

ROMANIAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN 7 JOURNALISTS' FACEBOOK POSTS: A CHATGPT SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

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Title: Romanian Media Landscape in 7 Journalists' Facebook Posts: A ChatGPT Sentiment Analysis

Abstract: This article used OpenAI Chat GPT 3.5's sentiment analysis capabilities to evaluate 595 Facebook posts written by seven renowned Romanian journalists. Our main objectives were to:

1) Assess the journalists' use of Facebook regarding journalism, including its effectiveness in promoting quality articles, combating disinformation, and facilitating explanatory journalistic procedures.

2) Allow an unbiased AI system to analyze the tone of the journalists' social media posts, as well as their attitudes and opinions on the primary issues affecting the media environment in Romania.

3) Determine the framework that embodies the Romanian society's 2023 'zeitgeist' from recurrent themes, categorized and ranked, gleaned from journalists' posts.

We extracted data from public Facebook posts using Apify. Our sample included posts uploaded within a timespan ranging from one month old to one year old. It is worth noting that the owners of the public accounts analyzed were consistently involved and active.

We also had to be able to accommodate with time and financial constraints, as well as adhere to the limitations imposed on the use of the specified free tools. Therefore, the sample set consisted of an initial group of 12 journalists with varied socio-demographic origins. Out of this sample, some journalists were removed following subsequent considerations, resulting in a final sample group of 7 Romanian journalists.

Outcomes: The journalists engage in discussions or endorsements of their own work or the work of others, strive to provide reliable and accurate information to the public before others do, as well as analyze and expose false information and manipulative messaging. Aside from informative content, they share images featuring their personal lives, such as their children, feline companions, or acquaintances, just like the majority of the general users (although such posts are confined to the realm of personal space, as they rightfully should be).

Even after accounting for false flagging, which ChatGPT rarely commits, the majority of the individual journalists' posts were negative. The journalists have a broader perspective and a better understanding of societal and judicial issues, they express themselves accordingly, and the artificial intelligence entity is capable of parsing such sentiments manifested in social media. Hopefully, the time will come when also more

political, judicial and civil participants fully understand the main issues in Romania, as journalistic texts also reflect them on social media.

Keywords: *Romanian journalism; Journalists; Romanian media landscape; Sentiment analysis; ChatGPT;*

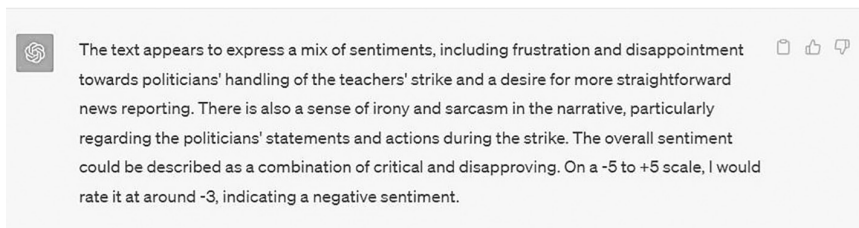


Figure 1 – ChatGPT's sentiment analysis: detailed result and score (input submitted: journalist's post reporting on the teachers' strikes)

1) Key facets of the Romanian media environment in 2023. A political, numerical, and educational perspective

Currently, Romanian media outlets face a situation characterized by a lack of journalistic independence and increasing political influence (Euronews, 2023).

Independent groups strive to sustain themselves by using various sources of funding, including crowdfunding, Western financing, grants, and advertorials. Many journalists encounter multiple obstacles, such as threats, intimidation, and restricted access to otherwise public information. These problems have resulted in a decrease in press freedom in the country and a deterioration of journalistic integrity.

Furthermore, the acquisition of media outlets primarily by a select few influential individuals or political parties has resulted in a lack of diverse perspectives and viewpoints within the Romanian media (Obae, 2020; Ofițeru, 2023). The government has effectively used financial resources to silence dissenting opinions and cover up their questionable actions and decisions. This was achieved through public 'buyouts' of national or local media outlets or by disguising large sums of money as pandemic support (Pantazi, 2023). During Ludovic Orban's premiership in 2019, the Socialist Democrat (PSD) and National Liberal (PNL) parties formed an alliance, allowing them to control the majority of the mainstream media (Euractiv, 2023; Tapalagă, 2021). The ruling parties also have control over the primary public national television channel and radio networks. After collecting their funds, some media trust owners have corrupted the essence of the media field by focusing on entertainment programs, mishaps, inconsequential remote news, and reality shows (Simina, 2022). It is worth noting that television remains the primary source of information for a significant percentage of the population.

Journalists who criticize government officials or expose corruption in Romania often face litigation and defamation lawsuits, known as SLAPP measures (Dobrescu, 2023; Vanghele, 2023). This has led to self-imposed censorship among Romanian journalists, which in turn weakens the public's right to access objective

and factual information, and ultimately undermines the democratic principles of accountability and transparency. The lack of media autonomy has facilitated the spread of propaganda and misinformation, resulting in the public being regularly subjected to distorted and inaccurate news and narratives. Without a healthy and diverse media landscape, citizens are deprived of accurate information and are subsequently unable to form educated opinions on social and political issues.

Social networks have also greatly facilitated the swift propagation of propaganda and misinformation. The algorithms deployed by these platforms promote content that is both engaging and sensational, often resulting in the amplification of erroneous or false information. This tactic has resulted in both the manipulation of public opinion and the erosion of trust in conventional news sources.

There are concerns about media ownership consolidation in Romania. Certain media organizations have affiliations with particular political or corporate interests, which raises questions about their independence and impartiality. Efforts have been made to address these issues, and governing bodies such as the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) oversee the media sector. Amidst the recent decline of the press, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, one of Romania's oldest newspapers owned by the Ringier Media Trust, has experienced a series of unfortunate events, including resignations, censorship, and ultimately the cessation of its printing operations (Fati, 2023). After *Gazeta Sporturilor*, *Libertatea*, a daily tabloid led by an investigative committee, seems to be facing similar challenges (Diură, 2023). Government agencies persecuted a journalist who exposed academic plagiarism in high-ranking politicians' publications, with the aim of undermining the journalist's credibility. In 2020, Emilia Șercan, a prominent investigative journalist in Romania, received death threats after uncovering a series of academic scams taking place at major national institutions. As a result, she had to hire private security and live in fear for her safety (Active Watch, 2022; Pavel, 2023). In another incident, journalist Vlad Ursulean was physically assaulted while documenting a protest against government policies (Ionescu, 2018). Moreover, a journalist's death led to a series of morbid television shows, revealing an unacceptable fracture within the Romanian media landscape (Context.ro, 2023; Pora, 2023). These examples illustrate the significant risks that journalists encounter in Romania and the effect on their ability to report freely on important issues.

Recently, allegations have been made that political parties in Romania are controlling or influencing the media ahead of upcoming national and local elections (Andrei, 2022; Arun, 2023; Lupu, 2024). This has led to biased coverage and limited availability of alternative viewpoints, which has compromised the transparency and fairness of the electoral process and hindering the voters' ability to make informed choices. With an already declining trust in European institutions, the potential result of this could be a decrease in civic participation, which could ultimately endanger democracy (Media Fact Book, 2023; Vasilescu, 2023). The most detrimental effect has been the division created between professional journalists and those who are widely not considered to be journalists, e.g. those who have strayed from their designated roles and overall journalistic code of conduct.

This pivotal moment could have had a significant and lasting impact not only on the media landscape, but on society as a whole, given the lack of media literacy in Romania, the poor quality of the education system and the low level of trust in the press.

Nonetheless, Romania has several prominent journalists and media organizations in the alternative and independent media sectors who have made noteworthy advancements in journalism. One of these journalists is Paul Radu, who is known for his investigative reporting and unwavering commitment to uncovering corruption. He is a co-founder of the *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project* (OCCRP), a global alliance of investigative journalists. Cristian Andrei is another journalist who consistently questions politicians about cases of media funding by political parties or the government (Andrei, 2020-2023). Radu and Andrei demonstrate journalistic dedication to the truth and have had a lasting influence on the field of ‘new journalism’ in Romania. Our study also identifies other notable individuals and publications.

2) Purpose, premises, stages, and methods

Rather than using a traditional ‘documentary’ approach, which would have involved spending time with journalists in editorial offices, we chose to focus on artificial intelligence analysis. Artificial intelligence (AI) was used to impartially analyze the sentiments detected in the journalists’ use of Facebook, as a platform for their profession. This analysis, known as sentiment analysis, allows us to observe whether Facebook serves as a complementary tool or distinct platform for journalists. The professional ‘records’ of journalists may contain information that is not always included in their published work. This may include fact-checking, providing contact information, writing, documenting sources, recording, filming, and photographing. In this study, the contents of the journalists’ ‘records’ were accessed through their Facebook profiles.

Our aim was to determine if journalists discuss journalism on their social media accounts. We investigated whether on Facebook there is a greater effort to explain the journalistic practices, advocacy for high-quality media content, and efforts to raise awareness about significant media distortions in a culture where subpar journalism and declining informative standards permeate mainstream news outlets.

We also tried to respond to questions such as, “What about the subjects of the posts, and what is their specific score weight? Journalists who use Facebook to address societal issues, investigate specific themes, or engage with the public, editorial colleagues, or journalists from different publications – do they hold a favorable, neutral, or negative perspective on political, social, and legal developments in Romania? What is the experienced feeling after independently analyzing each batch of 85 social media posts (texts)? And what is the post ranking in comparison with the others? Additionally, what properties would have a ranking of the journalist’s post, ascertained by weighing the main topics covered and the posting tone?”

The seven journalists who eventually became the authors of the materials studied were part of a group that initially included 12 journalists, selected through simple random sampling based on the following criteria:

- The journalists' involvement in projects and journalism editorial offices with independent sources of funding, without omitting the mainstream segment (Cătălin Tolontan, Răzvan Luţac) in order to find as honest and professional approaches to journalism as possible.
- Influence, proven integrity, and degree of notoriety in the field and in journalism schools, including their presence in other studies. The selection also aimed to capture journalists from editorial boards that have innovated in the media field, attempted to bridge the gap between the specificity of Eastern Europe and Western media editorial offices, or are part of global collaborations. Additionally, the selection aimed to highlight experienced journalists (regardless of age) who have won grants and awards over time from recognized professional institutions (such as the *Superscrieri Awards*).
- The high proportion of posts related to journalism in general and the Romanian media landscape in particular, during an initial scan (for example: the number of posts in a month).
- Gender representativity, given the quality of good journalism practiced in Romania, which includes both women and men equally. A subsequent study could examine differences in discourse, preferences for certain topics, etc.
- Another important factor in the selection was the limited time and research tools available to the authors. A future study could include more journalists, and the monitoring period could be longer, depending on the intended purpose.

However, it is worth noting that the chosen individuals (five women and two men) are prominent in the Romanian media sphere and even in the broader media landscape of Eastern Europe. It is important to mention that the initial group of 12 journalists was reduced to seven due to one journalist transitioning into the role of spokesperson for a non-journalistic entity in Romania (Ionel Stoica). The study group was also limited due to the low recurrence of serious posts on Facebook as a complementary means of meta-journalistic communication (Ovidiu Vanghele), or because of the limited use of the social network (Venera Dimulescu, Răzvan Luţac, Vlad Stoicescu).

Distribution and methodology: evaluation of scores and coefficients

The report focuses on seven specific journalists who were targeted. Their professional careers can be summarized as follows:

Emilia Șercan is a university lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, University of Bucharest, and is also affiliated with Press One. Mona Dîrțu was the author of the weekly newsletter *Monday Memo* and an experienced journalist specializing in press editing. Diana Oncioiu (*Dela0*) is a reporter who mostly focuses on social injustice. Cătălin Tolontan, known for his impressive investigations and thorough editorials published in *Libertatea*, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, and *Tolo.ro*, resigned while the present study was being carried out. Codruța Simina is the chief editor and author of the only Romanian newsletter dedicated to exposing disinformation in mass media, digital media, and political speech (Misreport). Ana Poenariu is an investigative reporter at *RISE Project*. Cristian Lupșa was previously the editor and manager of *Decât o Revistă*, a long-standing independent alternative magazine that has now closed after 13 years of existence.

Posts examined were arranged in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent and ending with the oldest.

- Ana Poenariu: July 17th, 2023–October 26th, 2022;
- Cătălin Tolontan: October 13th, 2023–October 2nd, 2022;
- Codruța Simina: October 13th, 2023–March 4th, 2023;
- Cristian Lupșa: October 3rd, 2023–October 21st, 2022;
- Diana Oncioiu: October 11th, 2023–April 21st, 2023;
- Emilia Șercan: October 9th, 2023–January 19th, 2023;
- Mona Dîrțu: September 28th, 2023–November 20th, 2020.

As schematically depicted above, the study procedure encompassed the following phases:

1. Text mining by extracting information from 200 posts using Apify's scraping capabilities;
2. Consolidating and optimizing acquired data into spreadsheets;
3. Assessing posts pertaining to media and other topics in press materials, centralizing them separately, and optimizing them for the NPL examination;
4. Data processing with ChatGPT libraries and procedures;
5. Centralizing results and calculating coefficients using spreadsheets; then, rendering visual representations using DataWrapper;
6. Additional editing or correction interventions.

The process of post scraping took place October 9th through October 10th, 2023, processing a total of 2000 posts.

Out of the seven journalists whose posts were analyzed, five mostly focus on topics related to journalism. This includes promoting their own work or the work of their teams, as well as praising the efforts of their fellow colleagues. Within other articles, we encounter the documentation of issues such as political and legal pressures, meddling in media fairness by influential individuals, and the involve-

ment of financial backers, as shown by the recent case of bookies and the Ringier Media Trust. Alternative methods involve acknowledging instances of misconduct (supporting the defense of a colleague's reputation, rights, or pursuit of justice), penalizing actions that deviate from journalistic standards, or activities that undermine the integrity of the profession. The journalistic profiles of the other two people from the sample group are quite similar; they deviate from the general media tendency by consistently addressing the shortcomings of the Romanian legal system, specifically highlighting the overall trend of illiberalism that Romania has fallen into.

The sentiment analysis reveals a predominantly negative tone in the posts, with the majority of posts promoting journalism, reporting facts, or expressing criticism. The posts which fall under these categories, summed up, account for approximately 40% of the journalists' posts.

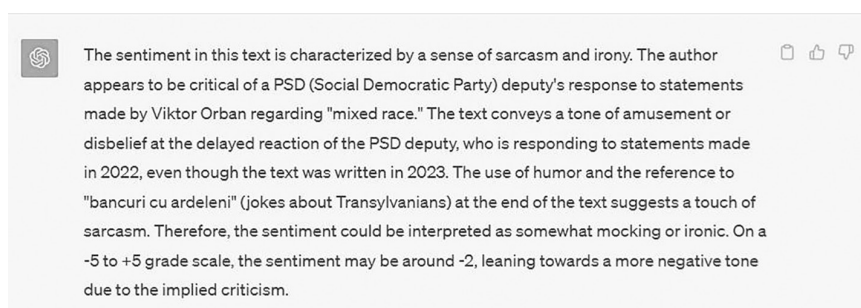


Figure 3 – ChatGPT sentiment analysis, with automated translation and learned information from previous requests on the chat channel.

3) Measuring journalists' sentiments temperature in the NPL field

The Natural Language Processing (NLP) services offer the ability to analyze sentiment and mine opinions inside text corpora. NLP toolkits often encompass a cloud-based assemblage of machine learning and AI algorithms specifically crafted for the creation of sophisticated applications that manipulate written language (Hobbs; Gordon, 2011). These attributes aid in the process of ascertaining public sentiment towards brands or topics by evaluating text and detecting signals of positive or negative sentiments, and can establish connections between specific parts within the text. Sentiment analysis enables organizations to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how customers perceive their brand worldwide, as it was specifically developed for marketing research purposes. Through the analysis of diverse texts such as commentaries, opinions, and reviews, businesses can gain insights into the sentiment of customers from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, sentiment analysis can be employed to monitor social media platforms and online forums in order to assess public perception in real-time (Rochadiani, 2023). This allows businesses to promptly address any unfavorable sentiment and take advantage of good input.

By migrating these tools and techniques into the philology field, a multidisciplinary approach could gather the nuances of different kinds of texts (Ammencheril, 2023). This could greatly enhance our understanding of language and communication. By analyzing the sentiment of texts from various fields such as literature, history, philosophy, and new media, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the emotions and perspectives conveyed in these texts. This multidisciplinary approach would enable scholars to unravel the intricate connections between language, culture, and society, leading to new insights and interpretations and a better comprehension of contemporary language use and communication strategies.

ChatGPT 3.5 employs various techniques to evaluate sentiments accurately and reliably in any kind of text (Sharma, 2023). In the case of the present study, it was used to analyze the tone of the journalists' writing, considering both positive and negative language cues, to determine the overall sentiment of a text. Additionally, the model took into the consideration the contextual information provided, enabling it to understand the intended message more effectively. By combining these factors, ChatGPT 3.5 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the journalist's sentiment, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their post subject. This comprehensive evaluation of sentiments by ChatGPT 3.5 not only ensures accurate analysis but also helps in detecting any potential bias or subjective language used in journalism. By considering the contextual information, this model can distinguish between a sarcastic statement and an almost genuine sentiment, adding another layer of understanding to the journalist's message. With these techniques, ChatGPT 3.5 enhances the reliability and depth of sentiment analysis in journalism, facilitating a more informed interpretation of media articles.

In our study, we used ChatGPT 3.5's natural language processing algorithms to capture the sentiments that Romanian journalists expressed through their word choices. This offered a profound insight into their cognitive and emotional experiences about their journalistic process or context. This research may uncover the preferences, biases, and overall sentiments that journalists manifest towards specific issues or individuals. This knowledge not only helps in deciphering the journalists' biases but also allows readers or listeners to evaluate the objectivity and reliability of the media coverage about such topics. Additionally, understanding the underlying sentiments and attitudes expressed in the journalists' texts enables a deeper comprehension of the societal and cultural context in which these journalists operate. Ultimately, this research can contribute to fostering a more informed and critical understanding of the present media landscape in Romania.

	A	B	C	D
	Steagurile noastre toate.	The sentiment of the provided text is negative. The text discusses an official position from UEFA and disputes the claim made by the Hungarian Football Federation that they have UEFA's approval to use the map of Greater Hungary on flags and banners. The use of the word "FALSĂ" (false) implies a strong contradiction and a sense of disapproval or criticism. On a numerical sentiment scale, where -5 represents strongly negative and +5 represents strongly positive, I would assign a score of approximately -3 to -4 to this text, indicating a moderately negative sentiment due to the contradiction and criticism of the claim made by the Hungarian Football Federation.	-3.5	Negative
33	Euroins a blocat accesul Libertatea la conferința de presă. Patronul grupului bulgar acuză ziarul că „implementează o atmosferă de agresiune între ambele țări” Citește întreaga știre: Euroins a blocat accesul Libertatea la conferința de presă. Patronul grupului bulgar acuză ziarul că „implementează o atmosferă de agresiune între ambele țări”	The sentiment of the provided text is negative. The text reports that Euroins blocked Libertatea's access to a press conference, and the owner of the Bulgarian group accuses the newspaper of "implementing an atmosphere of aggression between the two countries." This situation implies a conflict or disagreement between the parties involved. On a numerical sentiment scale, where -5 represents strongly negative and +5 represents strongly positive, I would assign a score of approximately -3 to -4 to this text, indicating a moderately negative sentiment due to the conflict and the accusation made by Euroins' owner.	-3.5	Negative
34	Secretul imobiliar al Liel Savonea.	The sentiment of the provided text is neutral. The text mentions "Lia Savonea's real estate secret" without expressing a specific positive or negative sentiment. It is a factual statement or headline.	0	Neutral
35	Astăzi am câștigat definitiv procesul deschis împotriva Uniform pentru achizițiile făcute în pandemie. Adică am pierdut timp pe la uşile instanţelor ca să obţin ceva ce trebuia să fie public din start. Nu-i nimic, mai am. Între timp am mai dat încă o dată în judecată Uniform pentru alte informaţii de interes public.	On a numerical sentiment scale, it would be scored as close to 0, indicating a neutral sentiment as it is a neutral statement of fact. The sentiment of the provided text is negative, with elements of frustration and criticism. The author mentions winning a legal case against Uniform related to pandemic purchases but expresses frustration over the effort and time spent to obtain information that should have been public from the beginning. The text conveys a sense of disappointment with the lack of transparency in public institutions and state-owned companies.	-3.5	Neutral

Figure 4 – Spreadsheet with centralized content, interpretations, scores, and approach tones from the journalists’ posts on social media, after ChatGPT’s sentiment analysis.

4) Sentiment analysis of Facebook posts by seven Romanian journalists

The outcomes of our study were categorized into three categories based on the analysis of each journalist’s posts. The first category pertains to the overall tone of individual posts. This is presented in a general table (Diagrams 1d) and further illustrated in individual charts that indicate the numbers of positive, negative, and neutral posts (Diagrams 1a). The second category encompasses the synthesis of recurrent themes identified in the journalists’ public posts (Diagrams 1c). The third category displays the various discursive approaches (such as media product promotion, personal experience, professional experience, opinions, reporting, etc.) portrayed as percentages. This information may be seen in Diagrams 1b.

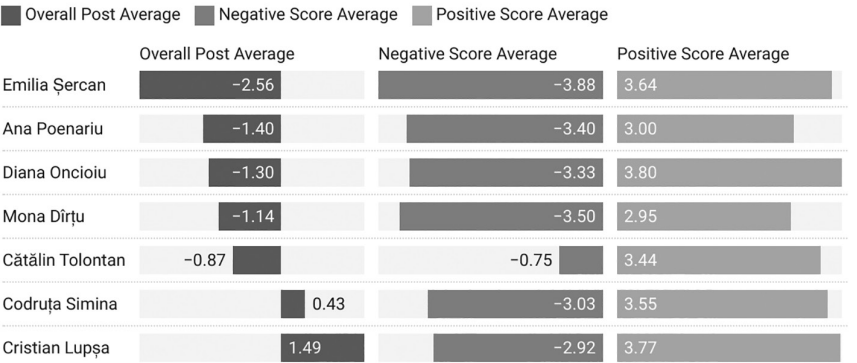


Chart: Andrei Stipuc, October-November 2023 / OpenAI - ChatGPT 3.5 • Source: Andrei Stipuc • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 5 – Rankings of the sentiment analysis’s score, ordered by the overall factor:

Posts that underwent sentiment analysis using ChatGPT 3.5 were assigned a score ranging from -5 to +5. Scoring coefficients refer to the arithmetic mean obtained for positive, negative, and neutral posts.

Mona Dîrțu (MondaMemo) - ‘The Analyst’

Mona Dîrțu, the creator of the pioneering journalism newsletter Monday Memo, has gained significant expertise in the local press. Her work experience includes writing content for various publications, including the prominent local newspaper chain *Monitorul* (centered around the *Monitorul* publication from Iași), as well as the economic press publications *Business Magazin* and *Money Express*. Throughout multiple editions, Mona Dîrțu’s meticulous work and professional characteristics have established her as one of the most significant press editors in Romania. In addition to her press expertise, Mona Dîrțu has initiated and facilitated various seminars on writing, storytelling, and business.

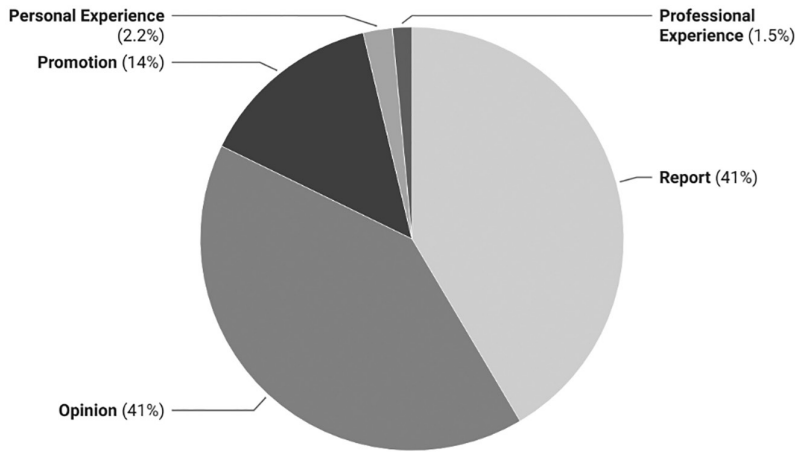


Figure 6 – *Mona Dîrțu’s Facebook posts types (a post can cover several different approaches).*

Mona Dîrțu is listed with 22 positive posts, 45 negative posts, and 15 neutral posts (Diagrams 1a). The average coefficient of postings, which stands at -1.14, positions her precisely in the median of the ranking of critical journalists, or those who report or promote objectively and relatively cold. Mona Dîrțu approached various topics in her Facebook posts, starting with journalism (45 posts) during the study period. She later analyzed the work of her colleague, journalist Emilia Șercan, as well as politicians (22 posts each) and ministers (16 posts) (Figure 7, Diagrams 1c).

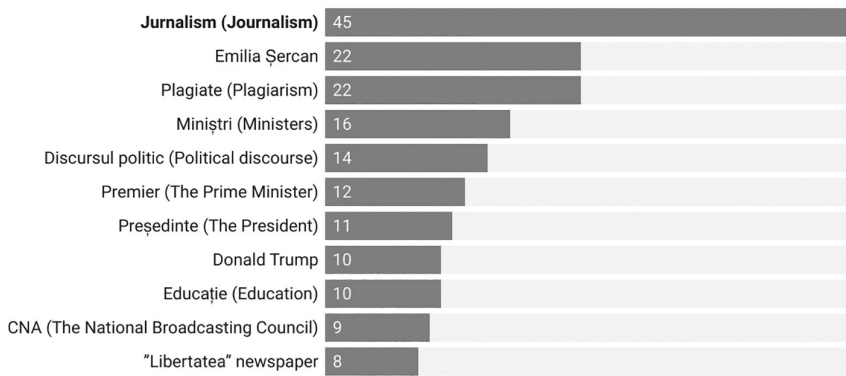


Figure 7 – Main topics of Mona Dîrțu’s Facebook posts. (For the full ranking table of recurrences, see Diagrams 1c).

Within the other postings, there are recurring issues such as news or stories regarding the Prime minister (12 posts) or the President of Romania (11 posts).

Mona Dîrțu’s postings are highly intricate, replete with meticulous information, organized in a logical manner, and effortlessly comprehensible despite their extensive nature. The primary methodologies of these minor analyses strive, in equal measures, to provide a factual account (41%) and an explanatory understanding (41%) (Diagrams 1b).

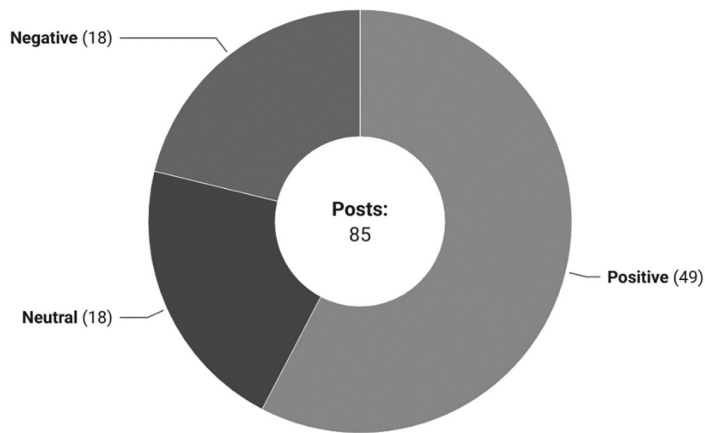
Cristian Lușșă (ex Decât o Revistă) - ‘The Discreet Promoter’

Cristian Lușșă, known for his discretion and modesty, served as the editor and publisher of *Decât o Revistă*, the longest-running alternative media project in Romania (Diură, 2022). Over the course of 13 years, he introduced long-form narrative journalism and illustrations to the Romanian media scene, making it a unique and innovative publication. His entrepreneurial experience as a media manager primarily relies on a solid foundation of contacts within the Anglo-Saxon space, particularly with American journalists. He resorts to a diverse range of storytelling techniques, derived from his exposure to various forms of journalism. Additionally, he has gained valuable management skills through his pursuit of a master’s degree in Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia in the United States. In Romania, Cristian Lușșă has created a range of convergent projections in collaboration with *Decât o Revistă*. He consistently supports and mentors young journalists within the editorial team, recruits esteemed collaborators in the field of design, illustration, and arts, and continuously strives to adapt to emerging digital trends and meet the expectations of the quarterly magazine’s specific audience. *Decât o Revistă* was perhaps the sole Romanian journalistic periodical magazine that operated on a subscription basis (Chipurici, 2022).

The editor of *Decât o Revistă* maintained a consistently positive coefficient in all of his Facebook posts, which distinguishes him as one of the most self-assured and optimistic journalists among those examined. The positive postings have a score of 3.77, while the negative posts score an average a value of -2.92 (see Dia-

grams 1d). Within this pattern, Cristian Lupșa has made 49 posts that are positively oriented, 18 posts that are negatively oriented, and 18 posts that are neutral in nature (Figure 8, Diagrams 1a).

Number of positive, neutral, and negative posts after Sentiment Analysis with Open AI ChatGPT 3.5.



-- 85 (from 85) relevant posts.
Chart: Andrei Stiplic, October 2023 • Source: Cristian Lupșa, Apify • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 8 – *The tone of Cristian Lupșa’s Facebook posts.*

Cristian Lupșa’s postings predominantly revolve around journalism (79 posts). As an editor and manager, he advocates for the dissemination of press materials from *Decât o Revistă*. Additionally, he indirectly expresses his support for his colleagues on the editorial board through social media platforms, with a total of 46 postings (Diagrams 1c). Less frequently occurring themes include literature and youth, (with 8 posts apiece). Additionally, arts, events from the *Oamenii Dreptății* series of public events, and texts related to journalism awards include 7 posts each.

According to Figure 9 and Diagrams 1b, promotional aspects account for approximately 62% of Cristian Lupșa’s posts and 28% of his reporting posts.

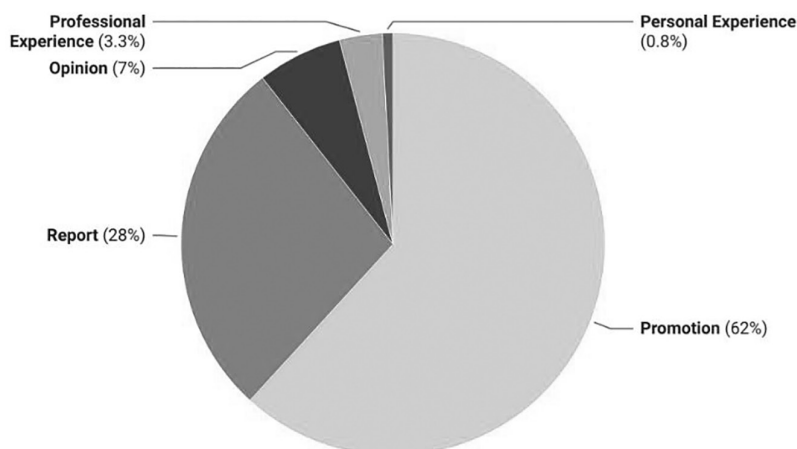


Figure 9 – Cristian Lupșa's Facebook posts type (a post can hold together multiple approaches).

Diana Oncioiu (Dela0, Să fie lumină) – ‘The Justice Seeker’

Diana Oncioiu began her career as a journalist in the Realitatea-Cațavencu press group in 2007, then worked as an editor for the DIGI trust at *Digi24*. Since 2014, she has been associated with the independent press, specifically the *Dela0* project, aimed at documenting and investigating the structural problems of Romania, and from 2017 in the editorial project that aims at uncovering abuses in the spending of public money and other forms of abuses related to the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Să fie lumină* (Vrabie, 2022).

Diana Oncioiu is a journalist who actively pursues justice. In our study, we have recorded a total of 17 positive posts, 51 negative posts, and 11 posts that indicate a neutral stance. The mean positive post coefficient is 3.80, whereas the mean negative post coefficient is -3.33. The overall mean coefficient of all posts is -1.30. Diana Oncioiu's score positions her in the middle of the list. The reference to the figure is found in Diagrams 1d, and Figure 5.

Diana Oncioiu's Facebook posts can be categorized into three main topics: journalism, with a total of 51 posts, and the media product *Judecata de Acum* with 25 posts, where she helped with the growth of this debate-style podcast during its initial period. Additionally, she has written about politicians and social services, these topics being covered in 11 posts each. Additional details can be found in Diagrams 1c.

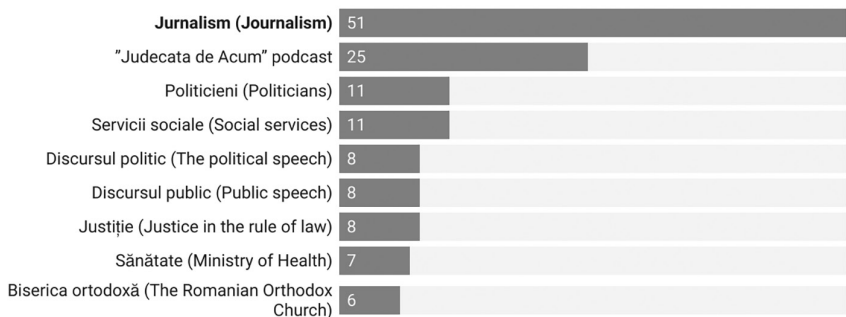


Figure 10 – Main topics of Diana Oncioiu’s Facebook posts. (For the full ranking table of recurrences, see Diagrams 1c).

Diana Oncioiu also examines the political discourse and public speeches, focusing on the deviations of the justice system (8 posts apiece).

The distribution of approach types is skewed towards the promotion of media items (38%), critical remarks on system flaws in Romania (24%), and neutral reports (24%), Figure 11, Diagrams 1b).

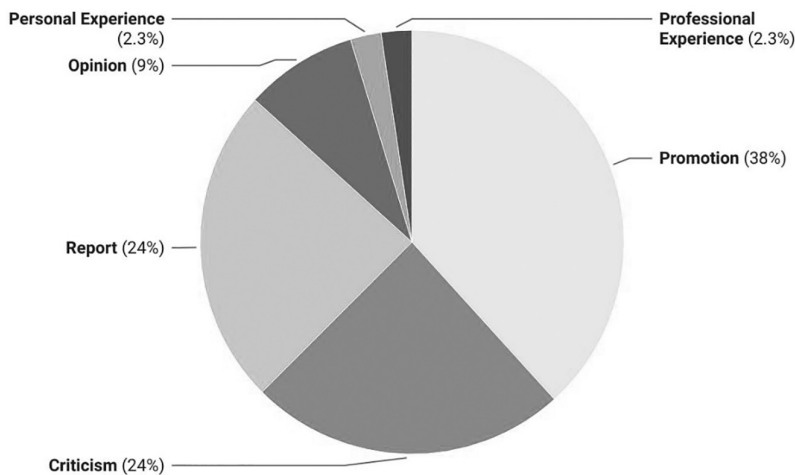


Figure 11 – Diana Oncioiu’s Facebook posts type (a post can include multiple different approaches).

Ana Poenariu (RISE Project) - ‘The Corruption Sniffer’

Ana Poenariu completed her studies at the Faculty of Journalism in Sibiu and began her career in 2007 as a photographer for Mediafax Foto, Reuters, and AFP. The television network *Digi24* produced the episode series *România furată*, to which she had significant contributions. Ana Poenariu conducted independent investigations and collaborated with fellow investigative journalists to expose instances of corruption involving influential leaders at that time. Since 2015, she has served as an investigative reporter at the RISE Project and, since 2016, as a collaborator of the *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project* (OCCRP).

Ana Poenariu engaged in workshops aimed at enhancing the caliber of employment within the public sector. During several workshops, she emphasized the essential resources and phases of a legal procedure for individuals whose rights are infringed upon by governmental agencies.

Ana Poenariu predominantly uses her Facebook platform to promote the materials of the investigative report publication she works for, *RISE Project* (52% of posts, Diagrams 1b). In doing so, she adopts a critical tone when discussing the context of the alarming problems identified in the promotional materials (13% of the posts). She also covers various phases of personal experiences, which account for 13% of the entries.

Ana Poenariu has posted a total of 46 negative posts, 15 positive posts, and 20 neutral posts, as indicated in Diagrams 1a. Based on the sentiment analysis conducted (Figure 5, Diagrams 1d), Ana Poenariu is ranked second in terms of the most negative perspective according to these critical methods.

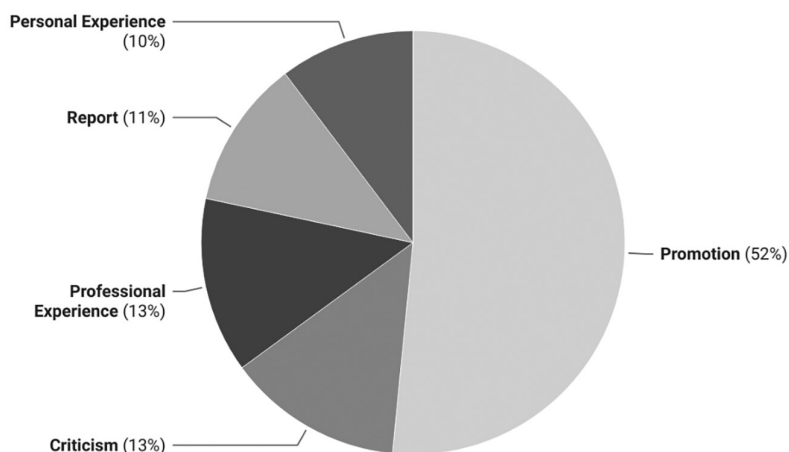


Figure 12 – Ana Poenariu's Facebook posts type (a post can hold together multiple approaches).

Justice is the main topic of journalist Ana Poenariu's writings (29 posts), then explanations of or additional information about journalism (17 posts, Diagrams 1c). Following the previous rankings, posts on politicians hold the next position with 7 posts, public funds follow with 6 posts, and disinformation comes in third with 5 posts.

Codruța Simina (Misreport) – 'The Delicate Editor'

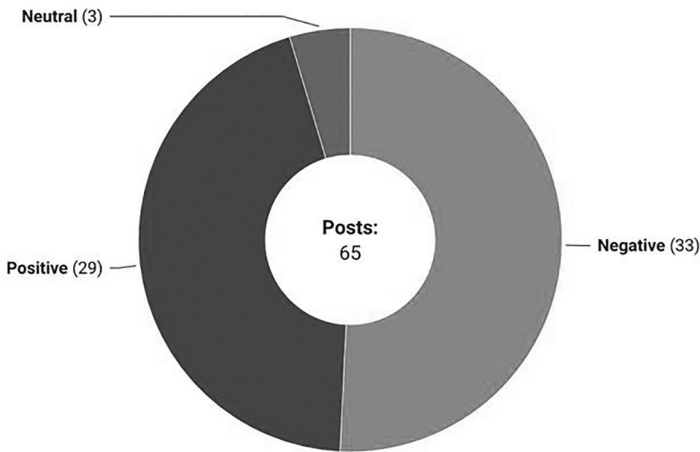
Codruța Simina made her first appearance in the local media in 2004, namely in *Clujeanul* and *Ziarul Clujeanului*. It was during this time that she acquired the skills and knowledge necessary for her profession and gained a deep understanding of how the local administration operates (Tănase, 2022). Subsequently, she established the itineraries connecting many editorial offices located in Bucharest and Cluj. Prior to her current role as a reporter for *RISE Project*, a collaborator of

Scena 9, and the author of the *Misreport* newsletter on misinformation, Codruța Simina was associated with *Press One*. She is also a poet who has published several volumes of poetry and achieved success by winning a lyrical debut contest. With her experience as editor, Codruța Simina dedicates a significant amount of time to browsing social networks and websites in order to identify and uncover methods and contexts for creating and spreading disinformation. The outcomes of her efforts are regularly delivered to the email inboxes of *Misreport* subscribers on a weekly basis in the form of newsletters.

Codruța Simina crafts her texts with a unique approach, skillfully blending many styles and nuances while carefully conducting extensive fact-checking and sourcing. As the author of a rigorously curated newsletter on disinformation in the media landscape, she shares on Facebook her thoughts on journalism (34 posts), political parties (8 posts), and disinformation (7 posts). Among the other postings, she covers topics such as environment (7 posts), while the *Misreport* newsletter, and the young generation (6 posts each) had a lower frequency of occurrence (Diagrams 1c).

The posts related to these subjects are categorized under reporting (27% of posts), criticism (24% of posts), and promotion (20% of posts) (Diagrams 1b).

Number of positive, neutral, and negative posts after Sentiment Analysis with Open AI ChatGPT 3.5.



– 65 (from 85) relevant posts.
Chart: Andrei Stipiu, October 2023 • Source: Codruța Simina, Apify • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 13 – *The tone of Codruța Simina’s Facebook posts.*

In terms of the tone of these posts, Codruța Simina has uploaded 33 posts with a negative tone, 29 posts with a positive tone, and 3 posts with a neutral tone (Figure 13, Diagrams 1a). This places her in second row in terms of her neutral, and even optimistic, approach to the themes discussed in Facebook texts (Figure 5, Diagrams 1d).

Emilia Șercan (Press One) - ‘The Own Professional’

Since her debut in the local press in 1996 and up to her migration to alternative media in the editorial office of *Press One*, Emilia Șercan has worked for several central newspapers and magazines in Bucharest. PhD lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of the University of Bucharest, Emilia Șercan has earned her notoriety in the Romanian media through the countless investigations and disputes on the quality of the papers and doctoral diplomas obtained by important political leaders and members of the administration. Combining tenacity with scientific methods of detection of errors in a scientific approach specific to the university environment, Emilia Șercan has become an undesirable person for the Romanian political class and related institutions because, in Romania, the PhD is not only an intellectual emblem but also a major increase in salary in the case of many employees of the public system. Universities which easily award diplomas contributed fatally to the decline of the scientific and cultural prestige of this title and illustrated the decay of the education system in Romania. As a result of these investigations, Emilia Șercan became herself a subject of press investigations, being subjected to abuses, information leaks, and attempts to denigrate her through the involvement of state institutions (Pavel, 2023; Zafir, 2023).

Throughout the observation period, Emilia Șercan exhibited 11 positive, 65 negative, and 7 neutral posts. The average coefficient for positive posts is 3.64, while the average coefficient for negative posts is -3.88. The overall average coefficient for all posts is -2.56. Emilia Șercan is the journalist who articulates her disillusionment most prominently regarding the subjects she covers. The reference to the figure can be found in Diagrams 1d, namely Figure 5.

Emilia Șercan distinguishes herself by using hashtags, including her trademark ‘#statulcapturat’, which refers to an opaque and secretive national, political and administrative system, characterized by pronounced illiberal tendencies. This hashtag appears most frequently throughout her Facebook posts, with a total of 40 entries. The topics of justice (30 posts) and journalism (28 posts) are responsible for filling the final two positions (Figure 14, Diagrams 1c).

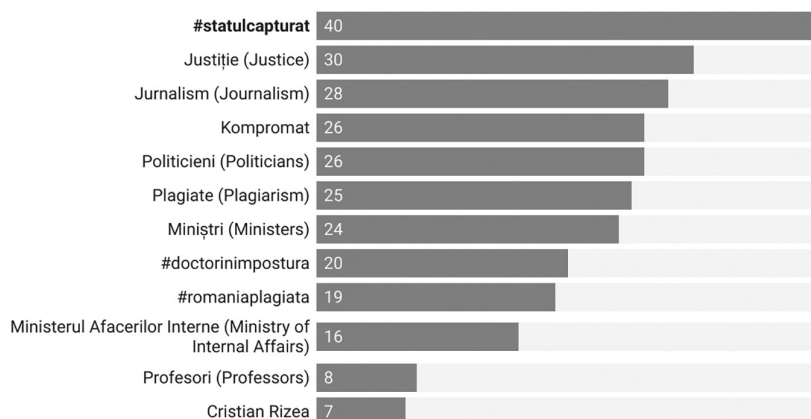


Figure 14 – Main topics of Emilia Șercan’s Facebook posts. (For the full ranking table of recurrences, see Diagrams 1c.).

Emilia Șercan predominantly discusses the topics of her *kompromat*, a vindictive action to which she became a victim due to her journalistic endeavors (Europa Liberă România, 2022; Mihăilă, 2022). She also delves into politicians in 26 posts, plagiarism in 25 posts, and ministers in 24 posts. Emilia Șercan's approach styles are predominantly reporting (38% of posts) and narrations about her professional experience (18% of messages) (Diagrams 1b).

Cătălin Tolontan (ex Libertatea, ex Gazeta Sporturilor) - 'The Promo Bot'

Cătălin Tolontan began his journalistic career at a student publication and has since established himself as a notable presence on several platforms, like IMDB, his personal publication, *Tolo.ro*, and Wikipedia. Under the guidance of Ovidiu Ioanițoaia, he established the sports journal *ProSport*, which was affiliated with the MediaPro conglomerate. Cătălin Tolontan expanded his work beyond the sports field by contributing to other local newspaper networks, like *Bihoreanul*, *Clujeanul*, and *Hunedoreanul*, inside the MediaPro Trust. From 2003 until 2008, he shifted, alongside his team of journalists, to *Gazeta Sporturilor*, which is part of the Ringier Media Trust.

In 2018, he resigned from the position of editor-in-chief in favor of the journalist Cătălin Țepelin. In 2023, Ringier's trust initiated a sequence of restructurings, which journalists have characterized as employer intervention in the editorial domain because of their vested interests in the betting sector. The series of events reached its climax with the resignation of Cătălin Țepelin and the removal of Tolontan from *Gazeta Sporturilor*. In December 2023, Cătălin Tolontan was compelled to step down from his position at *Libertatea*, a longstanding print publication in Romania (Mihăiță, 2023; Vulcan, 2023). As the leader of a group of investigative journalists, Tolontan successfully published press investigations of great significance during his tenure.

The primary purpose of Cătălin Tolontan's Facebook account is to promote press materials from the daily newspapers *Libertatea* and *Gazeta Sporturilor*, where he was working. These posts make up 66% of his content. Additionally, he shares informative or detailed materials, mostly from the same editions, which account for 29% of his messages (Diagrams 1b).

The published materials have featured three main topics or stages: the War in Gaza (19 posts), the media scandal involving Romanian journalists from the Ringier Media Trust (15 posts), and journalism in general (with 29 posts). Among the secondary subjects he approached, we find posts covering the Ringier Media Trust (10 posts), the issue of Simona Halep's doping file, and the influence of the gambling business on journalists (each with 7 posts) (Figure 15, Diagrams 1c).

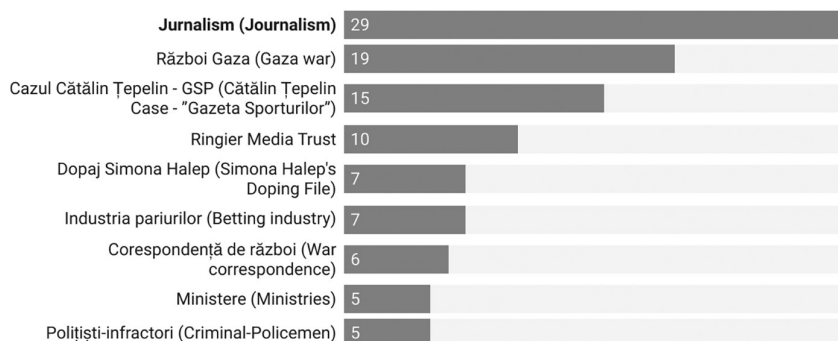


Figure 15 – Main topics of Cătălin Tolontan's Facebook posts. (For the full ranking table of recurrences, see Diagrams 1c.).

According to ChatGPT 3.5, with a total of 47 posts (Diagrams 1a), Cătălin Tolontan's postings are primarily critical and negative. This places him in the middle range of our study's sentiment analysis rating (Figure 5, Diagrams 1d).

5) Romania, as seen by journalists. Research conclusions and perspectives

For six of the seven journalists studied, journalism is the profession to which it is referred, complementarily, as a recurring topic in their posts on their personal Facebook accounts. In four cases, the journalists approached the promoted press materials they have worked on, their colleagues from the same redaction, or even reading materials from other publications. This type of approach and promotion ranks first among four out of seven journalists followed. Many of the journalists monitored the debate on the topics approached within their communities and even tried to provide details about their personal and professional experiences. In the case of obtaining information of public interest (*Law nr. 544* and the *Law of Transparency*), many journalists report on experiences in the courts of justice in which the various institutions of the state have acted in a manner meant to avoid and/or refuse to provide public information. The secrecy of other pieces of information of public interest is another major problem in Romania in 2023, which is also becomes apparent from the numerous posts studied.

Another major systemic problem in Romania is the justice system and its undemocratic means of protection of corrupt politicians (two main recurring topics in four of the seven journalists of our study). The SLAPP trials to which corrupt individuals resorted, following their affairs being investigated by journalists, appear to have become a common thing in an attempt to discourage journalistic efforts. But among the worst things exposed by journalists (plagiarism, incompetence, abuse, delay) is the replacement of magistrates who do their job professionally with servants of the political class and, therefore, with the prescription of numerous corruption cases and of persons maliciously convicted of other crimes.

Editorial pressure and commercial interference in editorials have been additional significant issues in the Romanian journalism landscape of 2023. From journalists' resignations and the *Gazeta Sporturilor* newspaper being under pressure from the bookmakers and the gambling industry to the several journalists resigning from the *Libertatea* publication (owned by the same Ringier Media Trust), it becomes apparent that the integrity and independence of the Romanian journalism have been severely compromised (Radu, 2023).

The diminishing of the mainstream press and the transformation of journalists into mere employees, who no longer serve the public interest and cease their investigations on politicians and governors, is another significant and worrying issue. Such influential decision makers allocate illicit funds to entire editorships and publications, in order to 'keep the press quiet', an approach they prefer before the elections. This is another major issue affecting the freedom of the press in a supposedly democratic regime. This trend, along with the disappearance of some iconic Romanian journalism publications (*Decât o Revistă*, *Gazeta Sporturilor* print edition, and *Vice Romania*), and the lasting decay of local media, portends a very likely election year filled with propaganda and disinformation.

The tendency of the state toward favoring social injustice, the issues young and old people face, systemic issues in the fields of health and education, environmental issues, etc. are just a few of the themes, approaches, and topics that are painful for Romanian society.

What is relatively rejoicing is the fact that, despite the increasing difficulties in doing their job, journalists in Romania find time and resources to describe the mechanisms of their profession, to document and explain their work as journalists, and to publish transparent and disaggregated sources of funding, especially in the independent media, with the ultimate goal of educating an increasingly less and less well-informed and at the same time a more or less intentionally misinformed public.

6) Interactive representation links

Apify was used to scrap 200 Facebook public posts of twelve prominent Romanian journalists. The data archive with different format files can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E0occg3V6C9DqbpKtIG78y9pRaG32U4J/view?usp=sharing>

DataWrapper was used to create both static and dynamic diagrams.

Diagrams 1a – *Number of positive, neutral, and negative posts after Sentiment Analysis with Open AI ChatGPT 3.5.*

Mona Dîrțu Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/4bFwt/

Cristian Lupșă Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/Zf66u/

Diana Oncioiu Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/7IEYI/

Ana Poenariu Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/wApkD/

Codruța Simina Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/5YNR7/

Emilia Șercan Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/W4Bwh/

Cătălin Tolontan Sentiment Analysis Posts: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/tjHhi/

Diagrams 1b – *The Facebook post types. A post can hold together multiple approaches.*

Mona Dîrțu Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/VWjkU/
 Cristian Lupșa Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/vhK6V/
 Diana Oncioiu Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/Nmx4N/
 Ana Poenariu Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/rbQQc/
 Codruța Simina Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/VrE0T/
 Emilia Șercan Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/T7xMB/
 Cătălin Tolontan Posts Type: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/ZdpfG/

Diagrams 1c – *Journalists' Facebook post subject, and the total number of posts in the same topic field.*

Mona Dîrțu Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/kj4Qq/
 Cristian Lupșa Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/foaK7/
 Diana Oncioiu Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/TgdY0/
 Ana Poenariu Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/aRr2Z/
 Codruța Simina Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/114f3/
 Emilia Șercan Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/Phqlr/
 Cătălin Tolontan Posts' Topics: https://www.datawrapper.de/_/qhEcC/

Diagram 1d – *Journalists' Facebook Post Sentiment Rankings, The Overall Picture:* https://www.datawrapper.de/_/AFh6N/

Diagrams Album – *Static Graphics (Google Photos Album):* https://photos.google.com/album/AF1QipP_rCeiVCpcrK9LItwEc0wMJskpu6-1sFzXj-dl

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