

Communication without journalists?

David Witzthum*

Abstract

The essay looks apprehensively to the future of Journalism as a profession. With a modicum of nostalgia, the author, a veteran of Israel's public television news department, recalls its founding years. Then, most positions as in the printed press and radio were occupied by journalists: film and video editors; broadcasters and reporters; even directors and chairpersons. Today, most of these, and many other (newly created by the necessities of new media), positions within and around are performed by non-journalists: technicians, specialists, actors, "talents" and "celebrities", PR people, agents, and young "researchers" – and with them, the new face of television values has shifted. Traditional "objectivity, fairness, Professionalism, neutrality" pave way to "immediacy, interactivity, involvement" and the (sometimes uneasy and critical) public role as "state media" is replaced by the (as uneasy but hardly critical) proximity to commercial interests of the privatized "media industry". In the new hyper world of "civic journalism", blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and iPhone, we could well be witnessing the last generation of professional journalists. The next era of media stories, or "contents", might have other story-tellers as well: be they Moslem Imams or reality-show stars.

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The black robe and the yellow press: Perceptions of the media by Israeli judges

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Abstract

This article examines changes in judges' perceptions of the media and attitudes regarding the relationship between the media and the courts in light of changes in media coverage of legal affairs and the expansion of the activities of the Courts' Administration spokesperson department. The study is based on in-depth interviews with 15 presiding and 15 retired judges and an analysis of all judicial decisions that referred to media-court relations. The data reveal a gradual penetration of "media logic" within the judicial community. Presiding judges referred to the leaking of news to the media, despite a ban on direct communication between judges and the press, and appeared to accept many of the features of court coverage that derive from an increasingly competitive commercial press. There has also been an increase over time in the importance that judges attribute to the media policy of the Courts' Administration. Nonetheless, unlike what has occurred in the political sphere, the adoption of media logic by the judicial community has been mitigated by the formal judicial ethos and the stringent rules that distance the courts from the media. The implications discuss these changes vis-à-vis the media on the characteristics and behavior of the judicial branch in Israel.

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"Where is Rose?!": Press coverage of Rose Pizam's murder as a case study in framing violence against children

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Abstract

In recent years, the phenomenon of violence against children has received much salience in the Israeli media and public debate. The mass media are a primary source of information regarding crime and violence for the general public. In order to learn about the Israeli news coverage of parental violence against children, this article quantitatively analyzes press accounts from two Israeli daily newspapers regarding the murder of a four year old-child, Rose Pizam. The article suggests one major investigative-dramatic narrative and two minor narratives used by the two dailies to report the case. First, a narrative of *difference/deviance* that emphasizes the uniqueness of the family that was in the center of the case; And second, a narrative of *victimhood*, which allowed readers to feel empathy towards the family, and projected on the society's defective structures, as if it enabled the tragedy. The article discusses the significance of the findings in the context of journalistic responsibility and current Israeli social beliefs regarding the connection between children, parents, family and society.

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The demise of simplicity: A comparative analysis of the rhetoric of Israeli printed advertisement in the 1950s and 2000s

Irit Zeevi*

Abstract

This article examines difference between the rhetoric of printed advertisements in Israel's first and last decades within their socio-cultural background. Findings show that the visual setting, content and language of ads have undergone major changes. Standard denotative layouts were transformed into unique and complex structures that are part of a larger transformation in the appeal strategy of ads. In the 1950s, content was directed toward reason and was therefore clear and purposive. Nowadays content is directed toward emotions, thereby lacking real connection with the promoted products. The use of standard or super-standard language in the 1950s indicate advertisers' pretense to distance themselves from consumers thereby commanding authority, while today's sub-standard language suggests an attempt to seek close proximity with them. This socio-cultural transformation was from a collectivist and austere society in which products were marketed for their true and often cherished values such as modesty to today's rich individualistic society, where any particular product has no apparent advantage over its competitors, thus an appeal to reason is not effective. The advertisers' objective in the 1950s to inform potential consumers using simple means shifted to the use of ambiguity and humor in texts invoking decipherment. This transformation in Israeli advertising is closely related to the overall transformations of the society at large.

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Website usage in Israeli municipal campaigns

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Abstract

The study of online campaigning in Israel and worldwide, deals almost exclusively with high-visibility campaigns, for elected offices such as president, prime-minister, member of parliament or state governor. The article presents the first comprehensive effort to study website usage in low-visibility campaigns in Israel, at the municipal level. It presents findings from a large-scale study that documented and analyzed website usage by some 600 candidates in 156 municipalities across Israel during the November 2008 elections. The general scope of website usage, the features available in candidates' websites, and socio-economic and strategic variables predicting website usage were analyzed. The article concludes by discussing the tensions between the actual scope and character of website usage by candidates and the expectations from the Internet as a new arena for enriching public discourse and deepening the connections between constituencies and the candidates competing to represent them.

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