions)<sup>33</sup>.

In C. Salmon’s opinion, the Internet is positioned as a means of mass communication, “favouring an anecdotal version of events (...), contributing as never before to blurring the border between reality and fiction, especially by combining information with entertainment”<sup>34</sup>. This fragile barrier between reality and fiction would allow for the substitution of explanation by the narrative, providing a clear path for the manipulation practiced in the professions of communication<sup>35</sup>.

Beyond possible personal inconveniences in the “management” of emotional states, the orientation of the “emotional Ego” towards its beneficial change (going as far as self-realization) “plays” more and more consistently in the “marketing of emotions” practiced by the employees in political communication, business, (old and new) mass media. It is not certain whether people are tired of so much information and “migrate” toward “stories” because they reflect topics with diegetic potential, but also mirror the proposing professionals (including proponents of reality as fiction – G. Lovink) and their stakes “woven” into narratives (C. Salmon). The appeal to emotions is more “human” in a hyper-technological era, communication is personalized in an era of standardization, of informational uniformity. And it proves to be more efficient, since “manoeuvring” emotions (in the persuasion of psychological type, in the media “applications” with socialization-participation purposes) doesn’t fail. We are in the logic of D. De Lillo, in which the ideal type of post-industrial organization brings together flexibility, agility, organization in networks, orientation towards cultural, human, immaterial needs. The need for story and storytelling has intensified in the past decades and it produces effects on several levels: the personalization of certain institutions and messages, the rapprochement between organizations and the target audience, the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, 154.

<sup>34</sup> C. Salmon, *Storytelling, la machine à fabriquer des histoires et à formater les esprits* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), 178.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, 181.

return to literary journalism (discreet, but with gains from the appeal to creativity, imagination, style...), the softening of expression, the feminization of the discourse (if one is not disturbed by the association!), the social befriending according to the taste and with the acceptance of His Highness – the public...

### **III. The “Narrative turn”: “narrative festivals”, “narrative horizon”, “narrative imperialism”**

In the conclusion to *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind*, C. Salmon draws an interesting distinction regarding the function of stories in a temporal perspective. Starting from the myths of the past and up to the modern novel, this function was “to explore the conditions of a possible experience (...), to invent (...) a «people that is missing»”. In what concerns the new stories proposed by- storytelling, starting from the 80s-90s of the past century, they no longer regard a possible experience, but “the means of adjusting it”<sup>36</sup>. The danger of the strategic proliferation of the latter lies in their hypostasis of “protocols of training, of domestication, which aim at taking control over practices and at seizing the experiences and desires of individuals”<sup>37</sup>. We would deal with a “formatting of desires and a propagation of emotions” in a “new narrative order”, in which, through the “storytelling machines”, it is allowed to “regulate the media, economic, financial, political or military transformations in direct contact with the targeted individuals”<sup>38</sup>. The main culprits are indicated to be the media professionals, since they would seek, with all intents and purposes, that transparency of reality that crosses the border towards fiction or towards the halo of facts, not only once seductive in approaching the target audience.

One of the voices that speaks of leaving the facts in the background is A. Simmons, the author investing the recipients of the message with the desire (even the will) to believe in the goals, successes, stories (tales) of professional communicators (counsellors, *spin doctors*, journalists, managers, authors of *storyboards* and *fake stories*, specialists in political marketing, etc.). Putting the reality in the story, a strategy older than a hundred years in manipulating the spirits, dilutes the compelling

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 199.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 211.

character of the proof of truth (especially in contemporary journalism, where traditional-style stories do not sell advertising to the same extent as the media productions marked by emotion and designed with the stake of sensationalism). In the *storyspinners* stage, the “narrative festivals” offer challenging roles, from interpreting the facts and exploiting the story by the sources of the media, to meeting the desire of the recipients for new stories, without ignoring the context: the consumer is the guinea pig of arousing emotions, since he is deemed the “audience of a show”<sup>39</sup>.

It is almost impossible to make a choice between the maximum appreciation of the need for a story (resorting to the exploitation of emotions – in line with É. Illonx, Ch. Beers) and the irony of the excessive “administration” (commercialization) of the emotional component found in postmodern man’s social DNA (D. De Lillo’s version). We also believe that prioritizing one over the other is not truly reassuring: on the one hand, because manipulation constantly accompanies the perception regarding communication professionals (as such, their interest is to psychologically dominate an impressive number of people resorting to psychological-emotional persuasion), and, on the other hand, because the rational component of information consumption turns into derision. The “storytelling machine” (C. Salmon) is the one that dislocates the thought while favouring “soul experiences”. Stimulating the emotions in the mechanism of this new narrative order contributes, along with “framing” behaviours and ideas, to “trapping” the thought, from “telling stories” up to hiding the reality behind a beautifully presented truth, and also farther: “to sharing a set of beliefs (...), to raising adhesion (...), to creating a compelling collective myth”<sup>40</sup>.

Storytelling proves to be a communication tool, but also a factor of change-innovation (for example, it brings consumers into the position of message “shareholders”), a method of building the identity of organizations, a possible “response to their crisis of meaning”<sup>41</sup>. The storytelling “sirens” are heard more and more often and loud, announcing the replacement of certain traditional elements in organizations (monitoring, orders, etc.) with real “narrative gears”. To speak persuasively of something, to convince that something is well done, to premeditate new perceptions and reactions to certain types of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, 136.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 102.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

speech or actions, all of these depend on the “story” that opens the “locks” of reception, on the “recipe of storytelling” (consistency, memorability, ability to disseminate in space and time). This happens for at least two reasons: 1). “People treat information in a narrative form”; 2). “Facts tell, but stories sell”<sup>42</sup>.

The success of well-chosen, detailed and seductive stories is recognized by professors of journalism (E. Cornog) as well as by advisers of important politicians (US presidents, for example). They all agree that inventing, formulating and disseminating some long-awaited, enjoyable stories, commented by the consumer public, have generated real “narrarchies” (“narrative presidencies”), due to a certain change in the “spirit of the time” (postmodernity). In fact, the great narratives have been replaced by narratives that are smaller (anecdotes, stories), but able to demonstrate “the fierce competition of values and vectors of legitimacy”<sup>43</sup>.

#### **IV. “Facts tell, but stories sell!”**

Why do the organizations that are subjected to the principle of reality “slip” towards effective fictions and useful stories? The possible answers (depending on each one’s mission) can vary from motivating people, up to empathy for problems or sufferings, including providing wellbeing by means of narrative therapies that are so “appreciated” nowadays in medicine, psychology, communication, etc. We were already familiar with the adoption of narrative journalism, according to a “narrative age”, lived by a world found at a “narrative turn”, in a “narrative horizon”.

A technique of communication, control, power, but also translating narrative thinking, storytelling catches wings because the charm of “stories” is to be able to constitute possible realities. One question, however, would be difficult for us to answer: are stories harmful to rational facts and arguments? “Yes” is valid if the seductive “stories” take the form of lies or propaganda. “No” becomes acceptable if we realize that stories can have real effects, ready to be taken seriously. For example, economics is a narrative discipline (D.N. McCloskey); law lives on stories (J. Brunner); research draws impressive amounts of money due to displaying in a persuasive manner the possible path to inventions,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, 122.

scientific discoveries and so on (S. Weinberg). Everywhere we find seductive “stories” (B. Richardson); we have the feeling of a true “narrative imperialism” (J. Phelan); at the cost of trivializing this concept, storytelling makes the difference between an anecdotal sequence (*stories*) and a delightful presentation (*narrative*) - P. Brooks<sup>44</sup>.

In the mid-1990s, the narrative turn (“twist”) in social sciences coincided with the explosion of the Internet as an “empire” of free communication (and able of providing benefits for individuals and organizations that were difficult to estimate at the time. This gave a new impetus to ideas, techniques, strategies and tools of communication, regardless of the field of activity. The present study provides two samples of social success, both from the area of civil society, both well liked by the public, in a moment of dynamism of users, doubled by the obvious social need: “Magic Home” and PRIME.

Under the slogan “We’ll heal Romania!”, starting from a cruel reality (parents with children sick with cancer and hospitalized did not benefit from a minimum of conditions as companions), the project “Magic Home” (launched in 2016) conceives “The family refuge”, sending to sensitive people a humanitarian message: “Nobody should fight alone. Make sure they are not alone either. Together we can do more than you can imagine for those who need us.”<sup>45</sup> The key words of this information-awareness-attitude-behaviour campaign are: inspiration, integrity, community, excellence, help for sick children... A simple “solidarity chair” sensitized an impressive number of people! Placed in a storefront in the heart of Bucharest, this “communication concept” consisting of a chair, a bed, a teddy bear and a perfusion machine aroused a strong emotion, especially since the messengers of this unique message

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<sup>44</sup> These considerations have the role of argument in C. Salmon’s book, *Storytelling...*, 120.

<sup>45</sup> <https://oanabotezatu.ro/oameni-si-povesti/tintuiti-pe-scaunul-rezistentei-pentrum-agichome> (accessed January 11, 2021); Iulia Bunea, “Studiu de caz. Povestea Magic Home, Grand Effie 2018: MagicHome, campania virală a anului, care a strâns donații de peste jumătate de milion de euro în mai puțin de o lună”, [www.paginademedia.ro/2019/05/studiu-de-caz-magichome-grand-effie/](http://www.paginademedia.ro/2019/05/studiu-de-caz-magichome-grand-effie/) (accessed January 11, 2021); <https://stirilepro.tv.ro/stiri/social/campania-magichome-500-000-de-euro-stransi-in-trei-saptamani-noul-centru-va-fi-deschis-in-primavara-anului-viitor.html>, November 29, 2017 (accessed January 11, 2021); <https://stirileprotv.ro/romania-te-iubesc/zromania-te-iubesc-la-magichome-local-in-care-copiii-cu-probleme-oncologice-uita-de-suferinta.html>, October 19, 2019 (accessed January 11, 2021).

had been skillfully chosen. *Jazz Communication* did the thinking, *Rogalski-Damaschin Public Relations* communicated, and *Parents of children sick with cancer live on one chair* went viral in 2018 and worthy of awards at the *Effie Gala* (2019). In the context of the rarity of SMS donation gestures (1/10.000) and of the appetite for information consumption in the fields of politics and public protest, this campaign aimed to raise 200.000 euro for a new “Magic Home”. This included accommodation, meals, psychological counselling for parents who, at the time, were only benefitting from “a chair they no longer get up from; on the chair they cry, they hope, they endure, they fall...”. The solidarity targeted at the public level was motivated by the involvement one feels while being part of something that is urgently needed, of an unquestionable durability, in a “team” that is very big and powerful through empathy and rapidity. Only 2 euro (with the text message “MAGIC”, sent at phone number 8844) is insignificant, but convincing 100.000 people that not only the children suffer, but their parents are also at the end of their powers, is challenging!

The involvement of the public could be generated by bringing people in the situation of the desperate parents: to get the hospital in a storefront (*Galateea* art gallery, Bucharest), by attaching a single chair to a bed; to call passers-by in a role-playing game (as if they were parents at the end of their powers), by simply sitting them on that chair; to broadcast live on the campaign website - to enhance engagement; to broadcast an online video, in which “flows” the story of the terrible reply that many parents hear when they are told about the loss of their children’s fight with the disease: “Sit down, please!”; to gain visibility by co-opting personalities from acting, music, journalism... In other words, to invite them to experience the emotions, the feelings of those parents at the limit of what is bearable.

The results exceeded all expectations: in three weeks the entire amount was collected; 636 people, of which 60 public figures, sat on that chair; the record of uninterrupted solidarity was registered (in Romania), namely 552 hours, day and night, in which the challenge-chair was occupied-. The media coverage totaled 200 articles and mentions, 514,095 minutes of viewing on Facebook, free broadcasting of the spot on four radio stations, reaching 9 million people on Facebook, 240,000 reactions at 2 million views of the campaign video, broadcasting the spot by seven TV stations, “the most extensive TV story” - 15 minutes in the

“Romania, I love you!” show. How was that possible? It draws a single answer, the essence of the entire communication campaign: “Because magic is something that you do!”.

“Magic Home”, therefore, brought into the “equation” of communication - combining the emotional and the efficiency - suffering, solidarity and empathy.

Our second example regards PRIME Iași, the organization of students in communication and PR at “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași<sup>46</sup>. Ever since its establishment (2006), PRIME has been aiming to support the students in their professional and personal development, but also to create a collaboration framework between academia, the business environment, between the students from Iași and those from other university centres. Located on “our wonderful land”, the one that is announced to be an “enchanted place, a place where every man and his opinion prevails”, PRIME believes that it is able to help every “leprechaun”, in a myriad of professional projects “scattered” throughout each academic year. Launched one by one, for years, the events and activities organised by PRIME include recruitments, workshops, anniversaries, PR and advertising competitions, “PR-flavoured” tea, conferences, congresses, *PRspective* magazine etc. All of these are part of the “adventure of our story”, depicted as “fairytale chapters”, and they all reveal a unique manner of familiarizing the intra-organizational public (the professional-academic space), but also the social dialogue partners, towards validation, as well as integration in the professions of communication (thanks to the rich and profitable digital environment). By analysing the PRIME universe as present in the Facebook posts, one can notice the density of words and expressions with an obvious emotional reference, doubled by a chromatic constant - blue (in fact, the colour-symbol of the parent-university). A few samples from the first three months of the 2019/2020 academic year can testify to this:

- a). Recruitments 2019, *Lucky we have you*. “Clover brings luck to Romanians, and YOU, to PRIME!”; “Do you know why we are overwhelmed with emotion? This concept is about you (...). YOU are an emotion worth being lived!”; “The D3 amphitheatre was

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<sup>46</sup> <https://primeiasi.wordpress.com/prime-iasi/> (accessed January 11, 2021);  
<https://teamadventureprimeiasi.wordpress.com/> (accessed January 11, 2021);  
<https://primeiasi.wordpress.com/pr-tea-de-iasi/> (accessed January 11, 2021).

- coloured in a bright turquoise (...) Heat, tears, emotions (...). Dear people, we are so lucky to have you!”;
- b). PR OUTLOOK: “... the project that leads to distant, fairytale lands”;
  - c). Team ADVENTURE: “the adventure of our story”;
  - d). PR Tea of Iași: “A little mystery, more light and a *catchy* atmosphere...”; “When we think of what animates our blue ocean (...), the big heart, full of blue, that offers unconditionally to those around”;
  - e). PRIME Anniversary: “magic style anniversary”; “13, a fateful number, but PRIME considers it a lucky TALISMAN”; “Almost blue”; “Once upon a time, there was an organization (...) 13 little humans came to its aid and gave it hope. With their forces united, they started to plan a legendary December evening”; “As the little humans sat and planned...”; “Emotion, suspense and friendship... It’s just the beginning of the “13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” story (...). What can be more beautiful than a present coloured in shades of blue...; “Another month brings another little blue human who excelled (...). YOU are the one who stood out (...), your blue soul coming to the surface”; “Returning to our blue family ...”

In conclusion, the “bees that work” at PRIME have the “face” of the leprechauns in the story, who live daily “the beautiful adventure of the magic realm, blessed by CRP”, experiencing (and urging others to do the same) what “magic” means - in the hope for a “student life coloured in blue”. The final interrogation of the PRIME leprechauns could also represent the last touch of our approach on the “story of storytelling”: “Wouldn’t you like to be part of the story, too?”

## V. Conclusions

The current time provides us with sufficient evidence regarding the implementation of a logic of flexibility, agility, organizing in networks, orientation towards cultural-human needs (in D. De Lillo’s vision, regarding the ideal organization), , regardless of the object of activity of various institutions, companies, associations, foundations, etc. The lesson of “taming” communication, of its “softening”, of its “feminization” also contains elements such as gentle persuasion, narrativity and appeal to emotions.

Communication strategies capable of generating awareness, a favourable attitude, an associative-responsible behavior (involvement) are based on creativity, innovation, “staging”, all of these meant to sensitize people, to surprise them, to generate communities, in other words, to change the world.

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