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CITY UNIVERSITY
Department of Journalism

Doctoral Thesis

**News Production
in Greece: Journalists,
Newspapers
and the Internet**

by **Demetris I. Kamaras**

June 2004

*To Kelly,
Athina & Ioannis*

Acknowledgments

This work is dedicated to my supervisor, Professor - yachtsman - Hugh Stephenson, whose patience, guidance and support made this thesis possible. His European mind, deep journalism knowledge and charismatic personality have guided and greatly inspired my efforts.

I am deeply grateful to my wife Kelly Theodorakopoulou for her invaluable assistance, support and encouragement throughout all these years of marriage and friendship.

I owe much to Andreas Rizopoulos, a Greek guru in the art of communication and to my friend and colleague Vivi Theodoropoulou (at *LSE*) for their comments and support. A lot of thanks go to Associate Professor George Gantzias (*University of the Aegean*) for his friendship and encouragement, as well as to the Papaioannou family and staff of *EPILOGI Monthly Economic Review* for marking a large part of my professional life.

I would also like to thank Vasilis Botopoulos, Chancellor at the *University of Indianapolis / Athens Campus* who has put faith on my strong desire to serve journalism from the Lecturer's post.

This work would not be possible without the contribution of hundreds of Greek editors and journalists working in newspapers and the Internet. Some of them are mentioned throughout the text. Many others have agreed to talk to me anonymously. I thank them all.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my parents Athina and Ioannis Kamaras for their life lasting support and encouragement.

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Abstract

In this work, the various factors influencing the production of news analysed in the international news theory writings acted as a base for in-depth examination of the Greek newspaper and news Internet market. Influences on news writings were found to range from politics, economics and news media ownership, to newsroom organisation, journalistic practices and routines, ethics, journalist-source relations and social stereotypes.

From the history of the Greek newspaper market, it is made clear that the evolution of journalism and the newspaper market was directly affected by political developments in which party politics always played a dominant role. Similarly, the evolution of the human factor was marked by the country's particularities, some of which are deeply associated with today's distortions and inefficiencies in the journalism profession. The close examination of Greek newspaper journalists brought into surface particular aspects of the profession, such as daily professional tasks, routines and practices, which along with the analysis of newspapers' internal organisational environment as well as of external pressures, have offered a valuable insight of the major influences on news and its making. The primary aim was to approach journalists and newsroom processes, in order to define the degree to which the quality of human resources and the power of news organisations influence the way journalism is practiced in Greece. In this framework, the extensive analysis of economic and business reporting offered a view of how Greek journalists actively participated in the bull-bear situation in the Greek stock exchange in the late 1990s.

Finally, analysing news making processes in some of the largest Greek Internet news sites revealed significant drawbacks towards the creation of a new type of journalism. The limited will and ability of local digital newsrooms to explore the particular aspects of web journalism, in combination with the traditional deficiencies of professional journalism in the country synthesise an environment that lacks innovation and dynamism.

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“Journalists and politicians are friends.
If citizens were aware of journalists-politicians
relationships, they wouldn’t like it at all...”
Dimitris Christou, Editor – Express

Introduction

The media have always been the dominant channels through which people consume elements of information and entertainment. With the development of digital technology, the entrance of the mass media to the digital era on the threshold of the 21st Century has started an irreversible journey towards their drastic transformation in the general context of the emerging Information and Knowledge Society.

It is commonly argued that, nowadays, news media are amongst the main constructing parameters of the contemporary social, economic, political and cultural environment. The research of news and the factors affecting the stages of collection, processing and presentation of newsworthy information-as-news requires to a definition of what news is in the first place. The answer to the question “*what is news?*” though, is not straightforward. Besides the obvious simplistic notion that news is what people do not know until they hear or read about it, or watch it on television, there is a series of definitions most of is contentious. For instance, according to Fuller (1996), publisher of the Chicago Tribune:

...news is a report of what a news organisation has recently learned about matters of some significance or interest to the specific community that news organisation serves.¹

This definition, though, broadens the narrow notion that appears among journalists, tends to recognise as news those news items presented by a newspaper or television bulletin. It connotes a sense of neutrality on behalf of news

¹ Fuller, J. (1996), *News Values*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 6.

organisations. This is not presumed in an earlier definition put forward by G. Tuchman (1978):

...news imparts to occurrences their public character as it transforms mere happenings into publicly discussible events.²

This notion of “transformation” entails the whole essence of the present discussion surrounding the production of news. In its raw form, news is rarely found ready to be reproduced in the pages of a newspaper or Internet site. In general, news is shaped inside the media’s newsrooms and is essentially the result of the transformation of information into a commonly understandable structured text by combining different bits of information, official statements or eyewitness reports and usually background material. The bulk of this productive activity within news organisations is dedicated, on a daily basis, to the creation of “hard” news, whose main task is to narrowly tell a story to the public. Thus, as argued by Roshco (1975):

...news concentrates on reporting overt incidents rather than ongoing processes... it is necessarily descriptive rather than analytic.³

This is another debatable definition that derives from a past discussion on “news as a concept of knowledge”, a notion first introduced by Robert E. Park in the 1940s.⁴ Additionally, the narrative structure, which is commonly included in a news item, creates the essential context in order for news to be transformed into “news stories”.

On the other hand, news could be simply anything that a citizen is not aware of; or, put another way, news could be any piece of information that an “informed” citizen is not familiar with. Generally, the degree to which the citizens of a society are informed about the contemporary political, economic and social developments, as well as of the effect of these developments on their lives and the nation’s future, are important factors in order to define what is news. Information new for a citizen

² Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, New York: The Free Press, p.3.

³ Roshco, B. (1975), *Newsmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 18.

of a remote geographical area may be already old news for a citizen living in the nation's capital. The model of the "informed" citizen has different dimensions, which are equally important. These could be a certain level of literacy and educational background, interest in politics as well as socio-economic developments, interest in reading, etc. Since the existence of all these dimensions is hard to identify, for the requirements of the present thesis we define news as every bit of true information that serves the people's knowledge or the political conscience of the public towards the common good.

"News" has always been thought of as carrying distorting, or incomplete, messages to the public. As early as in the 1920s, Walter Lippmann discussed the weakness of the private citizen to grasp "what is going on, or who is doing it, or where he is being carried", as a result, inter alia, of the fact that "...no newspaper reports [the private citizen's] environment so that he can grasp it".⁵ Tracking down and analysing the causes of these factors affecting the fullness of news stories and meanings, whether external or internal to the journalist's job, constitutes the main target of this study, which focuses on news making in major Greek newspapers and news Internet sites.

i. Structure of the thesis

Empirical and theoretical writings throughout the 20th century have thoroughly examined factors influencing the production of news. In Chapter I, the theoretical framework of the production of news is discussed, setting the appropriate base for further in-depth examination and testing of my hypotheses on the Greek case. The examination of the various factors influencing news ranges from politics, economics and news media ownership, to newsroom organisation, journalistic practices and routines, ethics, journalist-source relations and social stereotypes. The theoretical discussion moves from a general categorisation of the major schools of thought to more specific accounts of on news work, which originate

⁴ An informative discussion of R.E. Park's ideas can be read in B. Roscho's *Newsmaking*, op.cit.

⁵ Lippmann, W. (1925) 'The Phantom Public', reprinted in Robert Jackall (1995) *Propaganda*. Hampshire: Macmillan Press.

either from within the news media themselves, or externally, from the social, economic and political environment.

Chapter II refers primarily to the national context and the particular developments of the Greek newspaper industry over time. It starts from the early years of the newspaper history and ends with the influence of new technology in the beginning of the 21st century, setting the base of the analysis of specific factors determining news and its making in Greece. In this part, it is made clear that the evolution of journalism and the newspaper market was directly affected by political developments in which party politics always played a dominant role. In this context, the key role of newspaper journalism is stressed. That which included not only the mere recording of news, but in some cases, the active participation in its shaping.

In this thesis, the human factor holds a central role. Thus, Chapter III is devoted to the examination of Greek newspaper journalists themselves, presenting their general personal, education and professional profile and habits, as well as their views on a variety of news media issues. This was accomplished by a large-scale questionnaire survey performed amongst newspaper reporters in all major daily titles. Research focused on particular characteristics and beliefs as regards various elements and processes that affect and largely determine news making. The respondents describe the way they conduct their daily professional tasks and state their views on major issues as regards particular aspects of the profession.

Dealing with each news organisation separately was not a goal of this survey. Thus details on newspapers and Internet sites were kept to a minimum. However, certain discussions reflect particular organisational characteristics and changes to the degree corporate developments influence journalistic work. My primary concern has been to approach news and its news journalists, aiming at defining the degree to which human resources and organisational news environment have influenced, and continue to influence, the way journalism is practiced in Greece.

In Chapter IV, discussion is concentrated on a series of particular aspects of news production process in large Athens-based dailies and on various factors that influence news content. The research tackles issues originating from the internal organisation of newspapers, the hierarchy and allocation of power within the newsroom, the role of the human factor, the routines of news gathering and processing, as well as the role of news values in selecting and processing newsworthy information. Journalistic work is examined against organisational structure and culture, as well as the dominant editorial policy, dictated by newspaper proprietors and news executives. On the other hand, external factors of influence are also considered, such as the close relationships of reporters with political, economic and corporate sources, pressures originating from the advertising sector, the relations between journalists and elites, as well as the role of the audience in determining the formation of the editorial line.

In this context, economic and business reporting is used as a case study. The field was selected because of its particular influential role in the formation of contemporary journalism in the country. In the last couple of decades, the economy has been a central point of interest for the Greek public. Especially in the second half of the 1990s, economic developments were accelerated, mainly due to the country's prospective enter into the European Monetary Union. Progressively, public discussion on the country's role in the European Community was increased, along with the need for economic news. Economic and business reporting started to gain ground, leading gradually to a growth of journalistic specialisation and expertise. Thus, in the second part of Chapter IV, the economic/business newspaper market and the journalistic human resources involved are examined in relation to recent economic developments. My research in the largest Athens newspaper newsrooms has focused, *inter alia*, on the evolution of business reporting as well as the effects of stock market developments in the period 1998-2001 on journalism and the business newspaper market.

Since the mid-1990s, with the appearance of the first Internet news ventures, there has been a growing debate about "content management" (i.e. news handling) in the context of the new "web-journalism". The degree to which web journalism

represents an entirely new type of journalism is a matter that needs to be addressed in detail. In Chapter V, my main concern is the investigation of changes, if any, on Greek journalism caused by the advent of the Internet and its gradual development into a news platform. Research includes topics such as the organisation and structure of Internet news sites' newsrooms and the news production processes. This includes some analysis of the ability of Greek digital newsrooms to explore innovation, such as interactive applications and practices. The websites selected reflect "best –practice" in Greek web journalism.

Finally, in Epilogue, discussion focuses on future challenges as regards the human factor, the media industry as well as journalism research.

ii. Methodology

Focusing on journalism and news making in the Athens-based daily press required research in the newsrooms of all major political and financial dailies. This was accomplished through interviews with some 200 newspaper reporters and news editors, employed in the daily news business. These newspaper professionals were approached, either directly (through face-to-face interviews), or indirectly (through self-respondent questionnaires). Although much information was collected on the basis of a promise of anonymity, many important views are offered on-the-record. Despite their initial nervousness about being identified, when news executives are asked to speak about the industry, their strong feelings about the profession seemed to have liberating effects on their hesitation.

This thesis utilises all relevant past research on the Greek media. The fact is that Greek scholars have done little academic research in the field of newspaper journalism and even less as regards particular aspects of the profession, such as journalistic routines and practices, the role of sources and ethics. The lack of research on the Greek contemporary newspaper market and newspaper journalists can be explained by the delay of the emergence of the academic dimension of the media industry itself. Media and communications departments did not exist in Greece until the beginning of the 1990s. The dominance of broadcasting as a new

field of academic research, along with the absence of any organised academic research in the press, has resulted in newspapers being largely neglected.

The analysis that follows applies internationally recognised theoretical models to the Greek case. This is both a luxury and a necessity: a luxury because this means that the structure can be relatively simple and a necessity because this first Greek approach to such delicate matters needs to be safely based on models widely accepted elsewhere.

I

News theory

This study is about news and the factors that affect the ways news is gathered, processed and represented in Greek newspapers and Internet news media.¹ Online or not, the whole idea of transforming events and occurrences into publicly known information entails the existence of an organised, structured and nowadays clearly defined corporate environment, broadly termed as a news organisation, whose function relies on a set of continuously operating mechanisms. Moreover, in the case of the Internet, news production appears as a 24/7 operation (24 hours a day, 7 days per week), while other intrinsic characteristics create a continuity of publication deadlines that deeply affect newsmaking.

Nowadays, it is not hard to imagine that news goes through a production line, within which a series of inputs have as their primary task to create an output that satisfies the potential client (reader/user) and, furthermore, to strengthen the image and penetration of the medium itself. Both in the online and in print environment, a series of actors participate in the line of productive activity, who have a strong interactive relationship.

Most authors agree that the final product embodies major characteristics of its creators, characteristics that in the case of news may be not obvious. Journalists, editors, sources, press proprietors, online journalists, web producers and content managers, each plays a particular and vital role in the newsmaking procedure, while sharing at the same time all the characteristics of a common profession. Thus, for those who assume what appears in the news to be the absolute truth, they must bear in mind that this “truth” inevitably carries the characteristics of its making. It

¹ The term ‘Internet news media’ indicates daily updated news content appeared on Internet news sites developed either by large news corporations, or independent news business ventures.

should be noted, however, that in a case of a powerful event that speaks for itself (e.g. the devastating results of a strong earthquake), these characteristics could be relatively neutral and not distort the facts per se. In numerous other cases of everyday news production processes – and excluding premeditated distortions – the news production line has a determining and distorting effect on the final product.

Tuchman (1978) saw news as a window in the world. The window's view however, she argued:

...depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard.²

Distortions on news may range from politically biased and unbalanced news texts to unflattering politician's news photograph published in a newspaper, even to the specific photographic camera angle used by the news photographer to capture images.

What interests the present research is the production of text-based news either in print or online. Analysis of the various factors affecting the final product includes influences originating from the politics of media ownership, competition, news corporate hierarchical structures, journalistic practices and routines, ethics, journalist-source relations and social stereotypes. The theoretical discussion that follows starts from a general approach and moves to an analytical discussion of the factors affecting the production of news.

1.1 NEWS THEORY

The new digital world has not yet produced any comprehensive theories as regards the online journalistic function. Textbooks discussing the special characteristics of web-journalism and the particular profiles of journalists working online do not really exist.³ In addition, digital writing still remains to a great extent a product of

² Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, New York: The Free Press, p. 3.

³ End of 2002.

professionals who had to adapt to change, rather than the product of people who have grown within the digital environment from the outset. Also, the social dimension of online news, namely the public's reaction to online readings, has not yet been studied and analysed.

Any full exploration of the digital experience requires revisiting most theoretical concepts on communication and journalism. However, in this transitional stage and given the particularities of the Greek case, going back to the traditional theories about newsmaking seems the best way to build a strong theoretical base for the analytical discussion to follow. A discussion of future considerations will be found in the final chapter, after all evidence and research results have been presented.

Referring to all general news production theories, as well as to all those dealing with particular sections of newsmaking, seems pointless. So, I have adopted the most practically oriented theoretical approach as a base model. In the first part of the following discussion reference is made to major writings and general arguments. In the second part, a theoretical guide is presented so as to lead into the empirical observation and analysis. In this framework, the broad categorisation put forward by Schudson (1991) is a convenient structure for the initial understanding of the factors influencing the production of news.

1.1.1 The Schudson approach

Schudson divides newsmaking literature into three important groups of thought: the political economy approach, the organisational approach and the culturological (or socio-cultural) approach.⁴ What follows is a presentation of the main arguments, in a programmatic form, accompanied by some discussion on the theories themselves.

The political economy approach, embraced predominantly by British neo-Marxists, as well as by some American theorists, relies heavily on the Marxist view concerning the use of ownership of the means of cultural and ideological production as a mechanism aiming to the reproduction of the dominant ideology of

the upper class. This argument formulated by Marx and Engels has the following central tenet:

The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...⁵

The questions that, according to the political economists Murdock and Golding (1977), arise from this passage concern the relations between media proprietors and the capitalist class, the relations between ownership and control, as well as the processes through which dominant ideology is planted into media discourse. They are also about the extent to which “members of subordinate groups adopt the dominant ideas as their own”.⁶

In a way, the political economy perspective, by placing the real power on the hands of the capitalist class, sees the media as conduits of this power and its subsequent ideology. In other words, political economy “decentres” the media, viewing them simply as an integral part of the economic and socio-cultural structure of society.⁷ This starting point, although an important one, seems to consider media and journalism as helpless, institutional servants of the upper class. It seems also to ignore any independent phenomena of free-spirited journalism, investigative reporting, as well as the existence of alternative media. In the digital era, alternative Internet sites or national computer networks contributes to the expression of views and the dissemination of independent knowledge all over the world.

In the late 1970s, Murdock and Golding emphasised the notion of class power, noting that the sociology of mass communications “should derive from, and feed into, the continuing debate on the nature and persistence of class stratification.”⁸ Keeping in mind the whole theoretical and empirical research done in news

⁴ Schudson, M. (1991) “The Sociology of News Revisited” in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch: *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold.

⁵ Cited in Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1977) “Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations” in J. Curran et al. (eds.) *Mass Communication and Society*, London: Edward Arnold.

⁶ Cited in Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1977), op. cit.

⁷ Mosco, V. (1996) *The Political Economy of Communication*, London: Sage.

⁸ Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1977) op. cit.

organisations by UK and US media researchers, whose conclusions have revealed a series of paragon directly related to the concepts of organisational psychology, organisational behaviour, and journalistic routines and practices,⁹ the aforementioned political economists' basic argument seems to be restricted by the traditional theorist's difficulty in keeping up with the new age. Is the political economy analysis of news production just an attempt to embrace the contemporary role of the media, as it would have done with any other sociological issue, or does it really describes the situation in newsmaking? Are the capitalist elites those who predominantly influence the news discourse; or, put another way, can the political economy approach be universally accepted, or is it possible for it to function only in strictly stratified societies? The discussion of basic elements of the Greek society later in this study will consider the whole question concerning the preservation of the dominant ideology through the media.

The concentration of media ownership in a small number of wealthy people and diversified corporations all around the globe is undoubtedly a worrying phenomenon. Supporting the political economy approach are Ben Bagdikian's writings concerning the concentration of ownership in the US media. In an influential book on the developments in the American media market, Bagdikian (1992) stresses that a small number of large media corporations have taken over the American news. This phenomenon "would bring greater uniformity of content... [and] ...further increase corporate pressures to emphasise events, policies and politicians favoured by media owners".¹⁰ However, pressures on journalism in the handling the news content can derive from everywhere. A series of studies on the interaction between journalists and sources¹¹ has shown the special character of this relationship, which can easily lead to distorted journalistic treatment of news. On the other hand, the fact that elites are usually divided on various issues, as Hallin (1986) has shown in the case of the American politics during Vietnam, may have a

⁹ Studies such as those of: Chris Argyris (1974), Gaye Tuchman (1978), Herbert Gans (1979), Philip Schlesinger (1978) and others.

¹⁰ Bagdikian, B. (1992) *Media Monopoly*, Boston: Beacon Press (4th edition).

¹¹ See Schlesinger, P. & Tumber, H. (1994) *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Also Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M. and Chan, J. B. L. (1989) *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

distorting influence on processes securing the reproduction of the dominant ideology.¹²

A more practical concept of the function that the dominant ideology is supposed to exert in today's media environment, is given by the "propaganda model" put forward by Herman & Chomsky (1988). They argue that their model "...traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public."¹³ Their model consists of five filters through which information passes before it takes the form of news. According to Herman and Chomsky, these successive "news filters" are:

first, the size, ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; second, advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; third, the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; fourth, 'flak' as a means of discipline the media, and fifth, 'Anti-communism' as a national religion and control mechanism.¹⁴

This approach to the role of the media as mechanisms of the reproduction of the ideology of the dominant class seems to be a further developed and modernised version of the political economy approach. Both share the notion of an international or local conspiracy, headed and orchestrated by the elites, and both consider the economic factor as the predominant focal point in media research and analysis.

¹² Hallin, D. (1986) *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*, New York: Oxford. At this point, one should keep in mind that the "dominant ideology" may not always be a capitalist one and may not always represent that which traditionally stems from the ownership of the means of production. For instance, the contemporary ideological and political centre-left movement in Greece, to which the majority of theorists and intellectuals seem to subscribe, represents truly a dominant ideology, and furthermore by all appearances, an "anti-capitalist" one, within the traditional meaning of the term. According to Clogg (1987), from the early days of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement's (PaSoK) administration, its leader, Andreas Papandreou "envisage[d] the establishment of a decentralised socialism based on 'socialisation' and self-management. Candidates for 'socialisation' [were] the country's banking and credit system and strategic monopoly industries". See Clogg, R. (1987) *Parties and Elections in Greece*. London: C. Hurst & Company, p. 138. This economic ideology ruled the country throughout the 1980s to be abolished only in 1989 when New Democracy came into power. Then, when PaSoK seized power in 1993 the Papandreou's successor Costas Simitis adopted a modern pro-EU policy that differed extensively from the auspices of the 'Third World' to Socialism, promoted by the early PaSoK administrations. Still, "anti-capitalist" views, combined with strong "Anti-American" feelings are found to exist, at least verbally, in great parts of the population.

¹³ Herman, E. & Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing Consent*, New York: Pantheon Books.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Any attempt to consider political economy of communication as an adequate means to describe the production of news seems to stem from a desire to consider everything in economic terms. However, in the case of newspaper ownership, examining solely the proprietor's power does not provide sufficient explanation on how journalism forces actually work. Its usefulness as a starting point is not questioned. As it was argued by Meehan, Mosco and Wasko (1993):

In communication industries ... political economy provides an essential first step by analysing the conditions under which manufacture and distribution occur...[but]...is ill adapted to analysing cultural commodities as artefacts or audience commodities as cultural collectivities...¹⁵

Therefore, it seems to offer limited help in terms of investigating the insights of media organisations as far as the news production is concerned.

News organisations are a unique kind of business, since every day they have to come up with a new product. Despite their usually uniform platform of presentation, whose form commonly remains unchanged for a long period of time, the content must absolutely be different each time it reaches the consumer. In order for this repetitive act of production to be made possible, the existence of specific rules and routine practices are clearly essential. Therefore, the study of news production, despite the necessity of the inclusion of the economic factor, also has to look deeper into the organisational structure of the media. Furthermore, it has to evaluate the effect of the news media culture on employee relations, and on media workers themselves.

The organisational approach emphasises the constraints and complexities of news organisations and the multiplicity of aims within them.¹⁶ From an organisational point of view, news is, first, internally affected by employee relations and the news organisations themselves and, second, externally by the interaction between journalists and sources. As Tiffen (1989) argues, it is necessary to understand the

¹⁵ Meehan, E.R., V. Mosco, and J. Wasko (1993) 'Rethinking Political Economy: Change and Continuity', *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), Autumn (pp. 105-116).

organisational context in order to be able to specify the manipulation of news "... either internally via managerial intervention or journalistic prejudice, or externally by particular news sources".¹⁷ Similarly, Schudson (1991) traces the centre of the generation of news in "the link between reporter and official, the interaction of the representatives of the news bureaucracies and the government bureaucracies."¹⁸

Molotch and Lester (1974) see the media as reflecting "... the practices of those having the power to determine the experience of others."¹⁹ They argue for the existence of a "set of agencies" through which occurrences pass in order to be constructed into news events, with the use of organisational routines and practices.²⁰ Although Molotch and Lester subscribe to the organisational way of viewing newsmaking, their concept is very similar to that adopted by Herman and Chomsky (1988); the "propaganda model" suggests filters through which occurrences have to pass before they end up to become news.

Central in the organisational approach to the production of news is the discussion on the role of sources. According to Hall et al. (1978), accredited and widely legitimised people, who are used as sources by journalists, act as "primary definers" of social reality.²¹ Additionally, their primary definitions are so strong that any other explanation offered later is not capable of reversing the original interpretation.²² It should be noted that this discussion over the question of the "primary definition" entails also the question of class power and the extent to which class stratification in a society can be the predominant factor determining the access to the media. If the "primary definers" can always be found among the ranks of the upper class, then Hall's account reinforces the neo-Marxists' arguments

¹⁶ Tiffen, R. (1989), *News and Power*, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Schudson, M. (1991), *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Molotch, H. and Lester, M. (1974) 'News as Purposive Behaviour: on the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents and Scandals' in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds.) *The Manufacture of News* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981, revised edition - Originally published in the *American Sociological Review*, vol. 39, February 1974.

²⁰ Molotch, H. and Lester, M. (1974), *op. cit.*

²¹ Hall, S. et al. (1978) 'The Social Production of News: Mugging in the Media' in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds.) *The Manufacture of News* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981, revised edition) - Extracts from Hall, S. et al. *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

concerning the transfusion of dominant ideology, through the media to the people. However, this combined thought contrasts with more pragmatist arguments, such as those put forward by Hallin (1986), Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) regarding the occasional oppositional character of elitist views.

The socio-cultural approach locates the source of bias in news production in complex interactions between journalists, editors and news workers in general, as well as in the external social and cultural environment. This approach, as Schudson (1991) has argued, “finds symbolic determinants of news in the relations between facts and symbols”.²³

The proponents of the cultural approach see journalists as selecting stories, which correspond with the values of the national culture.²⁴ However, as it will be shown in Chapter IV, the notion of “national culture” is not a straightforward one, since the values of the people can be manipulated, a phenomenon widely met in most of the underdeveloped and less developed countries. While it can be legitimately claimed that, for instance, the BBC is preserving established societal values,²⁵ it is difficult to apply this concept in the Greek public broadcasting media, since, in Greece, state-owned media reflect, through the appointments of government sympathisers, the values put forward by the ruling political party of the day.

It is clear that none of the aforementioned three approaches should be thought of as mutually exclusive.²⁶ There are certain factors found in all the theoretical perspectives that seem all to play a vital role in the production of news. At this point, it could be argued that, in the final analysis, the influence of the factors included in both the political economy and the socio-cultural approaches weigh upon the organisation of news work, namely the series of operational functions examined by the organisational approach. However, since my task here is not to focus on news content as a result of a series of functions, but to investigate the

²² Hall, S. et al. (1978), op. cit.

²³ Schudson, 1991:151, op.cit.

²⁴ Gans, 1979, op.cit.

²⁵ See Schlesinger, 1987 for a relevant analysis on the BBC's role.

functions themselves, it is vital to look at specific areas and use more narrowly specified analytical paths, which will assist in the production of more substantiated results. In this way, we examine news and journalism in Greece through a more holistic approach. This is done also for another reason, namely the lack of previous organised and in-depth studies in the field.

For the purposes of this study, the broad theoretical platform reflected in the categorisation performed by Schudson is abandoned for a more analytical course of analysis so as to accommodate the variety of issues that need to be discussed. This will assist the whole task of combining theory with practice. The theoretical base put forward by Shoemaker and Reese (1991) illuminates the general area of influences on media content and acts fruitfully as a platform on which to base our empirical and theoretical research.²⁷

1.1.2 Internal and external sources of influence; the Shoemaker & Reese approach

For the purposes of this study, news product in general and journalists and their work in particular will be considered as the centre of a complex communicating activity, which involves the interaction of various internal and external factors. These will be tested against the hypothesis that the mere presence of the factors, as well as their strategic use by various players, renders them influential in the production of news in the press as now in the Internet. The major topics put forward in the broader area of newsmaking literature and research will act as a useful base for the introduction of the main research objectives and questions as regards the Greek case.

According to Shoemaker & Reese (1991), the evidence of influence on media content should be traced inside and outside media organisations to a series of factors such as "...the personal attitudes and orientations of media workers,

²⁶ See also Schlesinger, P. & Tumber, H. (1994) *op. cit.*

²⁷ Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D. (1991) *Mediating the Message*. New York: Longman.

professionalism, corporate policies, corporate ownership patterns, the economic environment, advertisers and ideological influences”.²⁸

In the light of the above and for research purposes, the Shoemaker and Reese distinction between internal and external factors affecting news work and news output is followed. The internal factors considered are:

- first, news values and the role of the journalists themselves, their personal ideology, as well as the stock of knowledge and professional training on which they build upon;
- second, the professional routines and practices employed either by journalists themselves or dictated by the various media in general and newsroom rules and habits in particular;
- third, the organisational structure and culture of the news media (internal hierarchy and allocation of power), and the influence and control which spring from media ownership, as well as news executives; and
- fourth, the professional ethics prevailing in the exercise of journalism itself.

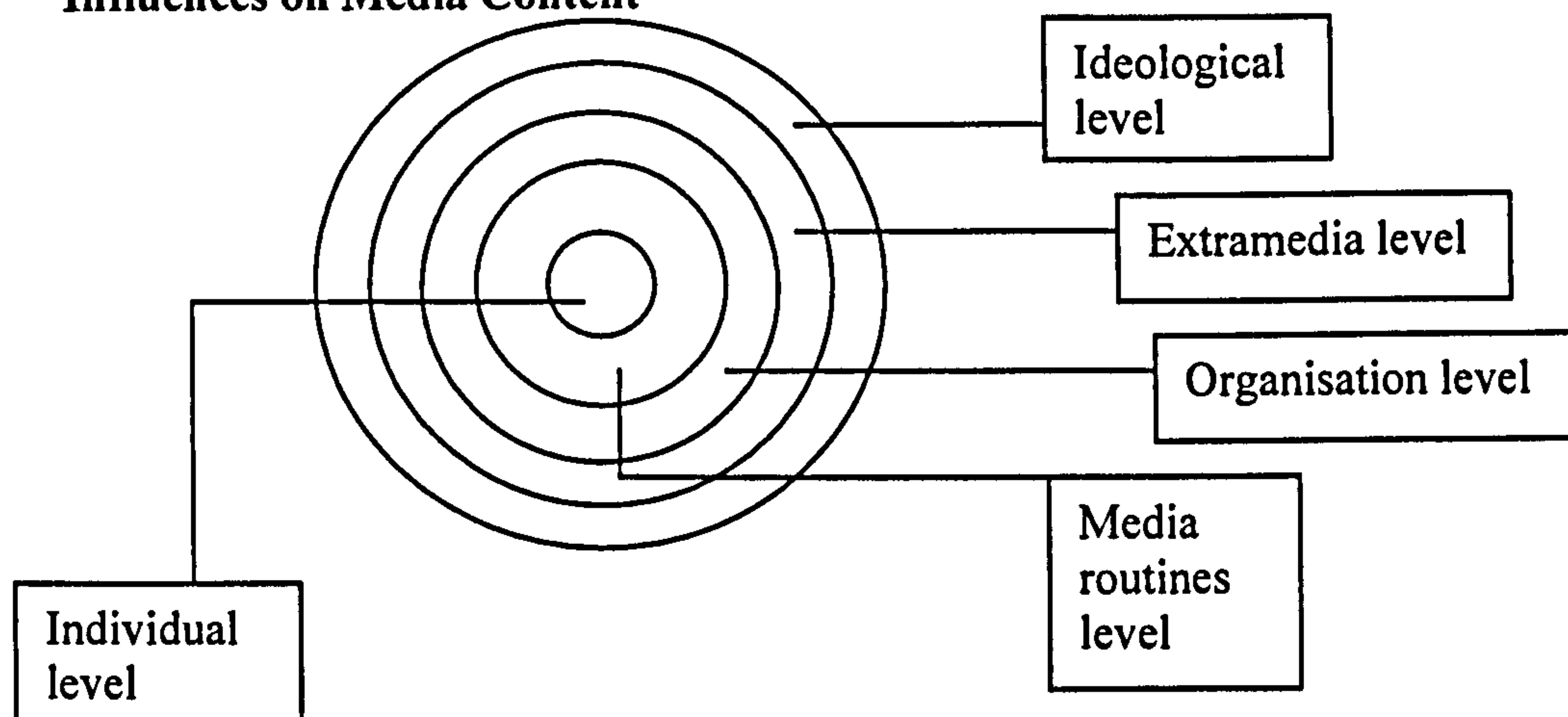
The external factors considered are:

- first, the role of sources and their power on determining the dominant journalistic views;
- second, the role of advertising and competition as pressures on journalistic work and final output; and
- third, the sociopolitical environment within which journalists work and profess journalism, as well as the dominant culture and ideology that play an important role in determining news values.

A graphical representation of these internal and external factors of influence on news production is presented in the following Figure 1.1.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 1.

Figure 1.1
Influences on Media Content



Source: Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D. (1991) Mediating the Message. New York: Longman (p. 54).

Discussion will also include a particular focus on business reporting, an area highly affected by globalisation and modern business practices, as well as national politics. The magnitude of the Enron collapse and the financial scandals that followed in the early months of 2002 in the US have caused a great deal of scepticism as regards the role of business reporters in disseminating company news and forecasts. As Marjorie Scardino, CEO of Pearson, has argued, “I do think the business press - and I include the FT in this - has not worked hard enough to ferret out these stories... If journalists were better at reading balance sheets, some of these things would be discovered sooner”.²⁹ On the other hand, at the local level, the Athens Stock Market “adventure” during the period 1999-2001 offers a great opportunity for evaluating routines and practices, as well as journalistic ethics in the Greek case.

1.2 SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

1.2.1 Internal factors

Previous research on news values, the profile of the contemporary journalist, the prevailing professional routines and practices, the organisational structure and

culture, as well as the professional ethics, have been illuminating as regards the identification of the influence of these factors on media output in Western European media markets and the US.

1.2.1.1 Personal Values and News Values

Following Shoemaker & Reese's paradigm, the focal point of our investigation is the characteristics of journalists ("communicators") and their personal and professional backgrounds (e.g. education and training, social status etc.). Moreover, investigating personal attitudes, values and beliefs, such as the way journalists see the role of the news media in society, or even their perceptions on what should be done, as opposed actual practice, assists the identification of distortions or contradictory situations within the profession.

A series of past studies have attempted to define the profile of professional journalists working in the press or broadcast media. Researchers such as Tuchman, (1972), Altheide (1976), Gans (1980), Tunstall (1971, 1993), Lichter & Rothman (1981) have written extensively about journalists' personal characteristics, education and even political views. Observation of routines and practices, as well as the journalists' opinions on objectivity and the categorisation of news, have provided useful accounts.

For instance, Altheide (1976) identified two types of bias that influence journalistic work as "...personal values and preferences, and ideological commitments."³⁰ Gans, on the other hand, in his criticism on Rothman-Lichters surveys in 1985 refers to a series of social-science researchers who found that journalists' "...personal political beliefs are irrelevant, or virtually so, to the way they covered the news".³¹ If this is the case in the US, it remains to be seen if the same neutrality can be suggested for journalists reporting in other national cultures as well.

²⁹ See "Scardino lambasts business press", *GuardianUnlimited.com*. Located at <http://media.guardian.co.uk/city/story/0,7497,804011,00.html>. Accessed 7/7/03.

³⁰ Altheide, 1976: 175, op.cit.

³¹ Gans, H. (1985) 'Are US Journalists Dangerously Liberal?', *Columbia Journalism Review*, November / December, pp. 29-33. Gans refers to studies by Epstein E. J. (1973 - *News from Nowhere*),

It could be argued that regardless of politics and its infiltration, or not, into news treatment, journalists and news executives are deeply influenced in their work by the way they view the world. What really matters is the constant mental effort a professional is obliged to make in order, first, to identify the difference between facts and views and, second, to decide consciously to cover facts in the most neutral way possible.

The old “gatekeeping” model provides a starting point here. It was presented in 1950 by D.M. White, who studied a provincial wire editor (whom he called “Mr. Gates”) in terms of the reasons he either selected or rejected news items from wire copy sent by the news agencies. White’s analysis was based on the following assumptions: news goes through certain channels; inside the channels there are certain places acting as gates; news may or may not be admitted through these gates.³² In the process of selection and news processing, Mr. Gates was found to be influenced by his personal socio-political beliefs, although his journalistic task of giving space to the most important stories made him promote issues that he personally disliked. He specifically argued for his personal beliefs, saying that:

...I dislike Truman’s economics, daylight saving time and warm beer... I am also prejudiced against a publicity-seeking minority with headquarters in Rome... As far as preferences are concerned, I go for human interest stories in a big way.³³

On the other hand, Mr. Gates included in his preferences hints of an organisational as well as editorial policy character: “...My other preferences are for stories well-wrapped up and tailored to suit our needs (or ones slanted to conform to our editorial policies).”³⁴

It could be argued that the particular study of Mr. Gates, although quite old and perhaps simplistic for today’s rapidly evolving timeliness and informational inflow,

Sigal L. V. (1973 - *Reporters and Officials*), Roshcoe, B. (1975 - *Newsmaking*), Tuchman, G. (1978 - *Making News*) and of course his own work (1980 - *Deciding What’s News*).

³² Dexter, L.A. & White, D.M. (1964) *People, Society and Mass Communications*. USA: The Free Press of Glencoe. First published in *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, Fall, 1950, p. 170.

³³ Dexter, L.A. & White, D.M. (1964), op. cit.

underlines a useful point, namely the complexity of criteria that can be found in the minds of contemporary information managers, i.e. journalists. Decision-making takes place in all levels of hierarchy on all stages of news production, from the early rumour or leak, till the final page or html layout. In this continuous decision making process, various criteria are employed, stemming either from personal preferences and likes and dislikes, or from organisational dictates. Therefore, the notion of the gatekeeping process expresses the essence of journalism in general and news work in particular. According to Shoemaker (1991), it connotes a broader notion of selective information process, involving "...every aspect of message selection, handling and control...".³⁵

1.2.1.1 Journalism as a profession

Lambeth (1986) and later Ginneken (1998) have put together a series of factors that, in their view, constitute the basic elements of journalistic professionalism.³⁶ In his account, Lambeth argues that journalism does not fit very well in a series of criteria which define an average profession, such as professional commitment, officially defined standards of entry (e.g. accreditation and relevant academic degree), a clear role of serving public interest and a high degree of autonomy.³⁷ On the other hand, Ginneken argues for the necessity of five elements that should characterise journalistic professionalism. These are the existence of professional education, the existence of "some kind of licensing or registration system", the inclusion of a large part of the profession into "representative professional organisations", the "proclamation of a 'code of ethics' by the professional organisation [and] ...the introduction of some kind of limited jurisdiction to guard against breaking the rules" and, finally, the success of the profession in having "its view (that it performs a public service in the general interest) accepted by most of society".³⁸

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Shoemaker, P.J. (1991) *Gatekeeping*. Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage, p.1.

³⁶ See Lambeth, E. B. (1986) *Committed journalism: An ethic for the profession*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press (cited in Shoemaker & Reese, op. cit.). Also Ginneken, J. van (1998) *Understanding Global News: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage

³⁷ Lambeth, E. B. (1986), op. cit.

³⁸ Ginneken, J. van (1998) op. cit. pp. 74-75.

Generally, it is argued that nowadays one of the basic elements of the definition of the journalistic profession is “the existence (and gradual expansion) of professional education, in which students acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, but also professional ideology...”³⁹ In this respect, recruitment criteria in mainstream media in Europe and the US are facing a rapid change. In the US, in particular, the proliferation of journalism education has been, according to Glasser (1992), “influenced by the requirements for accreditation”.⁴⁰ Personal skills, capabilities and a sixth sense for news, which in the past came first in a candidate’s preferred profile, have progressively given way to the priority of a first degree in the field of media and communications as a prerequisite in the recruiting profile of the contemporary mainstream media.

Also, in most European countries, the number of places where media and communications education and training can be offered is rising, while the importance attached by employers to the role of specialised education for the creation of future journalists is also increasing.⁴¹

1.2.1.1.2 Personal Values

“Journalists try hard to be objective, but neither they, nor anyone else, can in the end proceed without values”, argued H. Gans in late 1970s, when he identified a series of values found to be dominant amongst US journalists.⁴² Gans has distinguished between event-specific values, which he called “...topical values [which] are the opinions expressed about specific actors or activities of the moment” and values lasting over time and shared by various types of news stories,

³⁹ Ibid. p. 74. Also, for a thorough discussion of the evolution of mass media education, as well as a collection of research evidence on the effectiveness of journalistic education and training, see Dickson, T. (2000) *Mass Media Education in Transition: Preparing for the 21st Century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associated, Publishers.

⁴⁰ Glasser, T.L. (1992) ‘Professionalism and the Derision of Diversity: the case of the education of journalists’, *Journal of Communication*, 42(2), Spring, p. 137.

⁴¹ Mory, P. and Stephenson, H. (1990) *Journalism Training in Europe*. Report for the Commission of the EC.

⁴² Gans, H. (1980) *Deciding What’s News*. London: Constable, p. 39.

which he called “enduring values”.⁴³ Gans focused on the latter, presenting a group of “...eight clusters: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership”.⁴⁴

Examining US news media, Gans found the value of ethnocentrism to be quite evident in international news, while in the case of domestic news critical reports of domestic conditions reflect occurrences that are mostly “treated as deviant cases”.⁴⁵ According to Gans, American news reflects a judgment of other countries “by the extent to which they live up or imitate American practices and values...”, while war news appear to be the clearest field of expression of ethnocentrism.⁴⁶ Ethnocentrism, on the other hand, seems to act as a strong base for the orchestration of a productive system of information management by government elites. This is quite evident in the writings on the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, as well as the more recent Afghan conflict and Iraq war, which reveal the continuous struggle of the US government to control news.⁴⁷

Altruistic democracy as a news value refers to news treating political developments in terms of their affect on public interest and public service. Gans argues that politics per se is treated as a contest, which identifies “...winners and losers more

⁴³ Ibid. p. 41.

⁴⁴ Gans has pointed out that this list is not exhaustive, since a series of other were not included, “either for reasons of space or because they are taken for granted”, such as “the desirability for economic prosperity”, “the undesirability of war sui generis (which does not always extend to specific wars)”, “the virtues of family, love and friendship” and “the ugliness of hate and prejudice”. Gans, H. (1980), op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁵ Gans, H. (1980), op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Writings include inter alia D. Hallin’s *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*, New York: Oxford, 1986 for the Vietnam War, Mowlana, H., Gerbner, G., & Schiller, H. (eds) (1992) *Triumph of the Image: The Media’s War in the Persian Gulf – A Global Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press for the ‘pool’ system and other communication strategies used during the Gulf War, and numerous analyses in the internet for the Afghan conflict that followed the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks in the US, such as “CNN Chief Orders ‘Balance’ in War News”, by Howard Kurtz, *Washington Post*, October 31, 2001; page C01 ([www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A14435-2001Oct30? language=printer](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A14435-2001Oct30?language=printer)), (accessed 1/11/2001), “Newspapers are asked to limit use of bin Laden quotes”, by Ron Hutcheson, *Seattle Times* (http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/134352809_media12.html) (accessed 26/10/2001), “Press Must Speak Up for its Rights”, *Editor & Publisher’s Editorial*, October 3, 2001

than heroes and villains”.⁴⁸ According to Gans, domestic news indicates “...how American democracy should perform by its frequent attention to deviations from an unstated ideal, evident in stories about corruption, conflict, protest, and bureaucratic malfunctioning”.⁴⁹

According to Gans (1980), responsible capitalism includes the necessity of a welfare state and the faith in fair competition between entrepreneurs who “compete with each other in order to create increased prosperity for all”, refraining at the same time “from unreasonable profits and gross exploitation of workers or customers”.⁵⁰ Small-town pastoralism as a news value includes the romantic view of the old and the nostalgic reflected in news for “rural and market towns as they were imagined to have existed in the past”.⁵¹

The individual struggle is highly esteemed by the US news media. The “good society of the news” encourages participation by individuals who participate “on their terms, acting in the public interest, but as they define it”. On the other hand, “...self-made men and women remain attractive, as do people who overcome poverty and bureaucracy”.⁵² Moderatism, on the other hand, the sixth enduring value, discourages any acceptance of excessive behaviour and extremism, which naturally emerges from individualism.⁵³

Gans puts special emphasis to social order and national leadership, dividing hard news to two types of stories: disorder news (natural, technological, social and moral), “which reports threats to various kinds of order, as well as measures taken to restore order” and stories covering the “routine activities of leading public officials”.⁵⁴ According to Gans, two additional values emerge from these types of

(http://www.editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/headlines/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1069406) (accessed 29/10/2001), etc.

⁴⁸ Gans, H. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 49.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 50.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 51.

⁵⁴ By “routine activities”, Gans means information deriving from political beat coverage, such as day-to-day decisions, policy proposals and recurring arguments, officials’ appointments, etc.

news: “desirability of social order (... of a certain type) and the need for national leadership in maintaining that order”.⁵⁵

Personal ideology, beliefs and values of journalists are closely interconnected to news values, the set of mental tools according to which events are evaluated so to become news. Throughout the whole process of news production, journalists’ personal prejudices and ideological beliefs, as well as the news criteria that dominate the thought of professionals and shape the newsroom culture, play a vital role.

1.2.1.1.3 News Values

According to McQuail (1994), the overall pattern of news appears rather stable and predictable when measured in terms of subject matter categories. Although variations are traced between various national cultures and different media, the pattern is “naturally responsive to major events [with] the stability of news content [to be] often remarkable”.⁵⁶ This is explained by the existence of a set of news values employed by journalists and news executives during the news selection process. In this field, the Galtung and Ruge (1973) analysis is central. They argue for the existence of twelve news values⁵⁷ such as frequency, closeness, clarity, relevance, personification, negativity etc., which act as criteria by which events become news. This set of news values leads to three important hypotheses:

- (1) The more events satisfy the criteria [...], the more likely that they will be registered as news (*selection*).
- (2) Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated (*distortion*).

⁵⁵ Gans, H. (1980) , op. cit., p. 52. Although Gans’ research refers to the late 1970s and no matter how much values eventually do change overtime, some remain quite recognisable in the US case, since they reflect a strong domestic structure and culture.

⁵⁶ McQuail, D. (1994) *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. London: Sage (3rd edition), p. 270.

⁵⁷ They argue for the existence of twelve news values: *frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative*. see Galtung, L. and Ruge, M. (1973) ‘Structuring and Selecting News’ in S. Cohen and Jock Young’s (eds.) *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, revised edition, 1981 (p. 60).

(3) Both the process of selection and the process of distortion will take place at all steps of selection in the chain from event to reader (*replication*).⁵⁸

This concept entails influential factors of organisational and genre-related, as well as of a socio-cultural, nature.⁵⁹ Therefore, it can be argued that news distortion is essentially a product of a complex combination of filters, such as news companies' organisational structure, the particularities of news subject matter, journalistic routines and practices, as well as the prevailing societal and political ideology.

In an influential book, Hall et al. (1978) argued that

the media do not simply and transparently report events which are “naturally” newsworthy in themselves. “News” is the final product of a complex process, which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.⁶⁰

Therefore, “socially constructed” news values are responsible for the organisation and journalistic construction of news we get on a daily basis. Naturally, the more criteria an event seems to satisfy, the more probable it is to become news. These criteria of newsworthiness, according to Fowler (2001), are “probably more or less unconscious in editorial practice”.⁶¹ In this respect, the organisational culture of news corporations plays a vital role. Journalists work within a strong, predetermined organisational ideology, which is routinely preserved, either through self-censorship, or through daily guidance by news executives.

The degree to which this is the case in the Greek newspapers and Internet media will be investigated and analysed in Chapter IV. The analysis will also include a suggestion that there is a set of prevailing news values specific to Greece. On the other hand, a series of basic questions need to be answered in order to define the

⁵⁸ Galtung, L. and Ruge, M. (1973) ‘Structuring and Selecting News’ in S. Cohen and Jock Young’s (eds.) *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, revised edition, 1981 (pp. 60-61).

⁵⁹ McQuail, D. (1994), op. cit.

⁶⁰ Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan, p. 53.

⁶¹ Fowler, R. (2001) *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge, p. 13.

profile of the contemporary Greek journalist and further discuss its effect on news content. These are:

- How journalists have entered the profession? For instance, is of any truth the assumption that a lot of journalists have entered it by chance?
- What is their academic and professional background?
- What does their professional ideology consist of?
- What is their income status and how does this affect their work?
- What sort of ambitions do they have concerning the acquisition of a certain status within the profession and society in general?

The characteristics listed above and their potential effect on news will be addressed through the discussion of the results of a survey performed amongst Greek journalists, presented in Chapter III.

1.2.1.2 Professional Routines and Practices

Without standardisation, without stereotypes, without routine judgements, without a fairly ruthless disregard or subtlety, the editor would soon die of excitement. (W. Lippman, 1922)⁶²

Standardisation of processes and activities in newsmaking is certainly an operational necessity. It is impossible for newspapers and Internet news media to deal with news events on an ad hoc basis. Certain mechanisms, suited to the medium's publishing frequency, are needed to secure a specific production process through which information is transformed into news.

In both newspapers and Internet media, these mechanisms cover not only the technical part, but also the stages of gathering and processing information. Journalists appear on their beats on a daily basis, talk to sources, gather information and write their pieces to a predetermined deadline that serves the operational needs of the newspaper newsroom. They are familiar with the peculiarities of gathering

⁶² Lippman, W. (1922) *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace. Quoted in McQuail, D. (1994) *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. London: Sage (3rd edition), p. 213.

and processing information as well with the final effort they have to put for their writings. They work under a familiar schedule that offers them a specific time span within which they have to finish the job. Therefore, despite the particularities of journalism, the activity of a journalist on an average day could be characterised as a routine process, just as in any other profession in the information sector (e.g. stock market analyst).

Tuchman (1972) argued that, in order to understand news, it is important to look at the characteristics of the journalistic routines. According to Tuchman, the way the notion of “objectivity” is sometimes put forward by journalists refers to various practices they employ in their work, such as quotations, the presentation of oppositional views, or the search for additional information. These routines are used by journalists as excuses, aiming to verbally legitimise their behaviour in treating the news.⁶³ However, this routinisation of news work is characterised as “a set of emotional and even organisational checks and balances against both the subjective and objective risks of the trade”.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the journalistic categorisation of news in various kinds, such as hard news, soft news, spot news, and continuous and developing news, as well as the fact that every category reflects a certain, pre-determined group of routinised actions taking place within news organisations, influences the way news is handled and presented.⁶⁵

The everyday activity of the majority of print journalists ends up to the production of a plain text, which is filed in an intranet files directory for further processing. This partial participation in tomorrow’s final product makes the average professional merely a part of a production line. Journalists themselves rarely follow the next production stages; these are monitored by news executives, who are responsible for the whole process and who also work to pre-determined journalistic routines and practices.

⁶³ Tuchman, G. (1972) ‘Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen’s Notions of Objectivity’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 77(4), pp. 660-679.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

As will be discussed in Chapter V, this is not the case in web-journalism. Journalists working in Internet news sites have increased authority over the enrichment and processing of the final product, participating in more production stages than their newspaper colleagues. In some cases they have acquired even the authority of direct publication, operating independently of editorial supervision. Of course, publishing online is a totally different job and one of its unique characteristics is the capacity to correct mistakes after the product is launched. In Chapter V, empirical evidence will show that routines and practices between newspapers and the online news industry, although quite similar in strict journalistic terms, vary significantly in terms of deadlines and operational methods, as well as the journalists' participatory role in the formation of the final product.

In both print and online industries, the power of professional standardised news work practices on the formation of news is unquestionable. Moreover, this well-defined organisation of the daily quest for news, the necessity to come up with new attractive content despite the occasional poverty in news flow, as well as the problems of dealing successfully with the unexpected, constitute factors that may lead journalists and editors to view news in an excessively practical and production oriented way.

Routines also depend largely on the way journalists see themselves in terms of their role in journalism as an informative function. In a study by Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1972), two dominant types were found: the *neutrals*, who consider themselves merely as carriers of news to the public, and the *participants*, who see their job as being more investigative and analytical.⁶⁵ Almost in the same pattern, the study of Weaver and Wilhoit (1986) on media organisations' bureaucratic controls and journalistic role conceptions identified three dominant roles: the *interpretive*, which is pretty close to the participant type; the *dissemination* function

⁶⁵ Tuchman, G. (1973) 'Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 79 (1), pp. 110-131.

⁶⁶ Johnstone, J.W.C., Slawski, E.J. & Bowman, W.W. (1972) The professional values of American newsmen. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 522-540. Cited in Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D., 1991, op. cit.

(also close to neutrals); and the *adversary* function, according to which officials and businesses are treated as rather “hostile sources”.⁶⁷

In the newsgathering process, which is in essence a process of interaction between journalists and sources, journalists routinely gather information, either through personal contacts, or through the collection of material officially prepared elsewhere (e.g. press releases). Great differences in terms of routines and practices, as well as professional habits, occur between beat reporters and general assignment reporters. The first cover a specific agency or subject area, either assigned to various sections of government, political parties, public organisations (“agency beat reporters” according to Gans terminology) or monitoring law, education, economic and business sectors (“substantive beat reporters”).⁶⁸ General assignment reporters, on the other hand, treat subjects on an ad hoc basis, contributing also to research, rewrites and supplementary pieces. Gans (1980) has also divided journalists into *generalists* and *specialists*, with the first to acquire knowledge due to an assignment-determined necessity and the latter, who are in essence “substantive beat reporters”, to be more specialised in steadily monitoring their turf.⁶⁹

These types of journalistic activity to a great extent determine the way journalists see themselves, as well as deeply influence the way news executives form opinions about their subordinates. Specialised journalists in crucial areas of specialisation, such as politics, international affairs, economics and science, due to their experience in these specific knowledge areas, enjoy a relatively increased power over the daily news agenda, in contrast to generalists, who usually deal mostly with editorial assignments. This is particularly evident in the case of less developed Internet news ventures, characterised by limited funding, as well as the lack of a sufficient pool of full-time specialised journalists and high-profile news executives.

⁶⁷ Weaver, D.H. & Wilhoit, G.C. (1986) *The American Journalist: A portrait of US news people and their work*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Cited in Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D., 1991, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Gans, H. (1980), op. cit., p. 52.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Also Fishman, M. (1980) *Manufacturing of News*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

In general, journalistic routines and practices can be divided into two kinds: first, those employed by individual journalists in order to gain the continuity of news supply in their work and, second, those promoted by the medium itself, aiming at the maximisation of readership or audience, as well as to overall corporate success.

In addition, various practical constraints (such as the available space) affect the final product of news organisations. Here technology is a significant factor, mostly in terms of the time journalists have at their disposal in order to gather information, process and complete their stories and “file” them. On the other hand, space limitations in newspapers have a lot to do with the placing of advertisements and the subsequent space left for news.

In the Internet world, on the other hand, the infinite space available lifts the barriers met in newspapers. But, again, things are not clear cut. Certain factors function to create specific problems that arise in this innovative news platform. In Chapter V, a detailed analysis will suggest that the “digital publication” of news on the Web allows for continuous alterations and interventions. On the other hand, research has shown that various visual elements that attract the reader’s attention in newspapers may not function as efficiently when put online. Finally, easy access to news sites does not necessarily secure loyalty by Internet users. Newspapers are bought, but Internet sites are visited, mostly for free. If visitors are not pleased or attracted instantly, they may type another domain name on their navigation software and vanish from the site. Another factor that is quite interesting is the concept of immediacy and the subsequent rolling deadlines that exist online. Every minute a new deadline is generated and web-journalists work non-stop till the next shift arrives to replace them.

For the moment, comparisons between newspapers and the Net do not provide room for the formulation of theoretical accounts of online news production. That is because the majority of Internet news sites have not yet developed a new unique character. The power originating from the capability of using techniques from all

the other media and the speed of text delivery to the public seem not to act as starting points for further development of the new medium.

1.2.1.3 Organisational and ownership patterns

As in the case of journalistic routines and practices, news organisations need a well-structured environment and the assignment of specific roles for their daily operation. No matter how independent journalists are considered to be, a news hierarchy and teamwork is necessary for news organisations to carry out their goals.⁷⁰

The examination of the organisational structure of news companies is an important tool in any attempt to define the allocation of power and decision-making processes within news “organisational walls”. The organisational chart, the specification of journalistic duties and their characteristics, as well as the structure of a typical newspaper, illustrate the centrality of news work organisation in the professional life of media workers. The detailed exploration of practices and routines employed by journalists in the processes of newsgathering and news-processing reveals the degree to which news work organisation influences the final news outcome. According to Bagdikian (1992), “news media ... suffer from built-in biases that protect corporate power and consequently weaken the public’s ability to understand forces that create the [national] scene.”⁷¹

However, the corporate organisation in journalism does not always mean conformity of views and a strict adherence to the entrepreneurial goal. The continuous empowerment of the individual journalist is central to the profession. Therefore, the existence of different agendas within the media, as well as amongst journalists themselves, can be considered as yet another factor affecting the way a news organisation works. For instance, journalists’ personal aims may vary from the editors’ strategy and personal ideology, leading to conflict within the working environment. On the other hand, distorting effects on news work can be traced in

⁷⁰ See also Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁷¹ Bagdikian, B. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

occasionally conflicting interpersonal relations between journalists and supervising editors.

As an organisational way of seeing news making, an early framework suggested by Breed (1955) referred to six factors which contribute to the creation of a behavioural conformity among members of a newspaper's staff, as far as the handling news items touching the policy goal of the publisher are concerned.⁷² In analysing the dynamics of the newsroom, Breed considered internal factors such as the institutional authority and sanctions, obligation and esteem for superiors, mobility aspirations of media workers, the absence of conflicting group allegiance, as well as the pleasant nature of the journalistic activity to be responsible for preserving uniformity and "group reference" among "staffers".⁷³

In broadcast news, fieldwork done by Schlesinger (1978) in the BBC's radio and television newsrooms revealed the consequences of journalistic routines on the structuring process of news, leading the author to argue that world events "... are tamed to meet the ends of a production system in many respects bureaucratically organised".⁷⁴

Theories of the organisational structure and the allocation of power within the corporate environment prove to be informative as regards the internal structure of news organisations and the decision-making procedures within them. These factors play an important role in the determination of the productive activity as a whole, combined with the special environment. Argyris (1974), who studied newspapers from a managerial point of view, came across occasions in which subordinates, who although maintained a high degree of respect towards newspaper executives,

⁷² Breed, W. (1955) 'Social Control in the Newsroom: a Functional Analysis', in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold (eds.) *Approaches to Media: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1995). Originally published in Blackwell, G. and Jocher, K. (eds.) (1955) *Social Forces*. The Williams and Wilkins Co. (for the University of North Carolina Press, vol. 33, nos.1-4 , pp. 329-32, 335).

⁷³ Breed, W. (1955), op. cit.

⁷⁴ Schlesinger, P. (1987, 1992) *Putting Reality Together*. London: Routledge, revised edition (p.47).

were reluctant to express their point of views in meetings, mainly due to superiors' lack of interpersonal and leadership skills.⁷⁵

Epstein (1973), in the context of organisational culture and the effect culture developed within organisation has on their members, argues that "... members of [large] organisations eventually [modify] their own personal values in accordance with the requisites of the organisation..."⁷⁶ In terms of the media, this concept involves studying journalists as far as practices and occupational routines are concerned, predominantly those developed within the corporate environment of today's news organisations.

Journalists' writings, although subject to final decisions made by superiors, are the result of a preliminary decision-making process. Being a part of news organisations, journalists are influenced not only by corporate environment, but also by the characteristics of the medium itself. In Mouzelis' study of the organisation in relation to bureaucracy, the environment of the decision-maker is seen "as a set of premises upon which his decisions will be based".⁷⁷ Mouzelis subscribes into H.A. Simon's organisation theory,⁷⁸ in which two kinds of decision premises are distinguished:

...factual premises subject to empirical testing for the establishment of their validity, and value premises which are not subject to such tests. Roughly speaking, the latter have to do with the choice of the ends of action, the former with the choice of means.⁷⁹

Decisions on the means of media production are part of the daily discussions in both digital and newspaper newsrooms. The journalistic decision-making is heavily affected by the means of gathering, processing and presenting the news. The "value premises" on the other hand could reflect decision-making regarding professional ethics, editorial policy or the style reporting. One way or another, journalists, being

⁷⁵ Argyris, C. (1974) *Behind the Front Page*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

⁷⁶ Epstein, E.J. (1973) *News From Nowhere*. New York: Vintage Books, p. xiv.

⁷⁷ Mouzelis, N. (1967, 1975) *Organisation and Bureaucracy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.123.

⁷⁸ Simon, H.A. (1961) *Administrative Behaviour*, New York. Cited in Mouzelis (1967) op. cit.

⁷⁹ Mouzelis, N. (1967, 1975), op. cit., p. 123.

working members of a corporate organisation, have to face some limitations which, according to Simon (1961) and supported by Mouzelis (1975), have to do with:

[first], the skills, habits and reflexes which are more or less unconscious and which determine automatically an individual's performance and the decisions which precede it... [Second], ... the motivations, values and loyalties of the individual. [Third], ... the amount of basic knowledge and information available.⁸⁰

Although strictly organisational, the above account could prove to be illustrative in the case of newsmen, since journalists constitute a typical example of dynamic decision-makers operating in an organisational environment that puts constraints on their personal beliefs, behaviour, personal goals, as well as their general ways of professional action. Moreover, the uncertain nature of news reinforces the power of bureaucratic structure and culture, permitting "organisational politics to exert a major influence over the choice of news content".⁸¹

1.2.1.3.1 Newspaper proprietors

In the highest position of the organisational structure sits the medium's owner, who has the ultimate power.⁸² Lord Beaverbrook used to say that he "...ran the paper purely for the purpose of making propaganda and with no other motive".⁸³ Today, newspaper owners have tended to develop into business people with profit as a major priority. Political aspirations and personal ideology, as well as entrepreneurial interests, constitute essential elements of the contemporary newspaper proprietor.

When Rupert Murdoch's company, News International, acquired *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* in 1981, he consented to a series of guarantees; some of them were that editors would have control of the political policy of their newspapers; that they would have freedom within fixed annual budgets; that the editors would not be subject to instruction from either the proprietor or management on the

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 124.

⁸¹ Sigal, L. (1973) *Reporters and Officials: The Organisation and Politics of Newsmaking*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, p. 34.

⁸² Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. (1991), op. cit.

selection and balance of news and opinion; that instructions to journalists would be given only by their editor...⁸⁴ “At all times there must be editorial interdependence. Just as they should be preventing me from interfering, I don’t think directors should interfere either”, Murdoch pointed out in a meeting with the editors of *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*, just before the acquisition.⁸⁵ What happened afterwards is described in a book by Harold Evans, former editor of the *Sunday Times* and *The Times*. He writes: “In my year as editor of *The Times*, Murdoch broke all these guarantees...”⁸⁶

Traditional newspaper ownership has been progressively incorporated within large media corporations, at least in the case of famous and prestigious titles of international appeal. In general, according to Keane (1991), “...ownership of newspapers has become a key strategy by which large firms seek to outdo their competitors and to influence the market environment in which they operate”.⁸⁷

The growth of media conglomerates, in which newspaper publishing may constitute just one business activity amongst others, has increased “corporate pressures to emphasise events, policies, and politicians favoured by media owners.”⁸⁸ Naturally, not all newspaper owners are like Murdoch, who runs his media empire essentially from a distance. In many newspapers around the world,

⁸³ Quoted in the first Royal Commission on the Press. In A. Hetherington (1985) *News, Newspapers and Television*. London: Macmillan.

⁸⁴ Evans, H. (1994) *Good Times, Bad Times*. London: Phoenix.

⁸⁵ Cited in Evans, H. (1994), op. cit., p. 149.

⁸⁶ Evans, H. (1994), op. cit. Murdoch, speaking to a group of financial analysts in 1988 in New York, described his financial control system as follows: “Every day I receive print outs from each country on each operation item by item. Every newspaper, every magazine, every issue, a profit and loss covering the operation up to, and including, the previous Sunday. On Fridays those sheets are followed by thick books with itemised details of profit and loss figures on every single operation whether it be from Perth in Western Australia or in London or San Antonio. Their figures are what keep us up to date. We compare them with previous years and compare it with our budget and take whatever management action is called for...”. (Cited in *Media Moguls*, by Jeremy Tunstall and Michael Palmer, 1993, London: Routledge). What Murdoch wanted to achieve with his presentation to those financial analysts was to show off his superbly organised business headquarters, exhibiting absolute control and day-to-day decision-making. He really needed that at that time when his average bank debt was something around \$7 billion. However, Murdoch’s debt is rather indifferent to this analysis; what it is more interesting though, is Murdoch himself describing his numerous media corporations as itemised entries of profit or loss in an accumulative index...

⁸⁷ Keane, J. (1991) *The Media and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 72.

⁸⁸ Bagdikian, B. (1992), op. cit., p. ix.

including Greece, the owner / publisher is present and intervenes directly in day-to-day decision-making.

According to Ginneken (1998), the priorities of owners are predominantly business-driven. They want to keep advertisers happy; they wish for availability of major news sources; and they are trying to avoid libel suits, as well as any sort of dysfunctional controversies with politicians and the business community, hoping for a return on their investment. "Apart from that, they rarely impose their views directly (although this happens on occasion, particularly with tycoons)."⁸⁹ In any case, the structure of power within the newspaper organisation ensures that certain guidelines are followed. Thus, editors and chief news people are chosen by the publisher to correspond with their own personal goals and beliefs.

In this respect, it is worth exploring the differences between publishers who traditionally function in the media scene and other entrepreneurs, non-media owners who, for various reasons, have listed a newspaper title in their businesses. The latter are not newspaper people and their core business activity usually lies elsewhere. In this category of media owners, priorities vary. "In unusual cases", as Shoemaker and Reese have argued, "the owner of a [newspaper] organisation may choose to make the economic goal secondary, for political, personal goals, keeping a loss-making paper".⁹⁰ However, as we shall see in Chapter IV, this could hardly be considered "unusual" for the Greek newspaper market. On the other hand, different situations occur in the case of newspaper acquisitions when official ownerships alter, or in the case of other, less obvious financial deals, when the source of real power is shifted. In the analysis of the Greek case, it will be argued that certain business interrelations may cause uncertainty as regards the real identity of the owner.

Other major issues investigated in chapter IV include the description of the contemporary type of the Greek media proprietor, the existing interlocking

⁸⁹ Ginneken, J. van (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁹⁰ Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 121.

directorships between media and corporations, the relations between media moguls and politics, consisting of a close interaction that generates pressures for both sides, the role of the government (in terms of political pressure) and the subsequent degree of media freedom.

1.2.1.3.2 Editors: the long arm of the owner

It is commonly argued that newsrooms are complex and highly democratic places, where independent thinking is encouraged and constructive debate is included in the daily agenda. Usually, in larger organisations and in terms of their spatial position, newsrooms are situated away from advertising and other business oriented activities. This creates a sense of independence and autonomy to the people who are responsible for the creation of tomorrow's product.

It was previously argued that journalism in general and newsmaking in particular constitute a continuous decision-making process. In this respect each level of the news production line enjoys a moment of power, either in the selection of the given source over the other, or in the choice of a particular photograph or graphic visual to enrich a certain newspaper page. In general, the editors' job is to monitor journalistic practices and the content of the next day's paper, as well as to preserve editorial policy, on the determination of which the owner plays a central role.

The task of safeguarding editorial policy and the owner's preferences includes a set of directions defined from time to time, as well as guidelines issued on an ad hoc basis. The degree to which editors are in a position to make policy is questioned and seems to depend on the proprietors' discretionary will. According to Snoddy (1992):

In most cases the freedom of editors to edit is largely a myth: they have as much freedom as their proprietors are prepared to allow them and editors who turn out not to be in general harmony with their proprietor's view of the world tend not to last long.⁹¹

⁹¹ Snoddy, R. (1992) *The Good, the Bad and the Unacceptable*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 193.

Therefore, organisational structure and culture entails all these internal rules and guidelines, which secure the preservation of editorial policy. Journalists follow the editorial line, which determine certain standards and freedoms, as well as “how far stories should be pushed and what degree of ‘corner-cutting’ will be tolerated”.⁹²

Editors who possess, at least partly, the privilege of firing and hiring know exactly the human resources they have at their command. The use of the human factor in terms of journalistic assignments can be of major importance for the safeguarding of editorial policy as well as the proprietor’s interests. Since editorial policy is enforced on newspaper content as a whole, news is also treated in this manner. It is common for stories disturbing to the owner to be ignored, or for coverage of them to be assigned to a “safe” staffer.⁹³

What happens when news pieces that conflict with the owner’s policy reach the news desk? Breed (1955) has argued:

In [this] infrequent case [...], the story is changed; extraneous reasons, such as the pressure of time and space, are given for the change. Finally, the editor may contribute to the durability of policy by insulating the publisher from policy discussions. He may reason that the publisher would be embarrassed to hear of conflict over policy and the resulting bias, and spare him the resulting uneasiness; thus the policy remains not only covert but undiscussed and therefore unchanged.⁹⁴

Conflict over policy is not a frequent phenomenon inside newsrooms. Self-censorship is normally applied by journalists to secure the avoidance of disturbances as well as their exposure to criticism for “anti-policy” behaviour. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), this can also cause “subtle ‘slants’ in coverage as the employees try to anticipate what the owner wants”.⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Breed, W. (1955) ‘Social Control in the Newsroom: a Functional Analysis’, in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold (eds.) *Approaches to Media: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1995), p. 278. Originally published in Blackwell, G. and Jocher, K. (eds.) (1955) *Social Forces*. The Williams and Wilkins Co. (for the University of North Carolina Press, vol. 33, nos.1-4 , pp. 329-32, 335).

⁹⁴ Breed, W. (1955), op. cit., p. 278.

⁹⁵ Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. (1991), op. cit., p. 223.

1.2.1.4 Professional Values and Ethics

On a global level, various journalistic codes of ethics can be found in professional bodies, as well as in particular media outlets. A brief research in the Internet site of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) reveals a wealth of relevant information. Over thirty Codes of Ethics with varying content are gathered, written by large and smaller newspapers from all around the US.⁹⁶ In ASNE's own "Statement of Principles"⁹⁷, it is stated:

The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time. Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust...⁹⁸

In another part, reference on independence is made, as follows:

Journalists must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety as well as any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict. They should neither accept anything nor pursue any activity that might compromise or seem to compromise their integrity.⁹⁹

According to ASNE, integrity, propriety and avoidance of conflict of interest are, central elements of the independence of professionals. So are truth, accuracy and impartiality:

Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly. [...] Significant errors of fact, as well as errors of omission, should be corrected promptly and prominently. [...] To be impartial does not require the press to be unquestioning or to refrain from editorial expression. Sound practice, however, demands a clear distinction for the reader between news reports and opinion. Articles that contain opinion or personal interpretation should be clearly identified.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ <http://www.asne.org> (Accessed July 9, 2002).

⁹⁷ Originally adopted in 1922 as the "Canons of Journalism". The document was revised and renamed "Statement of Principles" in 1975. In <http://www.asne.org/kiosk/archive/principl.htm> (Accessed July 9, 2002).

⁹⁸ <http://www.asne.org/kiosk/archive/principl.htm> (Accessed July 9, 2002).

⁹⁹ <http://www.asne.org/kiosk/archive/principl.htm> (Accessed July 9, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Accuracy, balance and fair play in the presentation of news are considered essential for US journalism. What about the “subjects” of news, namely people? As ASNE maintains

journalists should respect the rights of people involved in the news, observe the common standards of decency and stand accountable to the public for the fairness and accuracy of their news reports...¹⁰¹

Guidelines of this kind can be found in most professional journalism bodies in the US and Europe.¹⁰² What makes the US case unique however, is the existence of more analytical codes of ethics and conduct within the media themselves. One of the most characteristic examples is the code developed by the *Washington Post*, which includes an extensive set of guidelines exhaustively analysed to cover all possible journalistic dilemmas. In the *Post*'s “Standards and Ethics” it is stated that the paper has “stringent policies on these issues, conscious that they may be more restrictive than is customary in the world of private business”.¹⁰³ Particularly they encourage journalists to pay their own way and not to accept gifts or free trips from news sources. Furthermore, avoiding conflict of interest includes working exclusively for the newspaper, non-active involvement in any partisan causes, such as political parties, social actions etc.¹⁰⁴

Despite the eagerness of US newspapers to create internal codes of ethics for their staff, studies in the US have revealed that existence per se of these codes does not always mean that these rules are highly respected. For instance, according to Boeyink (1994)

ethical guidelines are likely to be important when newsroom leadership is committed to institutional standards, when newsroom discussions of the ethics of controversial cases are encouraged, and when a culture of ethical sensitivity is fostered.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² For a discussion on journalistic codes of ethics in European countries, see Laitila, T. (1995) ‘Journalistic Codes of Ethics in Europe’, *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 10, no. 4, December, pp. 527-544.

¹⁰³ <http://www.asne.org/ideas/codes/washingtonpost.htm> (Accessed July 9, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Boeyink, D. E. (1994) ‘How effective are codes of ethics? A look at three newsrooms’. *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 4, Winter 1994, pp. 893-904.

On the other hand, personal values are as important as professional ones. As Boeyink (1994) has argued, there is difficulty in trying to establish a direct link between codes of ethics and journalists' behaviour, since the values of the latter are influenced by many factors, such as family, peers and on-the-job learning.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it could be argued that society and national culture should be seen as importance sources of influence for shaping the form of ethical concerns in journalism. Within any given framework, professionalism is developed with its own particular elements, affected by the general environment. In general however, certain elements of professionalism, discussed earlier, such as professional education, the proclamation of code of ethics by representative professional organisations, as well as the wider acknowledgement of journalism's public service and social responsibility, are considered of absolute necessity for the existence of ethical standards in the process of ethical decision making in journalism.

Journalism students in Greece, when first told about codes of ethics in the profession, seem surprised by their complexity and detailed lists of dos and don'ts. They tend to view ethics more as a source of restriction for free journalistic activity and less as a set of rules on which the journalists' work should be based. After the first introductory discussions on the justification of certain journalistic investigative practices, for example on "how far the journalist should go in order to reveal wrongdoings", fieldwork is quite disappointing for most of them. Rarely can Greek journalism students get serious answers on journalistic ethics from professionals they interview. This could be attributed to the low level of advanced and organised knowledge professionals have on these matters.¹⁰⁷ Why is this the case? Is it possible that journalistic codes of ethics are culture-specific? Or is it possible that the existence and, even more, the effect of journalistic ethics are directly related with the power to more general ethical considerations on a social, political and professional level?

¹⁰⁶ Boeyink, D. E. (1994), *op. cit.* Boeyink cites also the work of Weaver & Wilhoit (1986), *op. cit.*, whose study of the American journalist showed multiple source of influence, such as family, teacher, peers and day-to-day newsroom learning. Interestingly, as Boeyink notes, codes were not listed as a source of ethical values.

¹⁰⁷ From the author's teaching experience at the University of Indianapolis/Athens Campus and particularly on journalism courses, such as editing, journalism writing and news writing and reporting.

Considering the general lack of in-depth research studies into the Greek market, as against the plethora of studies of mature media markets (e.g. in the US and UK), it could be argued that in a given society and market, certain alternative characteristics are important for setting the base for the development of discussions on ethical issues: first, the presence (or lack) of academic literature and advanced research on media in general and journalism in particular; second, the dynamic presence (or lack) of professional bodies with a consultative as well as guiding role for the profession; and, third, the existence (or lack) of specialised professional education which approaches journalism through a holistic view that stresses, inter alia, its social responsibility and respectable goals. Further, in this study, particular reference to the Greek environment will test the power of these elements in order to extract useful conclusions as regards the academic and professional base of local journalist corps.

Social responsibility is a key concept in journalistic ethics. In their analysis of state press association ethics codes in the US from the 1920s, Cronin and McPherson (1995) have argued that most codes recognise that “journalism had a pre-eminent role as watchdog in a democratic society and, therefore, responsibilities and standards that developed from that role”.¹⁰⁸

In his discussion of ethics, McQuail (1994) focused on a limited number of principles, which, if respected by the representatives of news journalism, secure “good professional conduct”. These are:

truth and accuracy; impartiality and fairness; respect for individual privacy; independence from vested interests; responsibility to society and the public good; respect of law; and moral decency and good taste.¹⁰⁹

In the complex environment synthesised by major factors of influence on news and considering the whole list, from news values, routine practices and techniques,

¹⁰⁸ Cronin, M. M. & McPherson, J. B. (1995) ‘Pronouncements and Denunciations: An Analysis of State Press Association Ethics Codes from the 1920s’, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 72, no. 4, Winter 1995, pp. 890-901.

organisational structure and culture, to interaction with sources, competition and the social factor, the above ethical principles, summarised by McQuail, seem quite flexible. This is especially evident in cases of government corruption or financial irregularities and malpractice in private businesses in which investigative journalistic techniques may operate in the margins of the law in order to serve the public interest.¹¹⁰ Then honesty, respect of privacy or even good taste are severely tested.

In general, the path between definition of ethics and its actual implementation is usually a difficult, slippery and lonely road. Journalists are people who deal with authority and power on a daily basis, encountering numerous temptations of all kinds: from the active participation in political manoeuvres for ideological reasons, to their inclusion in payrolls of ministries and public organisations. And it is not solely a question of ethics. It comes down to professional effectiveness as well. The members of the small, closed groups of top journalists, particularly in politics and economic reporting, are “served” in various ways, either through exclusive information and ready-to-use material, or through the provision of access to prominent political, economic and entrepreneurial figures.

On the other hand, according to Keeble (2001), “ethics implies freedom to choose”.¹¹¹ But the various constraints put upon journalists from a series of internal and external factors, analysed in this chapter, such as “vested interests, routinised working practices and hierarchical, bureaucratic, organisational structures” limit the freedom of the individual.¹¹²

These sources of influence are consciously or unconsciously manipulated to produce the desired results. For journalists, certain routines seem to work towards the legitimisation of journalistic output. For instance, the constant reference of journalists to “facts”, “figures” or “reliable sources”, or the extensive use of

¹⁰⁹ McQuail, D. (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹¹⁰ See Belsey, A. & Chadwick, R. (1992) ‘Ethics and politics of the media: the quest for quality’, in A. Belsey & R. Chadwick (eds) *Ethical Issues in Journalism and the Media*. London: Routledge.

¹¹¹ Keeble, R. (2001) *Ethics for Journalists*. London: Routledge, p. 2.

quotations attributed to named or unnamed sources, although truthful in the majority of cases, create a quasi alibi for anything that appears in public. In this framework, the question of objectivity is central. Half a century ago, Breed (1955) claimed that reporters can occasionally manipulate their editors, “interjecting [their] own views, by following a procedure they associated with objectivity”.¹¹³ Two decades later, Tuchman (1972) argued for the existence of a defensive use of “objectivity as strategic ritual” on behalf of news people who protect themselves from mistakes and criticism.¹¹⁴

In the 1980s, a study by Mills (1983) amongst editors and reporters in US newspapers divided journalistic objectivity decisions into three categories, involving:

- conflicts between objective news coverage and the journalist’s personal gain, bias or convenience;
- conflicts between objective news coverage and the pressures of the job; and
- human limitations in deciding what is objective.¹¹⁵

Each category identified by Mills corresponds to different situations in the journalists’ professional life, ranging from acceptance of gifts and favours, to time pressures and proprietors’ interventions affecting journalistic performance. Finally, uncertainty amongst journalists “about what constitutes objectivity” is also mentioned as an important influential factor.¹¹⁶

Therefore, following the course of thinking that Breed, Tuchman, Shoemaker and Reese¹¹⁷ and others have suggested, ethics should be examined on all possible levels, either individual, societal or organisational.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Cited in Tuchman, G. (1972), op. cit., p. 669.

¹¹⁴ Tuchman, G. (1972) ‘Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen’s Notions of Objectivity’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 77 (4), pp. 660-679, particularly p. 678.

¹¹⁵ Mills, R. D. (1983) ‘Newspaper Ethics: A Qualitative Study’, *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 60, pp. 589-594, 602 (particularly p. 591). A further discussion referring to Mills’ study can be found in Merrill, J. C. (1985) ‘Is Ethical Journalism Simply Objective Reporting?’, *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 62, pp. 391-393.

¹¹⁶ Mills, R. D. (1983), op. cit.

¹¹⁷ Shoemaker & Reese (1991), op. cit.

Finally, from another perspective, “the ethics of the modern journalist can be summed up in one word: truth”.¹¹⁸ But the notion of “truth” is quite relative in its representation in journalistic terms. Whose truth is represented in news? Who has provided its initial definition? On this matter, discussion on sources and the agenda-setting role of the media will strengthen the quest of the factors influencing news work.

1.2.2 External factors

1.2.2.1 Journalists and Sources

The interaction between those defined by Molotch and Lester¹¹⁹ as “news promoters” (sources) and “news assemblers” (media personnel / journalists) refers to one of the most important concepts in news making: the role of sources in the formation of journalistic output. The source-journalist interactions hold an important position in this study, since according to our view, the journalist-source channel of communication is equally important for the discussion of news production influences, as the economic factor and interlocking directorships are for political economists.

It is extensively argued that, in the process of newsgathering, journalists prefer bureaucratically organised news beats. This systematic journalistic reference to official sources reflects, first, the journalists’ need to secure their daily product, since official sources have most of the time something “newsworthy” to say and, second, the subsequent dominance of established views in news content. As Fishman (1980) has observed, the journalist’s daily round in the various newsbeats is almost exclusively characterised by visits to sources of a “formally organised, governmental bureaucratic character”.¹²⁰ Examining a justice reporter’s daily round, Fishman has observed that

¹¹⁸ Herbert, J. (2000) *Journalism in the Digital Age*. Oxford: Focal Press, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ Molotch, H. and Lester, M. (1974), *op. cit.*

¹²⁰ Fishman, M. (1980) *Manufacturing the News*. Austin: University of Texas Press, p. 44.

the reporter regularly visited only bureaucratically organised settings... [and that] reporters expose themselves only to settings in which formally organised transactions of official business appear.¹²¹

This argument suggests that information gathering within official premises is heavily ruled by the source's ground rules, preferences and appetite for discussion. It is worth exploring the degree of the effect that this official bureaucratic setting, in which journalist-source interaction occurs, has on the journalists' daily routine and organisation of news work.

A great part of the journalist-source interaction is performed in the limits of pre-scheduled, public relations happenings where companies and organisations announce financial results, corporate policies, even new products. It is often claimed that public relations officers organise deliberately their happenings or "pseudo-events"¹²² to fit media norms so to gain maximum journalistic coverage.¹²³ The right timing usually secures public exposure either through newspapers or television.

In general, the timing factor is important for sources in order to gain access to the production of news. This is not something new to the public relations agencies and politicians' PR officers, who tend increasingly to include the consideration of media habits in their everyday decisions. Thus, as Galtung and Ruge (1973) have argued:

...the more similar the frequency of the event is to the frequency of the news medium, the more probable that it will be recorded as news by that news medium.¹²⁴

Further exploration should include discussion of exactly the opposite strategy occasionally employed by sources: the deliberate programming of events and

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 44-45.

¹²² The term was introduced by Boorstin, D. (1961) *The Image*. London: Penguin Books. Cited in Palmer, J. (2000) *Spinning Into Control: news values and source strategies*. London: Leicester University Press.

¹²³ Palmer, J. (2000) op. cit., p. 25.

¹²⁴ Galtung, L. and Ruge, M. (1973) 'Structuring and Selecting News' in S. Cohen and Jock Young's (eds.) *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, revised edition, 1981 (p.53).

sources' activities not to fit journalistic habits, or the downplaying of important information that does not serve the sources' policies. This would offer a hint concerning the extent to which sources' strategy exercises power over journalists. In the case of Greek business reporting, analysis will show that sources' and PR strategies employed for business events in which company results are announced target the promotion or downgrading of the event itself, depending on whether the announcement is of good or bad news.

Moreover, these habitually orchestrated meetings between sources and journalists, which usually end with the distribution of press kits (and occasionally expensive gifts), limit private interactions between journalists and business figures to the agenda specified for the given day, making any further journalistic exploration as irrelevant. In these occurrences, "pack journalism" thrives and company sources secure a uniformity of information appearing in the media.

Empirical research done mainly in the US has revealed useful evidence concerning the power of sources and their influence on the organisation of news work. Examining *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Sigal (1973) found that "most non-local news, regardless of subject matter, [came] from officials and agencies of the US government".¹²⁵ Gans (1980), on the other hand, through his empirical study of the media in the US generally argues that of all the considerations regarding the factors affecting the news "those governing the choice of sources are of prime significance".¹²⁶ Gans distinguishes power as the predominant criterion used by journalists in the selection of sources. He stresses that "sources ... have power: both to supply the information that makes national news and to exert pressure".¹²⁷

Berkowitz and Beach (1993) have suggested that the power of sources is more evident in non-conflict news, since here a less diverse range of news sources exists as compared with conflict situations. Journalists, when facing conflict, tend to think

¹²⁵ Sigal, L. (1973), op. cit., p. 119.

¹²⁶ Gans, Herbert (1980) *Deciding What's News*. London: Constable, p. 281.

more about objectivity and try to cover views from all sides involved in an issue.¹²⁸ It could be argued that, when non-conflict events or occurrences are covered, the source's ability to set the media news agenda is further enhanced. This is questionable, however, in the case of journalists who do not rely only on the provision of official information, but who also include in their coverage background research and the representation of less powerful views originating from players of secondary importance.

Studying the media politics of criminal justice, Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) provide interesting accounts on the role of the police as sources of information. Although they finally argue for the paramount character of Hall's concept of "primary definition",¹²⁹ they provide useful criticism stemmed from their empirical research. More specifically, they note the importance of the disputes occurring within the ranks of the primary definers, which blur the identification of the primary definer; the role of the "off-the-record" briefings through which un-attributable information goes public; the inequalities of access amongst the privileged themselves, which make some "primary definers" more privileged than others; the long-term shifts in the structure of power and, therefore, access; the fact that the media sometimes do challenge their sources; and finally the existence of counter-definitions provided by opponents within the elite.¹³⁰

What appears of great interest for the Greek case is the interactions of journalists with various specialists, a concept which will be addressed in the Chapter IV, when sources' power over the development of business reporting will be analysed in detail. One of the focal points of the analysis will be the politicisation of financial and business reporting and the implications for journalism and news production

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 282.

¹²⁸ Berkowitz, D. & Beach, D. W. (1993) 'News Sources and News Context: The Effect of Routine News, Conflict and Proximity', *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 1, Spring, pp. 4-12.

¹²⁹ Hall, S. et al. (1978), op. cit.

¹³⁰ Schlesinger, P. & Tumber, H. (1994) *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. See also Miller, d. (1993) 'Official sources and 'primary definition': the case of Northern Ireland'. *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 15, pp. 385-406.

processes. In this respect, the argument put forward by Weingart (1983),¹³¹ which refers to the use of scientific results as a basis and a legitimating resource for political decision-making will be put under examination, along with the investigation of the general power exercised by various sources for the promotion of personal or group strategies.

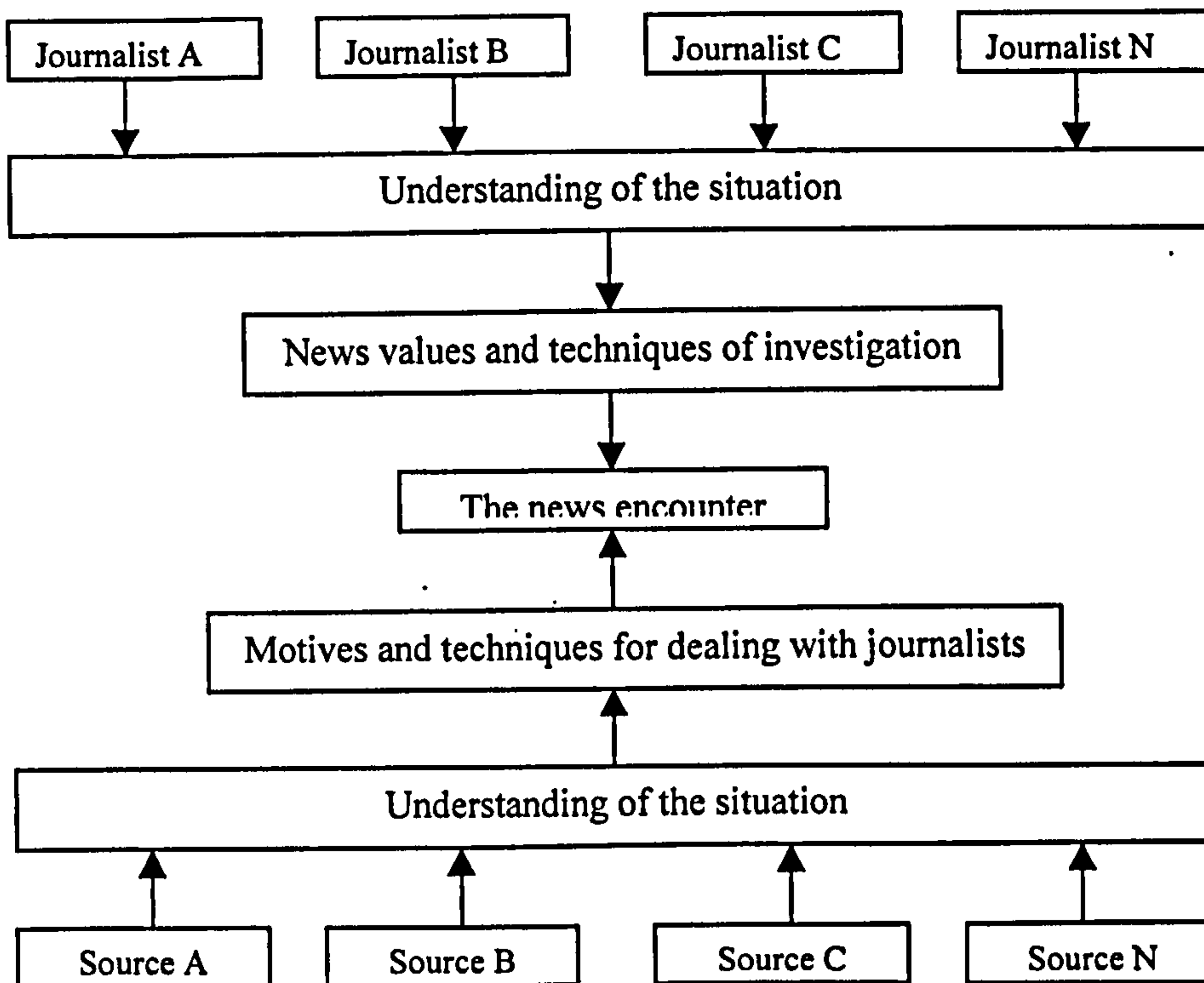
Palmer (2000) deals more analytically with the encounter between journalists and news sources. What he calls “the news encounter” is considered as “central to the process by which events become news” (see Figure 1.2).¹³² He argues that the negotiation between the two parties “over what will appear in the form of news output is conducted (at least partly) in terms of the ‘fit’ between an event and news criteria, which dictates whether an event will become news at all and how much attention will be given to it”.¹³³

Issues such as official briefings, unofficial discussions, off-the-record contacts and deliberate leaks define the typical journalists’ interaction with official sources. An interesting question, which will be considered further in Chapter V, is the tactics of official sources in cases where “kites” are “flown” in order to measure the social and political implications of a possible future government action. As it is broadly argued in the relevant literature, official sources, habitually use the media to channel information to readers and audience in order to test the public’s reactions.

¹³¹ Weingart, P. (1983) ‘Verwissenschaftlichung der Gesellschaft: Politisierung der Wissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 12 (3): 225-41, cited in Peters, H. P. (1995) ‘The interaction of journalists and scientific experts: co-operation and conflict between two professional cultures’. *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 17, pp. 31-48.

¹³² Palmer, J. (2000) *Spinning Into Control: news values and source strategies*. London: Leicester University Press, p. 25.

Figure 1.2
The News Encounter



Palmer, J. (2000) *Spinning Into Control: news values and source strategies*. London: Leicester University Press.

Sources' own agenda and the degree of effectiveness of the pressures put by various interest groups and public relations agencies on journalistic work, as well as "the degree of convergence, socially and in discourse, between sources and journalists"¹³⁴ are issues of great importance in the context of any discussion of the production of news in the Greek media.

1.2.2.2 Commercial constraints and influences

In the last few decades, control of information and media output are increasingly being concentrated under corporate umbrellas. Newspapers have become increasingly like the other businesses that entrepreneurs or corporate boards have to make decisions about on the basis of profitability.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 25.

In the US market in particular, according to Bagdikian (1992), by the 1980s the majority of all major American media were under the control of fifty giant corporations, which were “interlocked in common financial interest with other massive industries”.¹³⁵ This trend of conglomeration is also present in this side of the Atlantic. According to Stephenson (1998), to some extent newspapers in the UK market (particularly the tabloids) “have dropped the ‘public service’ aspect of their publishing and are now run as conventional businesses whose primary aim is to maximise revenue and minimise cost”.¹³⁶

News content has not escaped from the increasing entrepreneurial orientation of the newspaper industry. Market-driven journalism is an essential characteristic of the contemporary newspaper, especially of the smaller ones that struggle daily for their existence. In an interesting analysis by Bagdikian (1992) on the influence of commercialism on newspaper content, it is argued that newspaper executives have a specific target audience in their minds. More specifically, he has argued that

...US newspapers control the readership by not reporting significantly on neighbourhoods or low-income and elderly populations and by promoting their circulation in affluent neighbourhoods with the desired characteristics.¹³⁷

This practice has affected newspaper editorial policy in various ways. First, newspaper content is increasingly adapted to the preferences of people that constitute the larger proportion of readership, neglecting the views of the less affluent social masses, who are less and less represented in the news. Second, authoritative sources gain more prominence in news coverage, as against alternative voices and non-governmental organisations who could disturb the peace of mind of the average “affluent” reader. Third, since advertisers are interested in communicating with affluent readers and advertising revenues are increasing, so the

¹³⁴ See Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M. and Chan, J. B. L. (1989) *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Bagdikian, B. (1992), op. cit., p. xxvii.

¹³⁶ Stephenson, H. (1998) ‘Tickle the public: consumerism rules’, in H. Stephenson & M. Bromley *Sex, Lies and Democracy: The Press and the Public*. London: Longman (p. 19).

¹³⁷ Bagdikian, B. (1992), op. cit., p. 199. See also Christians, C. G., Rotzoll, K. B. and Fackler, M. (1991) *Media Ethics: Cases & Moral Reasoning*. New York: Longman, p. 50-53.

dependence of newspapers on this source of income has increased.¹³⁸ Fourth, excessive focus on the productive part of the audience, at the expense of society as a whole, leaves more room for advertisers to influence, not to say, dictate content.

At the corporate level, these do not appear to be negative, since profitability is what allows companies to stay in business. On the journalists' level, however, commercial pressures make things more complicated. As regards the production of news content, Christians et al. (1991) have argued that "it becomes extraordinarily difficult to separate the media's financial interests from the public's legitimate news interests".¹³⁹

According to McManus (1994), the market orientation of modern journalism has transformed readers into customers and news into a product.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, by adopting a sensitivity to audience penetration similar to that met in the television market, newspapers "have diminished the traditional role of 'professional' journalists as arbiters of which events and issues are newsworthy".¹⁴¹

According to Altschull (1995), newspaper content is directly correlated with the interests of proprietors and advertisers. He argues, metaphorically:

The press is the piper, and the tune the piper plays is composed by those who pay him or her.¹⁴²

Referring back to Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda model" and the central role of advertising as a major news filter, it is worth focusing on one of their key concepts; that is the "political discrimination of advertisers".¹⁴³ The authors argue that advertisers discriminate against unfriendly newspapers, which are willing to publish material that damages the advertisers' interests. Therefore, since advertising revenues are considered as the dominant source of revenue for

¹³⁸ For the growth of advertising in the American Press, see Altschull, J. H. (1995) *Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy*. New York: Longman.

¹³⁹ Christians, C. G., Rotzoll, K. B. and Fackler, M. (1991), op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ McManus, J. H. (1994) *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁴² Altschull, J. H. (1995), op. cit. p. 374.

newspapers, alternative, non-establishment voices are excluded from the finance media list. It all works towards the preservation of the “buying mood”¹⁴⁴ of the reading target group.

In this market-driven environment, Internet news is a typical example of a product developed for targeted audiences. In Greece, in particular, disturbing journalistic accounts were absent in the cases where Internet news sites were developed as part of an organised business plan. Thus, Internet news remained spineless and conformed to advertisers’ priorities, as well as to the profile of the average Internet user. Although all Internet news sites remained loss-making operations, a parallel commercial strategy was always in the generic plans of Internet ventures. Analysis in Chapter V will reveal that, in essence, serious journalism was not to be found on the “Greek web”, since news content was strategically developed as an escorting service to newspapers or to the new online commercial experience.

1.2.2.3 Ideology and the Sociopolitical Environment

According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), ideology as an influential factor on media content is as “a symbolic mechanism that serves as a cohesive and integrating force in society”.¹⁴⁵ In a previous discussion on professional values of US journalists, reference was made to Gans and his distinction of “topical” and “enduring values”.¹⁴⁶ These values were found to be dominant in the minds of people responsible for the production of news.

Galtung and Ruge have argued that news is usually presented “... as a consequence of the actions of [a] person or ... persons”.¹⁴⁷ This personification of news need not be inherently negative, if ideas and opinions were not neglected. For instance, Greek people still consider “charisma” to be a major criterion for a successful political career, regardless of the actual beliefs a given “charismatic” politician

¹⁴³ Herman E. S. & Chomsky, N. (1988) *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ Shoemaker & Reese (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁶ Gans, H. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ Galtung, L. and Ruge, M. (1973), *op. cit.*, p. 57.

holds. Therefore, charismatic figures and leading players in general seem to gain increased exposition in political and business reporting.

Social stereotypes are also of major significance. For instance, a series of studies on the representation of homosexuality and racial issues on news¹⁴⁸ has produced some interesting accounts regarding sexual and racial stereotypes, which seem to reinforce the argument in favour of sociocultural influences on news treatment. More specifically, Pearce (1975), studying homosexuality in relation to the media, found that “reports in papers were infrequent...”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, in those cases where big news stories focused on homosexuality, newspapers tended to treat the phenomenon as an anomaly which questions the validity of people’s pre-conceived impressions about their given society and widely accepted aspects of moral order.¹⁵⁰

Studying the way that racial conflict is represented in the media, Hartmann and Husband (1973) maintained that the mass media reinforce any existing tense and feed and expand the roots of this sort of societal conflict.¹⁵¹ They argued that

...the way the media define the situation is seen as resulting from the definitions prevailing in the general culture and from institutional factors that stem from the media themselves.¹⁵²

This course of thinking contains a dual argument: first, news is influenced by the prevailing ideology of the society and the dominant ethical values and, second, news is affected by the ideology of journalists themselves, which is expressed within the institutional framework of news organisations. Furthermore, news is also

¹⁴⁸ Pearce 1975; Hartmann & Husband 1973; Campbell 1995.

¹⁴⁹ Pearce, F. (1975) ‘The British press and the ‘placing’ of male homosexuality’ in S. Cohen and Jock Young’s (eds.) *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, revised edition, 1981, p. 305. Pearce’s analysis is based on Mary Douglas’s argument on anomalies, which are considered as endangering the natural moral order of the society. This moral order is constructed, in the first place, because “in a chaos of shifting impressions each of us constructs a stable world in which objects have recognisable shape, are located in depth and have permanence”. M. Douglas (1966) *Purity and Danger* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books), cited in Pearce.

¹⁵⁰ Pearce, F. (1975), op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Hartmann, P. and Husband, C. (1973) ‘The mass media and racial conflict’ in S. Cohen and Jock Young’s (eds.) *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, revised edition, 1981.

¹⁵² Hartmann, P. and Husband, C. (1973), op. cit., p. 292.

affected by the values of the supervising editors, who, having acquired a socially determined preconception on social issues, such as race or homosexuality, then publish the news whose content conforms to their personal ideology or the supposed ideology and values of their readers.

It can be argued, that the notion of media being the mirror of society reflects two different meanings. The first is that the media record merely the doings, values and beliefs of the people, thus presenting the actual truth just like the mirror reflects an object. But this concept is simplistic, even in the case of photojournalism.¹⁵³ The second meaning is that the media record not the actual truth, but their own perceptions regarding the doings, values and beliefs of the people. An illustrative paradigm that speaks for the notion of media's "perception" of reality can be seen in the cases of successful libel suits in the US where, although it is difficult to establish the media's premeditation ("actual malice"), it is often easy enough to prove that the media's perception per se is wrong.¹⁵⁴

In the Foreword of Glasgow Media Group's *Bad News*, Richard Hoggart argued for the existence of four filters, which constitute a filtering process that affects the selection of news. The fourth and, according to him, the most important filter is:

...the cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said and others had best not be said.¹⁵⁵

The public is heavily subject to the news media's projection of social reality and the world in general. The more news analysis by media is superficial, due to the variety of constraints put upon news work, the more the members of society receive a partial reality that is thus presented as the truth. At this point it should be stressed that nothing is more distorting than the partial revelation of reality, since the

¹⁵³ Nowadays, the use of a variety of state of the art software packages can result into the transformation of the original content of a simple photographic instance to a totally different one.

¹⁵⁴ For the concept of "actual malice", see the discussion on publicity that puts a person in a false light, in Rich, C. (2000) *Writing and Reporting News*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 305.

¹⁵⁵ *Glasgow Media Group Reader, Volume 1: News Content, Language and Visuals*. Edited by John Eldridge. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 8. For a further analysis of the media-defining role of reality, see Tony Bennett (1991) 'Media, 'reality, signification' in M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran and J.Wollacott (eds.) *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge.

“definition” attributed on the partial truth cuts the subject matter off from further investigation.

Additionally, media techniques and the use of stereotypes contribute to the multiplication of the given emotion each message carries, despite any oppositional and “sober” argumentation put forward regarding the essence of a particular issue. For instance, as Kitzinger (1993) has argued, the stereotypical use of images of a crowded pavement, or of people walking light-heartedly on the street, each time AIDS-related photographs are published in the press or broadcasted in television, connotes that the “danger travels free”, or that “anyone could be sick”, since the disease has no clear signs of its existence.¹⁵⁶

The national culture and the ruling social values, either American, British or Greek, seem to some extent to influence news values. What seems easy to predict is that they definitely constitute one of those factors that synthesise the national mental base on which the world in general and news events in particular are being evaluated.

By accepting that national context plays an important role in the prominence given to certain types of news, as well as the exclusion of others, it seems imperative to include in the discussion the particular characteristics associated with the society in question (in this case Greece) as well as with the historic development of local media markets.

In the next chapter, a brief historic overview deals with the Greek newspaper industry, from its early steps in the 18th Century to the Internet years in the eve of the 21st Century.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Kitzinger, J. (1993) “Understanding AIDS: Researching audience perceptions of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome”, in Eltridge, J (1993) *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power*. London: Routledge.

¹⁵⁷ Detailed analysis of the Internet market is included in Chapter V that deals with the Internet market and web-journalism practised in the country.

II

The Greek newspaper market

Examining news media and journalism is not only about specific particularities of the profession, such as practices, newsroom culture habits and journalist-source relationships and interactions. It is also about society and the general political and economic environment within which journalism is professed. Journalists are not separate from society; they constitute vital parts of the presiding status quo.

Therefore, understanding the national context and the particular developments in the Greek newspaper industry requires a travel in time. A short sketch from the early years of the newspaper market to the influence of new technology in the beginning of the 21st century provides the base of the analysis of specific factors determining news and its making.

The period after the Restoration of Democracy in 1974 until the 1990s is characterised by intense political juxtaposition that resulted to a boost in newspaper circulations during the 1980s. Later on, the gradual weakening of the traditional entrepreneurial role of the State, the EU prospects of Greece and the ultimate EMU national target enhanced the interest of the public on economic developments and private business activity. Therefore, during the 1990s, entrepreneurship and the stock market started to gain attention and an increasing presence in daily media coverage. As will be argued in Chapter IV, these developments have directly affected journalism and the newspaper industry, the journalist-source interactions, as well as the relations between newspaper proprietors and other non-media business sectors.

In what follows, a brief history of the newspaper industry is presented, through the examination of major developments since the inauguration of the Greek State. This part will set the base for the discussion on the evolution of media professionalism and the formation of the contemporary newspaper market. It will also offer some points of entry for our further examination of the influential role of social, political and economic structure and culture on news production.

First, it is worth looking at the character of the Greek Press itself. As McDonald (1983) has correctly argued:

The press in Greece is seen principally as a medium for the expression of political opinion. Newspapers are partisan and the notion of neutral, informational reporting is a recent one still not fully appreciated by many journalists and readers. This is a consequence of the history of the Greek press.¹

The dynamic and politicised journalistic views of the day have always played a central role and this remains the case today.

The dominance of national political struggle in journalism as well as in most facets of Greek everyday life has its roots in the nation's particular history. The evolution of the media in general and the press in particular should be seen through this unique prism, that of the development of the social, political and economic environment that dates back less than a century ago, when Greece managed to secure its current geographical borders. Greece survived a 400-year period of Ottoman occupation by preserving its traditional culture, language and history. However, as Clogg (1995) argues, "the Turkish rule had a profound influence in shaping the evolution of Greek society".² Clogg writes:

Ottoman rule had the effect of isolating the Greek world from the great historical movements such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the seventeenth-century

¹ McDonald, R. (1983) *Pillar and Tinderbox: The Greek Press and the Dictatorship*. New York: Marion Boyars, p. 15.

² Clogg, R. (1995) *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (first edition: 1992), p. 3.

scientific revolution, the Enlightenment and the French and Industrial Revolutions that so influenced the historical evolution of Western Europe.³

This isolation had significant effects on the process of social and political maturity of the country.

2.1 A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

2.1.1 The early years (18th Century)

During the Ottoman Occupation of the country (1453-1821) the dominant national cause was the liberation of the nation. In the late 1780s, when preparations for the revolution were under way, the first Greek newspaper appeared in Vienna⁴, where the principles of Greek journalism took shape. The first Greek newspapers had a substantial effect on the formation of a national view and the illumination of the enslaved Greek people.⁵ In the following years, a series of requests for the launching of newspapers, put forward by intellectual Greeks living in Vienna, were rejected by the Austrian government. Finally, the Austrian authorities awarded a printing licence to Markides Poulous Brothers, who on December 31 1790 launched a newspaper called *Ephemeris* (Ephemeral).⁶ In the years that followed, a series of publications appeared, mainly written by Greek scholars who managed to

³ Ibid.

⁴ The newspaper, whose precise title has never been a matter of certainty amongst Greek historians lasted only two months since it was forced to close down by the Austrian authorities, after the pressure exercised to Austria by the Ottoman Empire. Karikopoulos, 1984, op.cit. The claim that Vendotis' newspaper is the "first newspaper" ever published in the Greek language was originally promoted by G. Laios in "George Vendotis from Zakynthos and the first Greek newspaper (1784); unpublished documents from the Viennese archives", in *Epitheorisi tis Technis* (Art Review), vol 2. no. 8, Athens (1955), pp. 49-154, cited by Klimis Mastoridis (1999) *Casting the Greek newspaper*. Thessaloniki: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA).

⁵ Karikopoulos, P. (1984) *200 years of Greek Press* (Athens: Gregory). See also Gantzias, G. & Kamaras, D. (2000) 'Media' in the *Encyclopaedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn. Also, Svoronos, N.G. 'The 1821 Revolution', *Newspaper Avgi (Dawn)*, 25.3.1976, cited in Karikopoulos op.cit.

⁶ The paper, which circulated twice a week in Greek language stopped its presses a year later, was later re-launched and it was finally closed down in 1798. See *Helios* (Sun) *Encyclopaedia*, "The History of the Greek Press" - Volume 'Hellas', p. 1161-1168. See also Mayer, K. (1959) *The History of the Greek Press* and Karikopoulos, op. cit.

bring out the agony of the occupied nation and to establish in print an avenue of communication between expatriates' communities abroad.⁷

In the pre-revolutionary years and until World War II, a national political cause of the day was almost always attached to a Greek newspaper launch, both inside and outside the national borders. According to Karikopoulos (1984), the emergence of the Greek press was not based on economic or commercial interests, quite the opposite; its appearance materialised a deeper need of the Nation's scholars towards the preparation of the liberation fight against the Ottoman Empire, the resurrection of Greek conscience and, later, on the fortification of constitutional freedom.⁸

Soon after the Revolution, on August 1 1821, in Kalamata (Peloponnese), the first newspaper appeared in a free Greece. It was called *Salpinx Elliniki* (Greek Trumpet) and was published on a small press that Dimitrios Ipsilantis brought from Trieste.⁹ Later, the *Ephemeris ton Athinon* (The Athenian Newspaper) was published in 1824 and the *Ephemeris tis Kyverniseos* (Government Gazette) was founded in Nafplion, moving to Athens in 1834. The first opposition newspaper was *Apollon*, founded in the Island of Ydra in 1831. A few years later, a donation

⁷ In 1811 Anthimos Gazis published in Vienna a fortnight edition called *Ermis o Logios* (Hermes the Scholar) as a result of Greek intellectuals and educators' attempts to raise the moral of mainland Greeks as well as to educate them. Four years later, on January 17, 1812 another paper called *Ellenikos Telegraphos* (Greek Telegraph) started its circulation published twice a week, whilst an attempt to establish the paper as a daily edition failed in November of the same year. In 1819, also in Vienna, *Calliope* was published which lasted two years as a fortnight magazine. The list of newspapers launched in the pre-Revolutionary period by Greek expatriates in Europe should also include the fortnight literature edition *Athena* and *Melissa* (Bee) both published in Paris, *Museum* published in London as well as a few others. In the pre-Revolutionary years, there was also some printing activity in Greek territories, such as the Ionian Islands, whose inhabitants enjoyed a relaxed occupational status quo under the British authorities. In 1814 a newspaper called 'Ionian' was published, as an official instrument of the British authorities. It stopped its presses in the same year and it was published again in 1841 under the title 'Newspaper of United Countries of Ionian Islands' in Greek and French; its publication was finally terminated in May 1864 after it printed the protocol of the Ionian Islands unification with the mainland. See Mayer, K. (1957) *The History of the Greek Press* (Athens: Dimopoulos). Also, Karikopoulos, Panos (1984) *200 years of Greek Press* (Athens: Gregory), Helios / Sun Encyclopaedia, op.cit. and Mastoridis, K. (1999) *Casting the Greek newspaper*. Thessaloniki: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive.

⁸ Karikopoulos, P. (1984). op. cit.

⁹ Dimitrios Ipsilantis (1793-1832) has been a key-figure of the liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire. He was a Field Marshall for Eastern Greece.

of three printing presses from a philhellene organisation in London boosted the printing activity in the mainland.¹⁰

On January 1 1824 in the city of Messologi, the legendary *Greek Chronicles* was published on a small press brought by Alexandros Mavrokordatos from Europe.¹¹ The editor of the newspaper was the Swiss philhellene, John-Jacob Mayer. It was published twice a week and its motto was: "Publication is the soul of Justice".¹² The newspaper survived until February 20 1826, when a Turkish bomb destroyed the press. Later, during the Messologi exodus, Mayer was killed.¹³

In the following decade, many printing efforts followed the early revolutionary press.¹⁴ From the period after 1834, the year of the independence, until the early 1870s the Greek press was characterised by intensive political commentary initially against the then Governor, Ioannis Kapodistrias,¹⁵ who was thought of as adopting an autocratic governing style, and later against the Bavarian authorities and King

¹⁰ The first handwritten mainland newspaper was '*Pseftofyllada tou Galaxidiou*' and it was published in Galaxidi of Central Greece in March 1821. There were also other hand-written publications that circulated in other mainland areas in Greece such as '*Etoliki*', which was published in Messologi on August 10, 1821 and '*Acheloos*', published on November 24, 1822 in Agrinio. See Helios / Sun Encyclopaedia, op.cit. and Mastoridis, K. (1999) *Casting the Greek newspaper*. Thessaloniki: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA). Also Leandros, N, (1992) *Mass Printed Media in Greece* (Athens: Dolphin) and Karikopoulos, P., 1984, op.cit.

¹¹ Alexandros Mavrokordatos (1791-1865) was a liberation fighter and politician. He wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1821 in Epidaurus. After the liberation he was elected prime minister (1833-34, 1841 and 1844) and was given ambassadorships in Europe.

¹² This phrase remains the motto of the Union of Athens Newspaper Journalists till today.

¹³ *Helios* (Sun) Encyclopaedia, op.cit. and Mayer, K. (1957) *History of the Greek Press* (Athens: Dimopoulos).

¹⁴ '*The Friend of the Law*' was launched on March 10, 1824 in the Island of Hydra (closed May 27, 1827). '*The Newspaper of Athens*' was launched August 20, 1824 in Athens (closed April 15, 1826). The '*General Newspaper of Greece*' was launched in Nafplion on October 7, 1825. Later on, it was moved to Athens and in 1833 it was renamed into '*The Government Gazette*'. It has never stopped being published. Today is the official Government Gazette. The '*Independent Newspaper of Greece*' was launched in 1827 in Hydra Island (closed 1828). The '*Greek Bee*' was launched in 1827 in Hydra Island (closed 1829). '*Apollon*' was launched on March 11, 1831 in Hydra Island (closed October 7, 1831). The '*Athina*' was launched on February 13, 1832 in Megara, Attiki, moved to Nafplion, later to Athens (closed April 1835). The '*Hronos*' (Time) was launched on May 1, 1832 in Nafplion (closed September 1, 1832). The '*Hope*' - *Die Hoffnug* was launched on October 7, 1836 in Athens (closed November 1837). The '*Century*' was launched on September 25, 1843 in Athens (closed August 19, 1854). The '*Avgi*' (Dawn) was launched on May 1, 1857 in Athens, closed October 10, 1862 and it was re-launched in 1864; lived until 1876.

¹⁵ Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776-1831) was the first Governor of Greece. He formed a government in 20 January 1828. He was assassinated in Nafplion by political opponents on 27 September 1831.

Othon. This period saw a constant fight for the constitutional fortification of political freedom, which was reflected extensively in the newspapers of that period.¹⁶

With the establishment of the Greek State begins the first period of the political Press (1833-1862), consisted mainly of titles published in Athens and the provinces, as well as in the Ionian Islands, still under British occupation. The newspapers of that time had limited circulation, mainly as a result of illiteracy, lack of transportation and communications and to poor printing machinery.¹⁷ However, during the period 1833-1843, the intense press presence in politics contributed to the passage from an autocratic to a more liberalised form of Monarchy and finally to the formulation of democracy. These years were also characterised by attempts to control and censor newspapers through the strict press legislation of King Othon.¹⁸

It is widely accepted amongst researchers of the history of the Greek press that the period after the revolution against King Othon in 1862 initiated a new era in Greek press history.¹⁹ Article 14 in the 1864 Constitution declared the freedom of the press; and it was at that time that partisanship developed as the major characteristic of the political press. Newspapers were (and are) attached to political parties and to the ideology of key political figures of the day.²⁰

A decade later, in 1873, saw the start of the industrial period of the Greek press, almost ninety years after the first printing attempts in Vienna. At the same time, the means of production were rapidly developed and newspapers were transformed into businesses, while the creation of the first news agencies in the country, such as *Haves*, *Reuters* and the *Stefanopoli Telegraphic Agency*.²¹ The newspapers

¹⁶ Karikopoulos, P., 1984, op. cit.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Mayer (1954), Karikopoulos (1984), Mastoridis (1999), op. cit.

²⁰ Karikopoulos, P., 1984, op. cit.

²¹ Sun Encyclopaedia, op.cit. Also Karikopoulos, P., 1984, op. cit. The *Stefanopoli Telegraphic Agency* was founded in 1895. In 1906, the Greek State assumed its subsidisation, at which time it acquired its

Ephemeris (1873-1922) and *Acropolis* (1883-1989) were published, which are generally considered as models for the many other titles that followed.²²

2.1.2 The beginning of the 'industrial period' (1873)

As Leandros (1992) has argued, from the early years of their existence, Greek newspapers were used by their proprietors more as a means of participation in the political struggle and expression of political propaganda, than as mechanisms for entrepreneurial profit.²³

The social ground for this development was fertile. The newly founded Greek state lacked democratic tradition as well as the government apparatus to provide a framework for political and civil life to develop along with the market. According to Mouzelis (1995), in this chaotic and disorganized social-political environment, the patron-client relationship flourished as a means of introducing some degree of order and security into people's precarious life.²⁴

The press played an important role in the intense competition between various political factions struggling for power and its partisan identification with one or another group was the natural result of political clientelism. The government institutions maintained their clients, getting political support in return for favours.²⁵

Ephemeris, published in October 1873 in Athens by Dimitrios Koromilas was the first Greek publication, which according to Mastoridis (1999) complied "in all

present name *Athens News Agency* (ANA), currently the national news agency of Greece. Source: <http://www.ana.gr> (Accessed 2 June 2002).

²² Mastoridis, K., 1999 op. cit, p. 375.

²³ Leandros, N, 1992, op. cit.

²⁴ Mouzelis, N. (1995) 'Greece in the Twenty-first Century: Institutions and Political System' in D. Conostas and Th. G. Stavrou (eds.) *Greece Prepares for the Twenty-first Century*, Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press. Also, Mouzelis, N. (1986) *Politics in the Semiperiphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialism in the Balkans and Latin America*, London: Macmillan and Clogg, R. (1995) *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Clogg argues that during the Ottoman rule, in an attempt to develop a self-defence against the regime, Greeks secured "the protection of highly placed patrons who could mediate with those in position of power and privilege" (p. 3).

²⁵ See Mouzelis, N. (1995) and Clogg, R., 1995, op. cit.

respects of the meaning of the word ephemeris”, in terms of time, content, and use.²⁶ Mastoridis argues that the printing of *Ephemeris* was “a landmark in the history of the Greek Press, not only with regard to its content but also to its structure”.²⁷

It was the era of “philological journalism”, during which, according to Zioutos (1995), the ruling view was that “talent is everything”.²⁸ Famous Greek intellectuals, writers and poets contributed to *Ephemeris*, such as K. Palamas, Al. Papadiamantis, K. Kristallis, G. Drosinis, and Em. Roides.²⁹ In 1922, when *Eleftheron Vima* was published, another group of intellectuals appeared in newspaper columns, such as Z. Papantoniou, K. Ouranis, N. Kazantzakis and A. Sikelianos.³⁰

In the following years, the growing perplexity of social and political life created the need for professional training and education, as well as for the creation of new areas of specialisation in journalism.³¹ This need for specialised journalism and empowerment of reporting was acknowledged by Vlasis Gavreilidis, a pioneering journalist and proprietor of *Acropolis*, the second important Greek daily of the 19th Century, first published in 1883. Gavreilidis was the first to introduce news reporting in the Greek press; coverage of crime and local news, investigative journalism and interviews with prestigious people were the new forms. By the time of his death in 1920, Gavreilidis had introduced new press machinery and had come fully to understand the importance of advertising.³²

By the first quarter of the 20th century, a number of daily newspapers had appeared in Greece. The only title published in the 19th Century that remains in the market

²⁶ Mastoridis, K., 1999, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁷ Mastoridis, K., 1999, op. cit., p. 375.

²⁸ Zioutos, G. (1995) *Introduction to the Science of the Press*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press (Originally published in Athens, 1954), p. 85.

²⁹ See Karikopoulos, 1984, op. cit.

³⁰ Psarakis, T. (1993) *Newspapers and Journalists*. Athens: Livanis publications, p. 58.

³¹ Zioutos, G., 1995, op. cit.

³² See Karikopoulos (1984) and Mastoridis (1999), op. cit.

today is *Estia*, which was launched in 1894. Early in the 20th Century, a number of newspaper titles emerged that still remain active, such as *Rizospastis* (1908), *Ethnos* ("Nation" - 1913-1970; relaunched 1981), *Kathimerini* ("The Daily" - 1919) and *Eleftheron Vima* ("Free Tribune", currently *To Vima* ("The Tribune") - 1922).³³

The period between the 1880s and the end of the 1920s is considered by Basantis (2002) as the "first period" of growth for the Greek daily press.³⁴ In these early years, the problems journalists faced varied in nature. The working conditions were quite difficult and journalistic effectiveness was mostly a matter of personal interest and effort. As Kountouriotis (1975) describes in an account of his personal experiences as a journalist in the first decades of the 20th Century in Athens, telephony was quite inefficient, while the means of transportation for journalists were limited to the city tram. The average journalist could not afford to use hackney carriages, which were expensive and slow moving. Therefore, a great deal of time was consumed in news gathering.³⁵

In the eve of the 20th century, the publisher-typographer of the revolutionary years was progressively replaced by the publisher-journalist who also dealt with business affairs. Especially after World War II, new forms of financing emerged, including direct and indirect subsidies to the press from the state and entrepreneurial capital.³⁶

After 1909, the press reflected changes caused by the political dominance of progressive powers expressed mainly by Eleftherios Venizelos and the Liberal

³³ Leandros, N, 1992, op. cit. Also, Zacharopoulos, T. and Paraschos, M. (1993) *Mass Media in Greece: Power, Politics and Privatization*. N.Y.: Praeger Publishers.

³⁴ Basantis, D. (2002) *The Daily Press: From the 18th to the 21st Century*. Athens: Gregory publications.

³⁵ Fokos Kountouriotis has worked as a journalist at the daily political newspaper *Astir* (Star), whilst he has been a correspondent of *Kathimerini* and *Ethnos* during his stay in Smirni during the 1920s. His personal journalistic experiences are described in Kountouriotis, F. (1975) *Sixty Years of Journalism*. Athens: personal publication.

³⁶ Karikopoulos, P. (op.cit).

Party.³⁷ Newspaper titles such as the *Hronos* (Time, 1903-1939), *Patris* (Homeland, 1905-1935), *Esperini* (Afternoon, 1903-1935), *Ethnos*, *Kathimerini*, *Vradini* (Evening, 1923) and *Eleftheron Vima* played an important role recording, and occasionally participating in the formation of, the political developments in the country the first half of the century.³⁸ In the early decades of the 20th century, press circulation followed an increasing trend. In 1915, total circulation of the Athens daily press was estimated around 150,000 copies. In the period 1930-1936 it reached an average of 350-360,000.³⁹ The first unionised activity emerged in Greece after 1900 and the Union of Athens Newspaper Journalists (ESHEA) was founded in 1914.⁴⁰

According to Basantis (2002), by 1930 the distribution networks along with the basic channels of information (telegraph, telephony, the creation of Athens News Agency, transportation) were established, though circulation of the daily press could still not be considered as nationwide. The press remained predominantly Athens-based, a fact that reflects the dominance of the capital in terms of administrative, political and economic power.⁴¹ At the same time, the strengthening of the daily press and the increased circulation led to greater specialisation and to the formulation of a particular group of printing businesses that focused primarily, or exclusively, on the production and printing of daily newspaper titles.⁴²

In the period 1922-1940, the Greek press not only recorded the political instability, marked by new political movements and by dictatorships, but also retained its

³⁷ Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) was the most important political figure in Greek politics in the first three decades of the 20th century. He was elected prime minister in 1910 and in 1928, as a leader of the Liberals Party.

³⁸ Karikopoulos, P. (op.cit).

³⁹ Mayer, 1957, op.cit.

⁴⁰ The creation of Union of Athens Newspaper Journalists (ESHEA) in 1914 was followed by the creation of a number of other journalistic unions and associations during the 1920s, as a result of a narrow unionist philosophy of that time. In 1935 a new Law for "Journalistic Unions" was passed and ESHEA turned into the largest representative union of the journalistic profession. In 1947, ESHEA draw a new memorandum of association, which included the intention for the creation of a "Journalistic Code of Honour". See Karikopoulos, P. (1984), op.cit.

⁴¹ Basantis, D. (2002) *The Daily Press: From the 18th to the 21st Century*. Athens: Gregory publications.

⁴² Leandros, N, 1992, op. cit.

partisan role. New titles were launched representing views from almost all political ideologies.⁴³ According to Basantis (2002), the 1930s saw the start of the “second period” of the daily press, which continued until the late 1980s. During this period, the Athens-based press was progressively being organised as an industry, absorbing technological changes in terms of networking and journalistic practices.⁴⁴ During these decades, the appearance of broadcast media and broadcast journalism altered the face of communications in the country. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the development of broadcasting has been, and continues to be, of significant influence for the press and newspaper journalism.

The years covering the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas (1936) until the end of Nazi occupation (1944) was a period of constant struggle for Greek journalism. During the Metaxas Dictatorship, the first radio broadcasting appeared in 1938, totally controlled by the regime and while the press continued to feel the pressure of political patronage and propaganda.⁴⁵ In the early years of the Metaxas government, strict censorship rules were applied, which later took the form of official legislation covering both newspaper content and organisation.⁴⁶

During the Nazi occupation, hundreds of illegal newspapers and leaflets appeared in the cities and in the mountainous areas where Greek Resistance operated. Although there is no precise data for the “illegal period” of the Greek press, certain estimates put the number of newspapers and periodicals at over 200, published both by left- and right-wing resistance camps.⁴⁷ From the “illegal period” of the Greek press the only newspaper to survive and prosper in the following years was *Eleftheria* (Freedom), owned by Panos Kokkas, a legendary figure in contemporary

⁴³ Karikopoulos, P., op. cit.

⁴⁴ Basantis, D., 2002, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Karikopoulos, P., op. cit. See also Vlachou, Eleni (1992) *Journalistic years: Fifty something*. (Athens: Zedros).

⁴⁶ See McDonald, R., 1983, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Research performed by Th. Papakonstantinou appeared in two articles titled “The Press of the Resistance” in newspaper *Acropolis*, in the issues of 27 and 28 March 1982. Cited in Karikopoulos, P. (op.cit).

Greek history. After 1945, *Eleftheria* evolved into an editorially serious and prestigious daily newspaper, always oriented in the political centre.⁴⁸

Political struggle never ceased to dominate Greek journalism and the daily press even during the post-WW2 period and after the end of the Civil War (1949). In the 1950s, around 60 daily newspapers circulated nationwide, while the low educational level especially of the provincial public, the relative lack of newsprint and the poor national transport infrastructure, as a result of catastrophes during the Nazi occupation and the Civil War that followed, are considered the main barriers for the development of the press during these decades.⁴⁹

2.1.3 The Junta period (1967-1974)

During the years of the Military Junta (1967-1974), a significant number of newspapers stopped their operations either because they were severely censored and finally closed down by the regime, or on their own accord as a protest against the coup d'état.⁵⁰

Out of fifteen large daily newspapers in circulation in April 21 1967, only eight remained open.⁵¹ Two major titles *Kathimerini* and *Mesimvrini* (launched 1961) with a total average of more than 130,000 copies stopped their presses as a protest against the Colonels. Both newspapers were run by Eleni Vlachou, a conservative and legendary newspaperwoman, who had argued that “when all that was left in [Greek] politics were the Colonels, and the press was managed by their own

⁴⁸ *Eleftheria* was one of the newspapers that ceased publication from the early hours of the 1967 Junta and was never published again. For the early history of the newspaper see Mayer (1954), op. cit. Also Leontaritis, G. (1994) “The long course of *Eleftheria*’ in *Kathimerini*, 17 December, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Stratos, K. (1995) *Opposition and Disagreement*, Athens: Kastaniotis.

⁵⁰ McDonald (1983) op. cit. offers a detailed account of the ‘run and hide’ movements of newspaper executives who have been one of the first targets of the Junta Military officials in their arrests in the early hours of April 21, 1967 (see pp. 15-29).

⁵¹ The large daily, Athens-based newspapers in circulation in 1967 were: *Avgi* (launched 1952), *Acropolis*, *Vima*, *Ethnikos Kirix*, *Eleftheria* (1944), *Eleftheros Kosmos*, *Kathimerini*, *Athinaiiki* (1949), *Apogevmatini* (1954), *Bradini*, *Democratiki Allagi*, *Ethnos*, *Estia*, *Mesimvrini* (1961) and *Ta Nea*. From these 15, 8 remained in circulation in 1968: *Acropolis*, *Vima*, *Eleftheros Kosmos*, *Apogevmatini*, *Bradini*, *Ethnos*, *Estia*, *Ta Nea*, whilst the new *Nea Politeia* was launched (Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens – EIHEA). See also Stratos, K., 1995, op. cit.

devoted censors, newspapers, especially those in the morning market, lost every interest".⁵² Vlachou described various attempts made by Junta officials to persuade her to reconsider the decision to close down her papers.⁵³ *Eleftheria's* proprietor Panos Kokkas and editor-in-chief George Androulidakis also decided to protest against the regime by stopping their presses. The left *Avgi* (Dawn) and *Dimokratiki Allaghi* (Democratic Change) were banned by the regime, immediately after the coup d'etat.

During the first five years of the Military rule, newspaper total circulation remained somewhere between 550,000 – 650,000 copies, while in the Junta's final years (1973-1974) newspapers started to gain in terms of penetration, since, after the bloody uprising of students at the National Technical University of Athens (November 17 1973), the public's interest in politics increased (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Average Circulation of the Daily Athens-based Political Press (1967-1974)

	Morning	Afternoon	Total
1967	241,203	377,275	618,478
1968	226,145	372,768	598,913
1969	237,350	419,371	656,722
1970	197,520	382,029	579,549
1971	184,837	366,970	551,806
1972	201,355	429,467	630,822
1973	219,720	498,558	718,278
1974	257,763	561,279	819,042

Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens

According to Stratos (1995), press regulation and censorship during the seven years of the dictatorship passed through four stages: *strict rules / relative relaxation / "liberalisation" / stricter rules*. These described a policy pattern that stretched from the full subordination of the press in the early months of the military rule, to the relative relaxation in the years 1969-1971, to the "liberalisation" of 1973 and then to the immediate return to the previous strict regime of the early days. These successive phases are reflected in the figures of total newspaper circulation; in the

⁵² Vlachou, E., 1992, op. cit.

⁵³ Ibid.

first half of the Junta period (1967-1971) the average circulation was much lower than in the second half (1971-1973), since the last short phase of “stricter rules” that followed did not manage to alter the general trend towards the “liberalisation” of the press.⁵⁴

The early strict period included the obligation on newspapers to print certain material in certain ways. According to Stratos (1995), guidelines on reporting, commentary and on the way certain news items should be processed and presented were issued by the regime. In the second period, preventive censorship was relaxed, but many restrictions remained. Criticism of the regime was allowed in the newspapers, but only if it was done “in good faith”. In the third period, restrictions remained active, but there was a general climate of progressive “liberalisation”. In this context, newspapers were allowed to print more criticism of the regime even more than in the past. In the fourth period, immediately after the events in the Technical University took place, a new martial law was declared, under which news items that could lead to disturbances were prohibited. Finally, in the last period, during which D. Ioannides ousted the Junta leader G. Papadopoulos by force, the regulatory regime included threats to ban newspapers and a kind of self-censorship exercised by the press itself.⁵⁵

These successive phases of policy towards the press reflected the Colonels’ overall political attitudes. According to McDonald (1983)

...the evolution of their attitudes closely mirrored their approach to society at large. In the beginning they were absolute, rigorously stifling all dissent and dictating the news. Later they tried to present a semblance of legality while maintaining control through covert, coercive means.⁵⁶

Although in the 1968 Constitution freedom of the press was included in principle, certain clauses inserted in the text reflected the Dictatorship’s beliefs on the issue.

⁵⁴ Stratos, K., 1995, op. cit.

⁵⁵ Stratos, K., 1995, op. cit. G. Papadopoulos and D. Ioannides were army officers that led the coup d’etat in 1967. The latter replaced by force the former as the head of the regime in the final years of the Dictatorship.

⁵⁶ McDonald, R., 1983, op. cit., p. 9.

Article 14 on the freedom of the press was encumbered with so many provisions that it appeared almost impossible for the press to publish any oppositional views. These restrictions remained in the 1973 Constitution, finally abolished with the Restoration of Democracy and the new 1975 Constitution.

2.1.4 The 'golden' period

The predominant characteristic of the daily newspaper market until the restoration of Democracy in Greece in July 1974 was its oligopolistic form. The share of two leading newspaper groups at that period represented 90% of the sales. These were the *Botsis Group* (with the titles *Apogevmatini* (Afternoon) and *Acropolis*) and the *Lambrakis Group* (with the titles *To Vima* (The Tribune) and *Ta Nea* (The News).⁵⁷ Soon after the first democratic administration was established, headed by Constantine Karamanlis,⁵⁸ a number of new titles were launched (some of them were re-launched since they had stopped printing during the military Junta) so that the market share of the two pre-existing large newspaper groups was substantially lowered. Since then, except for very few short periods and in exceptional circumstances, none of the currently existing newspaper groups has managed to exceed the proportion of 20% of the market in terms of sales.⁵⁹

After the restoration of Democracy on July 26 1974, the average circulation of the Athens-based daily press increased rapidly (by 61.3% between June and August), reaching the peak of the decade with an average of 1,128,000 copies, recorded in August 1974. The abolishment of all restrictions put upon the press, which led to the re-launch of newspapers previously banned by the Military regime, as well as the people's thirst for freedom of information and unrestricted expression of personal and political beliefs, were the main reasons for this increase in newspaper sales.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Zaousis, A., and Stratos, K. (1993) *Newspapers: 1974-1992*. Athens: Gnosi Publications.

⁵⁸ Constantine Karamanlis (1907-1998), founder of New Democracy party served four times Prime Minister (1955-1958, 1958-1961, 1961-1963, 1974-1980), and twice as President of the Republic (1980-1985, 1990-1995). A brief profile can be found in http://www.freegk.com/politics/Karamanlis_constantine.php (accessed 2 July 2003).

⁵⁹ Zaousis, A. & Stratos, K. (1993) op.cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

However, this rapid increase in circulation did not last in the following years. One year later, in 1975, a declining trend started to appear and by 1980, total circulation to reach the level observed during the Junta period, with the morning press suffering the biggest losses. This decline in the morning newspaper market continued until the mid-1990s.

Generally, the years after 1974 constitute a period of massive changes in the Greek socio-political arena, during which the press remained heavily involved in politics and occasionally unconditionally surrendered to party politics. Newspapers operated as a functional extension of politicians, in practice more important for them than the political parties for their contact with the public. Broadcast media, meanwhile, remained under total government control. The Greek press has never stopped devoting a lot of editorial space, aimed at direct intervention in the political process as well as into political parties' internal affairs.⁶¹

The nine-year period 1981-1989, during which successive Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PaSoK) governments ruled the country (under Andreas Papandreou, the dynamic and controversial PaSoK historic leader),⁶² could be characterised as the "golden period" of the contemporary Athens daily political press.⁶³ These years were characterised by intense political developments, successive circulation peaks and the introduction of new technology, which brought to the Greek market the first tabloid newspaper. In 1981 *Ethnos* (Nation), owned by the Bobolas Group, was re-launched⁶⁴ as a tabloid, using big colour photographs in the editorial. This created a

⁶¹ Mavris, I., 'Mass Media and Politics: Seeking a New Balance', *H Kathimerini* (The Daily), January 30th, 1994. Also Psihogios, D. (1992) *The Uncertain Future of the Athens Press*. Athens: Diavlos Publications.

⁶² Andreas Papandreou (1915-1996) served as Prime Minister of Greece (1981-1989, 1993-1996) winning three general elections. He was Greece's first Socialist Prime Minister. For a full profile, see <http://www.agp.gr/english/index.stm> (Accessed 15 June 2002).

⁶³ See also Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit. p. 17.

⁶⁴ *Ethnos*, originally published in 1913 ceased publication in April 1970. In its relaunch in 1981, in a tabloid form, *Ethnos* was extremely successful, continuously increasing its circulation until the seasonal peak of 237,851 copies in May 1985. After that, it followed the afternoon press in its decline, maintaining however its position in the top 6 of newspaper sales nationwide. The second tabloid newspaper to be launched in Greece in April 1983 was *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press) (Source: Special

general trend with the result that ten years later, in 1992, out of 15 mainstream Athens-based newspapers more than half were tabloids (with eight of those titles representing 85% of total sales).⁶⁵

As soon as PaSoK came to power, total press circulation rose. From the early 1980s until 1989, when New Democracy came into power until 1993, the average circulation of the Athens-based daily political press remained constantly in a level of 900,000-1,000,000 copies, with two important surges when the average daily circulation exceeded 1 million copies: first, in the pre-election period in 1985 and, second, in 1989 which saw two national elections and the full exposure of the so-called Koskotas scandal.⁶⁶ The all-time record high for total circulation, surpassing 1.32 million copies, was in May 1985.

Despite the circulation peaks during the 1980s, the penetration of the morning press continued to decline (see Table 2.2). This could be attributed primarily to the closure of the morning daily *To Vima*,⁶⁷ but also to the fact that during these years the clear distinction between morning and afternoon press ceased to exist, since almost all newspapers in both categories were printed at the same time of day.

edition *Eleftheros Typos 1983-2003: 20 years in the news frontline*. Athens, 2003: Eleftheros Typos. Also Kyrtos, G. (2003) *The Secret War of the Powers*. Athens: Kastaniotis).

⁶⁵ Zaousis, A. and Stratos, K., op.cit.

⁶⁶ George Koskotas was a banker, head of the Bank of Crete. Koskotas used the bank's money to bribe government officials, as well as to finance private activities, one of which was the creation of a media group called *Grammi* (Line), using the most advanced printing technology imported from abroad. He owned the newspapers *Kathimerini*, *Vradini*, *24 Ores* (24 Hours) and a radio station. He was indicted for illegal financial dealings and embezzlement and remained in jail for almost 15 years. According to Clogg (1995), "it was alleged that state corporations had been encouraged to deposit their cash reserves with the Bank of Crete at artificially low rates of interest, the difference between the low rates and market rates being siphoned off". Koskotas himself alleged in an interview with *Time* magazine that PM Andreas Papandreou was directly implicated in the scandals (op. cit., p. 199).

⁶⁷ The morning daily *To Vima* ceased publication in August 1982, was relaunched July 1984, it closed down again September 1985, and finally relaunched March 1999.

Table 2.2
Average Circulation of the Daily
Athens-based Political Press (1975-1989)

	Morning	Afternoon	Total
1975	268,604	576,162	844,766
1976	235,577	578,258	813,835
1977	220,157	548,569	768,726
1978	230,776	570,268	801,044
1979	213,116	532,569	745,684
1980	191,147	527,653	718,800
1981	184,835	621,120	805,954
1982	170,156	730,427	900,584
1983	144,477	769,213	913,689
1984	150,924	828,382	979,306
1985	150,278	921,882	1,072,160
1986	119,781	860,793	980,574
1987	102,464	853,071	955,535
1988	86,293	885,579	971,872
1989	87,614	939,018	1,026,632

Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens.

Note: In May 1985, newspaper sales reached an unprecedented seasonal record level of over a 1,3 million copies.

The increased level of circulation in 1989 was the end of a period of euphoria for the political press. As regards morning dailies, total circulation accounted for almost 1/3 of the 1975 figure. Generally, the end of the 1980s was a period of serious developments that altered the Greek mass media environment: private broadcasting media came into scene in 1989 and businessmen from various business sectors started to enter the newspaper market, replacing most of the traditional newspaper proprietors. In terms of circulation, after 1989, the newspaper market as a whole experienced a continuous decrease with minor fluctuations throughout the 1990s.

Zaousis and Stratos (1993), in their examination of newspaper circulation in the period 1974-1992, have observed a strong relation between press circulation and important political developments, even specific events. They argue that newspaper reading in Greece is highly attached to political developments and particularly

those that incorporate the character of political struggle between political parties (see Table 2.3).⁶⁸

Table 2.3
Average circulation of Athens-based dailies (1974-1990):
Triggering events boosting newspaper sales

seasonal high	sales	event
Aug. '74	1,128,299	After the Restoration of Democracy (Aug. '74)
Mar. '75	931,718	Municipal elections (Mar. '75)
Oct. '81	1,047,552	National elections (Oct. '81)
Sept. '83	990,923	Agreement of NATO military bases (Sept. '83)
Sept. '84	1,078,172	Leadership change in New Democracy party (Sept. '84)
May '85	1,326,614	National elections (June '85)
Mar. '86	1,042,298	General increase during Jan.- May
Oct. '86	1,082,334	Municipal elections (Oct. '86)
June '88	1,008,856	Koskotas scandal
Nov. '88	1,061,892	PM A. Papandreou's illness
June '89	1,138,095	National elections (June '89)
Oct. '89	1,166,459	National elections (Nov. '89)
Apr. '90	901,839	National elections (Apr. '90)

Source: Zaousis, A. & Stratos, K. (1993) Newspapers 1974-1992. Athens: Gnosis publications.

Note: Average daily newspaper circulation, based on official EIHEA figures.

From the regular peaks appeared in chronological series for circulation figures it could be argued that thirst for politics amongst Greek readers has been stronger than the newspaper reading habit itself. Greek people seem to buy newspapers in order to read views reflecting the "big issue" at hand, rather than to be routinely informed about the daily flow of news.

⁶⁸ The examination of EIHEA (Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens) official circulation figures, on which Zaousis & Stratos' research was based, reveal spectacular ups and down in the sales of the Athens-based dailies. Specifically, certain events occurred during the first half of the 1980s, such as the 1981 national elections, the Leadership change in the Opposition (New Democracy party), as well as the 1985 national elections that followed secured newspaper sales in certain months to count for over 1 million copies, a figure which is totally absent from 1990s circulation boards. It is worth mentioning here that 1985 was the most successful year in the contemporary history of the Greek press, since in 8 out of 12 months of the year, total average circulation passed 1 million copies, whilst in the rest it remained closely to that figure. During the second half of the decade, the municipal elections in October 1986, the Koskotas scandal two years later, as well as the successive national elections that followed kept newspaper circulation to high levels. See Zaousis, A. & Stratos, K., 1993, *op. cit.*

2.1.5 The decline

The 1980s reflects a period of euphoria for the newspaper market that contributed to the creation of new titles, which failed to secure viable market shares.⁶⁹ The crisis caused in the industry by the fall in press circulation can be attributed to a variety of reasons, which are discussed in more in Section 2.2. The main reason, from which most contemporary problems in the Greek press industry originate, is the credibility crisis of newspapers themselves, which has led to the alienation of the reading public.⁷⁰ This is reinforced by the belief that the Greek press is progressively becoming a vehicle of established interests that are predominantly affiliated with the government of the day. It is widely accepted by the public, as well as by the majority of journalists themselves, that a great deal of journalistic effort in the press is directed towards the safeguarding of business and personal interests, largely ignoring journalism's proper mission, namely holding the government and authority to account and contributing to the strengthening of the public sphere.

In the past, the affiliation of the press with political parties and its active participation in the political struggle created new readers who needed fresh arguments against the opposite political camp. In the 1990s, however, political developments damaged newspaper sales, because of the way in which the political "game" was played during these years.

⁶⁹ During the decade, out of twenty three new national titles which appeared and tried to gain a share of the market, seventeen failed and they were forced to close down within a period of one or two years. A lot of attempts were made especially during the period 1988 - 1991, when 8 dailies tried unsuccessfully to establish a decent circulation. These dailies were: *Kathe Mera* (Every Day), launched in February 1988 (closed one month later), *24 Ores* (24 Hours), launched in February 1988 (closed at the end of the same year), *Epikairota* (Timeliness), launched in November 1988 (closed in October 1991), *Exormisi* (Campaign), launched in April 1988 (closed in June 1990), *Proodeftiki Allagi* (Progressive Change), launched in November 1989 (closed one month later), *Alithia* (Truth), launched in November 1989 (closed two weeks after its launch), *Vradinoi Kairoi* (Evening Times), launched in October 1990 (closed four days after its launch), and *Anagnostis* (Reader), launched in May 1991 (closed two months later). See also Leandros, N., 1992, op. cit.

⁷⁰ For instance, see See G. Gantzias and D. Kamaras (1999) "The Greek Mass Media Industry in the threshold of the Digital Era" in Yearbook *TASEIS* (Trends) - *The Greek Economy 1999*, Athens: Allmedia Publications, Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit. Also Mandravelis, P. (2003) 'The icebergs of Greek journalism', *Apogevmatini*, 22 May 2003, pp. 6-7.

After the Koskotas scandal, a “catharsis” (purification) campaign against the Socialists was led by New Democracy (ND) and the Communist Party. Following the deadlocked election of June 1989, these two parties formed a joint-government with the primary task of establishing a parliamentary commission to investigate the case.⁷¹ Further elections were called for November 1989, which resulted in no overall parliamentary majority for either ND or PaSoK. As a result, an all-party government was formed for reasons of “national necessity”.⁷² Finally, the elections of April 1990 brought ND in power, allowing the formation of a government that lasted until 1993.

The successive national elections in the second half of 1989 and in Spring 1990 created “political fatigue” amongst Greek citizens. The creation of the “ecumenical government” in 1989, according to Psihogios (1992), also showed that the political and ideological differences between the major parties were much smaller than politicians had repeatedly asserted.⁷³ Psihogios argues that the all-party government exercised a moderating influence on political struggle and passion, a fact that directly led to a decline in the circulation of heavily politicised newspapers.⁷⁴ On top of this came the emergence of private television. During the 1970s, the State’s tight control of the broadcasting media, along with the limited penetration of television in Greek households, helped newspaper circulation. According to Psihogios (1995), newspapers offered a kind of political security to their readers, in terms of news and editorial orientation. The advent of private radio has acted “as a purification of the airwaves, which in the past transmitted only authorised government views”.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Clogg, R. (1995) *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (first edition: 1992).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit. Professor M. Drettakis on the other hand, in his studies on the circulation of Athens dailies argues for the weakening of the influence of politics on newspaper penetration, due to the similarities observed in the policy of the two leading parties that governed the country between 1991-2000. See Drettakis, M. (2001) “Continuous decrease in the circulation of political newspapers”, newspaper *Express*, 20 May, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁵ Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit., p. 27. Psihogios traces the decline of the daily press to another set of reasons, such as people’s changing habits during the afternoon after the proliferation of private

Therefore, during the 1990s, the liberalisation of airwaves and the launch of private radio in 1987 and private television in 1989 altered the Greek media scene in many respects.⁷⁶ At once, neither political parties nor their supporters were any longer dependent on the press as a channel for political views and arguments.⁷⁷

On the other hand, in the 1990s, a shift of power from politics to business interests was observed. More particularly, until the 1990s, newspaper editorial production and policy was heavily influenced by politics and especially party politics. The emergence of the proprietor-businessman, however, has increased the importance of business interests in editorial policy at the expense of political ideology. Since the early 1990s, the personal business goals of proprietors have increasingly dictated the way editorial policy treated politics and political figures.⁷⁸ The gradual maturing of the Greek economy and the expansion of the private corporate sector has moved the focus of the press intervention from ideological criteria to business agendas of the newspaper owner-entrepreneur. This shift of interest from politics to business affairs, along with the particular political climate that prevailed at the end of the 1980s, seems to have affected the image of newspapers and to have diminished their public appeal.

The 1990s were characterised by a continuous decline of total newspaper circulation (see Table 2.4). More specifically, in the period 1990-1999 the daily press suffered a total 45% decrease in circulation, or 57% of the average of the peak year 1985. The biggest losses were in the afternoon market (51% over the period), offset by the 25% increase in the morning market after the re-launch of the daily edition of *Vima*.

television stations, as well as the practice adopted by the majority of morning radio shows and radio producers who are reviewing the press for their listeners on a daily basis.

⁷⁶ The first private television channel to be launched in the Greek market was *Mega* (November 1989), followed shortly by *Antenna* (January 1990).

⁷⁷ Psihogios, D., 1992, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Andreas Christodoulides, General Manager of *Athens News Agency*. Personal interview, 4 August 1995. Cited in Kamaras, D. (1995) *News Production in Greece with Special Reference to the Athens News Agency*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Sociology, School of Social Science, City University, London.

Table 2.4
Average Circulation of the Daily
Athens-based Political Press (1990-1999)

	Morning	Afternoon	Total
1990	73,682	767,185	840,867
1991	64,484	656,000	720,484
1992	54,478	587,998	642,476
1993	48,657	554,963	603,619
1994	55,944	580,558	636,502
1995	59,539	536,060	595,599
1996	61,457	572,514	633,971
1997	59,574	853,071	912,645
1998	62,301	407,758	470,059
1999	92,604	372,584	465,188

Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens.

2.2 THE CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPER MARKET

The main reasons of the decline in newspaper circulation figures can be attributed to a variety of factors. These include increases in the cover price, the emergence of private broadcasting and its role in enhancing pluralism and in breaking the news, the political fatigue of the newspaper reader, the decrease in the credibility of the press which seems to pursue the business agendas of the occasional proprietor and the use of sensationalism and “televsualisation” of the newspaper lay-out and editorial content, which has led to a downgrading of editorial quality and a lack of serious and in-depth news analysis.⁷⁹

In what follows, a further analysis of the most important reasons for the declining newspaper public penetration and the subsequent down trend of the circulation is

⁷⁹ See G. Gantzias and D. Kamaras (1999) “The Greek Mass Media Industry in the threshold of the Digital Era” in Yearbook *TASEIS* (Trends) - *The Greek Economy 1999*, Athens: All Media Publications (in Greek). Papathanassopoulos has defined two more factors which are responsible for the declining circulation of the Athens daily political press: first, the morning radio shows which are reviewing the press for their listeners on a daily basis (although one could argue that this factor is more a positive, rather than a negative phenomenon, since it acts as an advertisement for the press), and second, the constant information flow via the broadcasting media, which make the average Greek to be indifferent to the press. (Papathanassopoulos, St. (1999) “Newspapers are losing copies”, *Kathimerini*, March 21, p. 79); Also Psihogios, 1992, op. cit.

attempted, putting emphasis on qualitative factors and the competence of the daily press to fulfill its informative mission.

First, the unreliability of the press had emerged long before private television's appearance in the Greek media market. This crisis in the press is a result of the declining reliability of Greek politics that was quite apparent at the end of the 1980s. In the beginning of 1990s, both leading political parties suffered severe identity crises.⁸⁰ This was reflected in the press, because of its long close association with political parties and politicians. At the same time, the press reinforced the public perception of state corruption by making wild accusations and feeding the Greek people's inner need to run down their politicians.⁸¹

Second, the press crisis was reinforced by the increasing subordination of its weaker parts to the demands of the advertising market. This phenomenon will be addressed more analytically in Chapter IV. A characteristic example of this is the increased publication of "friendly" editorial copy, a product of dealings between the newspaper and advertisers. In this way, advertisers keep their clients happy, while newspapers increase their advertising revenues.

Third, faced by the new challenge from private broadcasters, the press adopted more sensational and striking ways of presenting its material, neglecting the fields of research and investigative reporting, in which the press has a competitive advantage.

Fourth, the newspapers adopted the marketing tactics of supermarkets, offering consumer goods to the public at a discount or for free, after the collection of a number of coupons found in newspaper pages. In the early years of the 1990s, newspapers started offering special editions, maps, encyclopedias, cinema tickets etc., through coupons printed in newspaper pages, a practice already familiar in

⁸⁰ Lyrintzis, Ch. (1998) 'Political Crisis (?)'. New Political Trends and the Possibilities of Modernisation' in M. Spourdalakis (ed.) *PaSoK: Party-State-Society* (Athens: Patakis).

foreign newspaper markets. After a short break in 1993, newspaper offers were expanded to cover consumer goods, cds, books, even cars and houses.⁸² Though this strategy produced temporary increases in circulation, it acted in the long term to reduce the credibility and prestige of the printed media. Newspapers, having presented themselves as extensions of the consumer society, damaged their reputations as a channel for the communication of serious news.

Fifth, the excessive interest that the press developed in television happenings and gossip, combined with the horizontal integration of press and television ownership, has led newspapers to become a supplementary product of television, as well as a channel of information through which the latter's strategy and products become broadly known.

These factors need to be seen against the background that newspaper readership has never been a strong part of the Greek culture. According to the annual statistics of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), the average circulation per population (copies per thousand people) place Greece behind all developed countries. For instance, in WAN's 2000 edition, the figure in question is 63.7 as against 321.0 for the United Kingdom, or 163.3 and 162.9 for Hungary and Bulgaria respectively.⁸³ Moreover, Eurostat data for 2002 indicate that only 20% of the Greek population read newspapers on a daily basis, whilst 30% never do.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Papagiannidis, A. (1998) *The Role of the Mass Media and Speaking of Corruption*, E21 Magazine, issue 31, May, vol. II.

⁸² The offer of free gifts by newspapers was temporarily banned by court in summer 1993, after an appeal submitted by the Press Foundation (the company publishing *Eleftheros Typos*) on the grounds that such a practice constitutes unfair competition. Newspaper offers returned stronger a year later with newspaper *Ta Nea* to start a new round of offers in January 1994, something that in the following months was transformed into a consumer offers frenzy through newspaper pages. At some point, newspaper front pages were transformed into colourful brochures. A characteristic example that expressed newspaper audience's consumer instincts' was an article appeared in June 1996 in *Kathimerini*, which was then a shareholder of Mega Channel, which in turn held a share in the analogue subscription channel *Filmnet*, explaining the newspaper's practice of non-involvement in discount offers of the Filmnet's signal decoder that have appeared in other newspapers. *Kathimerini* insisted that any offers by the newspaper would exclusively include quality historical readings, such as books and encyclopedias (*Kathimerini*, June 6, 1996, p. 2).

⁸³ World Association of Newspapers (2000) *World Press Trends*, Paris: WAN.

⁸⁴ Eurostat statistical research on the habits of EU citizens. Reported in *Imerisia* (Daily), 8 May 2002, p. 39.

2.2.1 Press is losing ground and scope

It is common ground amongst Greek media analysts and academics that the appearance of private television in the early 1990s had a profound effect on the newspaper market. As Basantis (2002) puts it, the daily press was transformed from a practically monopolistic informative platform to merely another player in the communication industry.⁸⁵

From the mid-1980s, when circulation had reached a historical peak, newspaper executives were trying to grasp a feeling of the new environment. In one of his rare in-depth interviews, Stavros Psiharis, editor of leading newspapers *To Vima* (Tribune) and *To Vima tis Kyriakis* (Tribune on Sunday), accepted that newspapers failed to adapt to the new reality, since they neglected the presence of television and the proliferation of print media titles that are increasingly made available to the public.⁸⁶

Moreover, the new challenges for the press found newspapers in an already weakening phase in terms of the quality of content as well as the vision of the people in charge. As Psarakis⁸⁷ has argued, the Dictatorship's negative effect on the press was not limited to the closure of a number of dailies that have emerged again after the restoration of Democracy. The real damaging effect was that in many cases the Military Junta's tactics forced many prominent and enlightened journalistic figures, with leading positions in newspapers, to retire early from the profession. Those who succeeded them during or after the Military regime were people of lower professional status and capabilities.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Basantis, D., 2002, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Psarakis, T. (1993) *Newspapers and Journalists*. Athens: Livanis publications.

⁸⁷ Takis Psarakis, journalist and writer, is a prominent figure in Greek journalism. He has worked in many newspapers and magazines, whilst in recent years he is occupied with his extensive archive of old books, news photographs and magazines. He has organised many public exhibitions of this historic material.

⁸⁸ Takis Psarakis, personal interview, Athens 21.06.2002.

The weakness of newspapers to deal with the emergence of broadcasting media was reflected to the industry as a whole. In June 1992 the Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens (EIHEA) expressed its worries as regards decreasing trend in circulation figures. In this paper EIHEA described the various causes of what it called the "misfortune" of the Greek press.⁸⁹ Decreased circulation was attributed by the Union, inter alia, to the fact that newspapers were weak in terms of immediacy, as well as to the practice adopted by radio producers of reading the daily press to their morning audience. EIHEA provided no remedy for the lack of immediacy, whereas in the case of radio stations, press proprietors suggested the intervention of the state in the form of regulatory measures, by legislating in favour of the newspaper industry and against radio stations, banning the transmission of newspaper material.⁹⁰ The appeal by EIHEA to the regulatory instinct of the state authorities was not matched at the same time by any positive advice to the press on the need to adopt a new philosophy in the production of news.

2.2.2 Market structure: competition and commercialisation

As we have seen, a landmark development during the 1980s in the Greek press was the general weakening of the morning market in terms of its share in total circulation. In early 1980s, out of 13 mainstream Athens-based newspapers, seven were morning papers and six were afternoon papers. More than a decade later, in spring 1992, only four morning dailies existed, whilst the number of the afternoon papers had risen to eleven.⁹¹

Once again, the chronological series of EIHEA for the 20-year period 1980-1999 offer a quite informative view of developments in the morning and afternoon newspaper market. Examining the market shares of the morning and afternoon newspapers in terms of circulation (see Table 2.5), one can observe the strong presence of the morning dailies in the beginning of the 1980s and their further decline during the same decade.

⁸⁹ Cited in Zaousis, A. & Stratos, K., 1993, op. cit., p. 177-178

⁹⁰ Zaousis, A. & Stratos, K., 1993, op. cit.

⁹¹ Psihogios, D., 1992, op.cit.

Table 2.5
Athens-based Political Press (1980-1999):
Market share of the morning and afternoon dailies
as a % of total circulation

year	Morning as % of total	Afternoon as % of total	year	Morning as % of total	Afternoon as % of total
1980	26.6	73.4	1990	8.8	91.2
1981	22.9	77.1	1991	9.0	91.0
1982	18.9	81.1	1992	8.5	91.5
1983	15.8	84.2	1993	8.1	91.9
1984	15.4	84.6	1994	8.8	91.2
1985	14.0	86.0	1995	10.0	90.0
1986	12.2	87.8	1996	9.7	90.3
1987	10.7	89.3	1997	11.2	88.8
1988	8.9	91.1	1998	13.3	86.7
1989	8.5	91.5	1999	19.9	80.1

Source: Circulation figures 1980-1999 by the Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens. Further processed by the author.

More specifically, in 1980 the morning newspaper market held a share of almost 27% with 73% for the afternoon dailies. In mid-1980s, the morning market figure had decreased to 15.4% (84.6% afternoon), while in late 1980s the morning dailies represented only 8.5% of total circulation. This situation remained until mid-1990s, when the circulation share of the morning press increased to 10% to reach almost 20% in late 1990s. During the early years of the 21st Century, the morning market has retained its presence (see Table 2.6).⁹²

Table 2.6
Average Circulation of the Daily Athens-based
Political Press (2000-2002)

	Morning	Afternoon	Total
2000	101.330	371.687	473.017
2001	117.463	365.896	483.359
2002	112.525	343.238	455.763

Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens

⁹² It should be noted that the increase in 2001 sales for the morning press appearing in Table 2.6 (affecting also the total) is not a real increase in circulation; it is a statistical technicality caused by EIHEA's chronological series that in 2001 included *To Vima's* Sunday sales in the total average.

Currently, circulation figures, as well as the market shares, indicate an increasing dynamism of the morning market, which has managed to increase its circulation share, from around 21% in 2000 to almost 25% in 2002. At the same time, the afternoon market's share has continued to decline, from more around 79% in 2000 to 75% in 2002 (see Table 2.7). Finally, it should be noted that, currently,⁹³ the circulation of the leading newspapers *To Vima* and *Kathimerini* represents around 81% of the morning market as a whole.

Table 2.7

**Athens-based Political Press (2000-2002):
Market share of the morning and afternoon dailies
as a % of total circulation**

year	Morning as % of total	Afternoon as % of total
2000	21.4	78.6
2001	24.3	75.7
2002	24.7	75.3

Source: Circulation figures 1980-1999 by the Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens. Further processed by the author.

Do these developments represent a come back of the morning market and the weakening of the afternoon newspaper? This issue cannot be addressed, without reference to a series of particular developments.

First, the re-launch on March 22 1999 of the daily edition of *To Vima* (Tribune) by the Lambrakis Group gained a substantial market share and has contributed to the strengthening of the morning market. However, *Vima's* main competitor, *Kathimerini*, has also started to gain circulation.⁹⁴

Second, technological developments and the proliferation of information sources have made it possible for the morning dailies to include all the news found in the afternoon papers.

⁹³ June 2003.

Third, the increasing interest of the reading public in the financial press has also increased the figures for the morning market, to which it belongs.⁹⁵

Fourth, the emergence of "Saturday" and financial weekly publications, all of which appear on newsstands at the same time has significantly reduced the distinction between morning and afternoon press at least in the perception of the average reader.⁹⁶

In mid-1990s, the traditional weakness of the political and economic weekly magazine market and the increasing general interest of the public on economics and business finance provided a fertile ground for the emergence of a new player in the newspaper market: the weekly financial newspaper. Since 1993, when *Ependitis* (Investor), the first weekly financial newspaper in the Greek market was launched, interest in national economy and entrepreneurship was further increased, reaching a peak in the period 1998-2000 when the stock market attracted the interest of the many Greeks who saw it as a way of earning easy money.⁹⁷ In 1993 there was one financial weekly; by early 1998 there were four in circulation and, by mid-2000,

⁹⁴ In the past, the morning press was substantially relied on the circulation of the leading morning daily *Kathimerini*, which held, before the emergence of *Vima* around 74 per cent of the morning market (circulation figure Jan. 1999).

⁹⁵ Circulation figures of the morning financial dailies are not included in the official EIHEA series, since the great bulk of their circulation is succeeded through subscriptions.

⁹⁶ However, one could argue that there is little substance in the division between morning and evening newspapers, especially in terms of news content. Also, the title 'afternoon' is rather spurious and in essence falsely attributed to that kind of daily, called afternoon newspaper. Both morning and afternoon papers are edited, prepared and printed at the same time. In Athens, the morning papers are distributed around six to seven o' clock in the morning and the afternoon papers somewhere between nine and ten. In the provinces, they are distributed all at the same time, to the effect that the morning paper to be considered falsely as carrying old news and the afternoon paper containing more up-to-date news items (*H Kathimerini*, October 1, 1995, p.2). But this could be just an impression in the mind of the average reader. Provided that the content is similar, since all newspapers close their front page almost at the same time the previous night, the only difference that could be pinpointed between the two kinds is in terms of the style of their writing, with the afternoon paper to be more popular and occasionally populist. On the other hand, an informal broad division does exist between evening and morning papers: evening newspapers are represented by the tabloid format, whilst some of the morning papers still retain their broadsheet form. Some of the financial press though has lately turned into tabloid, mainly for reasons of convenience during the processing and editing processes. Usually, the newspaper size that is used is a few inches smaller than the A3 size, because in that way, the proof can be printed very easily and repetitively in a laser printer and be corrected and edited over and over again, all in its natural size.

⁹⁷ For statistics on the General index of Athens Stock Exchange, see Chapter IV.

nine.⁹⁸ Gradually, financial weeklies started to include political articles and some of them, without abandoning their character, have been developed into newspapers of general interest.

This new market however was based almost exclusively on people's interest on stocks and easy money. When the stock market started to fall rapidly, the readership followed the same decline. Since the "good years" of 1999 and 2000, the financial weekly market has lost more than half of its circulation (see Table 2.8), though in 2002 eight titles were still in publication.⁹⁹

Table 2.8
**Total average circulation
of financial weeklies (1993-2002)**

1993	33,823
1994	34,145
1995	48,593
1996	64,019
1997	87,040
1998	122,109
1999	172,656
2000	176,680
2001	103,772
2002	80,128

Source: Union of Proprietors of Daily Newspapers of Athens.

Note: The 1993-1994 figures correspond solely to the circulation of Ependitis (Investor, launched January 1993)

On the circulation front, a landmark development in the Athens daily market was the replacement of the old newspaper distribution agency (Athens Press Distribution Agency - PEAT), which ceased operations after a series of financial problems at the end of the 1990s, by two new agencies, *Argos* and *Europe*. The new agencies were the result of two major co-operative ventures between

⁹⁸ In March 1995, *Isotimia* (Parity) was launched, followed by *Eksipno Xrima* (Smart Money), launched December 1996, closed August 2001, *Hrimatistirio* (Stockmarket), launched Jan. 1997, *Metochos* (Shareholder), launched April 1998, *Aksia* (Value), launched May 1998, *Deiktis* (Index), *Oikonomia* (Economy), *Symvoulos* (Consultant), launched October 1999, *Evrooikonomia* (Euro-economy), launched January 2000.

⁹⁹ The circulation of financial dailies is not officially recorded by EIHEA, since all major titles rely heavily on subscriptions, whose figures cannot be officially audited.

newspaper and magazine publishers in Athens.¹⁰⁰ The problems associated with the old distribution network and the participation of all major newspaper publishers in the management of the two new distribution agencies has resulted in a business-oriented consensus for the necessity of change. This has led to a rationalisation of circulation management, although small newspapers, with smaller shareholdings in the agencies still arguing for further improvements.

2.2.3 The role of the stock market

In November 1998, the *Lambrakis Group (Ta Nea, To Vima)* was the first press enterprise to be listed on the Athens Stock Exchange (ASE), followed one month later by *Tegopoulos Publications (Eleftherotipia)*. *Kathimerini*, the daily financial *Naftemporiki* and the parent company of *Ethnos* (Pegasus Publications) were listed on the ASE in March 2000, while a number of other media groups, predominantly operating in the periodicals market, took advantage of the stock market frenzy that started in late 1998 and continued until Spring 2000.¹⁰¹

All the five media groups listed above own leading titles in the morning, afternoon and financial newspaper markets. The flotation of the parent companies in the stock market resulted in their financial strengthening and the channelling of a total of 459 million euros (drs 156.3 billion) towards the newspaper industry.¹⁰² This amount

¹⁰⁰ 'Argos' first operated in June 1999. In the beginning of 2000, Argos' main shareholders were: *Lambrakis Group* 38.5%, *Tegopoulos Publications* 24%, *Lymberis Publications* (periodicals) 10%. At the same period 'Europe' (launched April 1999 and operated December of the same year), *Kathimerini* and *Pegasos Group* (newspaper *Ethnos*) held 21% each and *Technical Publications* (periodicals) and *Press Foundation* (newspaper *Eleftheros Typos*) a share of 11% each. In February 2000, the market share was divided 60-40 to Argos and Europe respectively. The old Athens Press Distribution Agency (PEAT) was launched in January 1945. For the history of PEAT, see Basantis, D. (1995) *Athens Press Distribution Agency – 50 years*, Athens: PEAT.

¹⁰¹ The course of the General Index of Athens Stock Exchange (ASE) starts from a level of 2,500 in December 1998, reaches 6,350 almost a year later, in September 1999 and ever since remains in a state of decline, reaching 2,200 in June 2002. Other media groups to enter ASE were: *Attikes Ekdoseis* (Attica Publications, Oct. 1999), *Lymberis Publications* (Feb. 2000), *Technikes Ekdoseis* (Technical Publications, Feb. 2000) and Imako Media Group (March 2000).

¹⁰² 1 euro = drs. 340.75. More analytically, the net revenues for newspaper companies from the ASE flotations in the period 1998-2000 has as follows: *Lambrakis Group*: drs 80 billion (6/11/98 and Nov. 1999), *Tegopoulos Publications*: 29.9 billion (30/12/1998), *Pegasus Publications*: 19.8 billion (27/3/2000), *Kathimerini*: 23.3 billion (7/3/2000) and *Naftemporiki*: drs 3.3 billion (8/3/2000). Source: Athens Stock Exchange (located at http://www.ase.gr/content/gr/companies/ListedCo/CapitalRaised/Capital_Raised_3132001.asp). Accessed 5 March 2002.

raised from the public was substantial for a business sector that in 1996, two years before the *Lambrakis Group* flotation, was estimated to be worth only around 176 million euros (drs 60 billion) as a whole.¹⁰³

The newspaper business did well in many respects by the short-lived Athens stock market boom. Its subsequently announced investment strategy included plans for areas such as the installation of technologically advanced printing facilities, the creation of new printing plants outside the Athens area, relocation of various media departments into new buildings, investments in information technology, the launch of Internet portals etc.¹⁰⁴

Those newspapers that were part of the media groups enlisted in ASE were benefited hugely from the input of funds by modernizing production in various areas. New newsrooms and modern computer devices were purchased and new publishing ventures were designed and launched. Technological modernization enhanced news production processes, smoothed the everyday job of journalists and improved the quality of printing. Where new large printing plants were built, revenues from third parties' printing activity were also secured. However, as will be shown in Chapter V, a significant part of the inflow of capital was channelled into unsuccessful Internet ventures.

The difference between these newspapers and those that did not belong to media groups listed on the ASE is significant. The latter lack modern equipment in many areas of news gathering and processing as well as in the printing stage. For instance, major differences are observed in terms of newsroom infrastructure, such as the use of intranets, the creation of newspaper web sites, or even basic newsroom

¹⁰³ Segoura, Io (1998) "The Publishing Sector" Athens: *Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE)*, September. IOBE' study suggests that in 1996, total in-print communication market in Greece amounted drs 81 billion, of which 74 per cent reflected newspaper sales and the rest 26 per cent the sales of magazines.

¹⁰⁴ All five newspaper groups have created Internet sites: Lambrakis Group (*in.gr*); Tegopoulos Publications (*enet.gr*); Pegasus Publications (*e-go.gr*); Kathimerini (*kathimerini.gr* and *eone.gr*); and Naftemporiki (*naftemporiki.gr*).

hardware, such as personal computers, and the provision of internet connections and e-mail accounts.¹⁰⁵

2.2.4 The Daily Press under pressure

In order for companies to be listed on the ASE, they had to adapt to modern management rules and procedures so as to fulfil the requirements of the stock market. The old newspaper management and corporate structures had to go through major restructuring. The implications of these developments on news making and journalism will be examined in Chapter IV.

The proliferation of new titles observed during the 1990s suggests that market entry was easy.¹⁰⁶ However, the financial viability of these new titles was a different question, since a large number of them have extremely low circulations. If realistic financial criteria applied, many of those dailies would be closed. How, therefore, have dailies with such low circulations been preserved? A common explanation is that press proprietors finance their loss-making titles through other entrepreneurial activity. By this tactic entrepreneurs secure a presence in the media, as well as a potential pressure mechanism to serve their ends. This “secret” about the Greek press, is now quite widely known. For instance, the owner of the recently launched newspaper *Aneksartitos* (Independent), which closed after a month, admitted in a meeting with the Union of Athens Newspaper Journalists that he was forced to

¹⁰⁵ Discussions with journalists working in a number of newspapers that did not secure funds from the stock market have revealed the absence of personal e-mail addresses, poor Internet access and a general weak digital culture.

¹⁰⁶ At the end of 1980 there were 6 morning and 7 afternoon Athens-based political newspapers circulating in the Greek market. The morning dailies were: *Acropolis*, *Avgi*, *Kathimerini*, *To Vima*, *Rizospastis* and *Eleftheros Kosmos* and the afternoon market consisted of *Apogevmatini*, *Avriani*, *Vradini*, *Eleftherotipia*, *Estia*, *Mesimvrini* and *Ta Nea*. The sales of the afternoon press corresponded to 73.4 per cent of total circulation, with the rest went to the morning market. Eight years later, in 1988 there were 4 morning and 14 afternoon titles (at the same time the share of the morning press has fallen to 8.9 per cent of total sales). In January 1990, there were 4 morning titles, 14 afternoon (both with the respected Sunday editions), 3 sports dailies, 1 weekly title and 3 financial dailies, 25 titles in total. A decade later, in January 2000 and despite the general circulation downturn, the local newspaper market has doubled its titles. There were 8 morning titles, 15 afternoon papers (with their separate Sunday editions), 3 independent Sunday titles, 12 weekly editions (9 of financial nature), 6 sports newspapers and 5 financial dailies (49 titles in total).

publish the newspaper as a part of his participation in the negotiations for a public investment contract.¹⁰⁷

The inflation of titles is not a unique characteristic of the newspaper market. It is part of what Papathanassopoulos (2002) calls the “paradox of the Greek communications industry”, where there are many more newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations than the small local market can support.¹⁰⁸ The phenomenon of continuous new launches and closures in the press has negative effects on press workers, creating an increasing “unemployed reserve army”, while those in employment work under conditions of constant insecurity.¹⁰⁹

It must be noted that, while the circulation of newspapers has declined, the number of pages published has substantially increased. From a typical pagination of 16 to 32 pages in a daily edition (increased to 48 on Sunday), today newspapers run from 32 to 64 pages for their daily edition, rising to over 120 pages on Sunday.¹¹⁰

In the early months of 2002, the leading newspaper titles started preparing for a fight. Sunday newspapers broke new ground by including in their editions previously independent magazines as supplements, occasionally coming from within the same media group, or other co-operating magazine publishers. *Vima* made the first move by offering a female magazine in its Sunday edition. *Kathimerini* followed, enriching its Sunday supplements with a co-operation with *Attikes Ekdoseis*, a leading magazine publisher. This strategy is expected to increase advertising revenues attracted by the higher circulation of a Sunday newspaper.

¹⁰⁷ Newspaper *Express*, 12 June 2002, p. 2. This statement was extensively published in the press of the particular day. After a month of preparation and another of circulation, the owner of *Aneksartitos* did not pay journalists and staff for the work done. The paper was launched 23 April 2002 and ceased publication on 21 May 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Papathanassopoulos (2002) “The paradox of the Greek newspapers”, *Kathimerini*, 2 June, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Some times, the total number of newspaper pages in the Sunday editions, including the various supplements ranges from 380 to 450 pages. See Papathanassopoulos, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

The financial position of the main newspaper companies suggests that significant changes must shortly be made by the industry. After the productive "ASE years", the 2000 and 2001 financial results were disappointing. Out of five newspaper corporations listed in the stock market, only the financial daily *Naftemporiki* showed an operating profit in 2001. All other newspaper companies recorded operating losses that for the same period, ranging from as high as drs 3.9 billion (*Lambrakis Group*), to drs 562 million (*Tegopoulos Publications*).¹¹¹

The pattern drawn by the ASE rally (intensive growth, followed by rapid decline) is also reflected in percentage changes of advertising expenditure in the years after 1999. In the newspaper market in particular, the decreasing change in the advertising expense observed in 2000 and the net decrease of 2001, continued in 2002, constitute the dramatic ending of the stock market frenzy that boosted advertising revenues at the end of the decade (see Table 2.9). More analytically, the declining percentage change of total advertising expenditure leads to a small increase in 2001 with the newspaper market to record a net decrease that reached 15.6% (-0.7% in 2002). The magazine market did a little better, since it managed to preserve more than half of its annual increase. Advertising expenditure percentage change for periodicals, although smaller than 2000 (23.5% for 2000/1999), was preserved in 2001 and 2002 in a relatively good level in the order of 13%.

Finally, it should be noted that the whole picture as far as the newspaper market is concerned is a little better than originally appears, since an unaccounted proportion of the advertising expenditure attributed to the magazine sector corresponds to newspaper magazine supplements.

¹¹¹ The operational 2001 profits of *Naftemporiki* amounted to drs 777 million. Operational losses in the same period reached drs 2 billion for *Pegasus Publications* and drs 592 million for *Kathimerini*. See 'Publications: the great 2001 losses', newspaper *Kerdos* (Profit), June 28, 2002, pp. 9-11. It should be noted that the proliferation of newspaper sections and periodicals contributed to an increase in operational expenses in newspapers. However, in some cases increases in advertising revenues originating from extra editions managed to partially offset the costs. It should be noted that the highest losses are observed in the case of leading newspapers that were involved in expensive Internet ventures, such as *Lambrakis Group* (*in.gr*), or *Pegasus Publications* (*e-go.gr*).

*Table 2.9***Percentage change of advertising expenditure (1997-2002)**

Year	Newspapers	Magazines	Broadcasting	Total
1997/96	25.8	41.0	-2.5	14.1
1998/97	26.0	33.7	13.9	21.7
1999/98	29.9	16.6	20.2	22.2
2000/99	18.1	23.5	7.8	18.2
2001/00	- 15.6	13.1	- 0.5	2.7
2002/01	- 0.7	13.6	9.4	10.3

Source: 1996-2001 advertising expenditure figures by Media Services SA, further processed by the author.

2.3 THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Despite the major losses in new economy ventures in general and Internet portals in particular, a proportion of funds that came from newspaper companies' flotation in the ASE was channeled to newsroom modernisation, ITC investments etc. Almost all newsrooms in newspapers are today fully computerized and connected to the Internet, however not all have developed integrated intranets. Also, leased telecommunication lines for full open Internet access to all working posts are still not fully adopted.

The advent of digital technology allowed Greek newspapers to exploit their traditional experience in content production, a strength that secured for them a leading role in the first wave of Internet investments that took place in the period 1999-2001. Newspaper companies were the first to co-operate with computer enterprises, creating portals and newspaper sites. Although in the majority of cases, newspaper sites have served as online archives, offered to users for free, some major players have proceeded to launch Internet portals in which news services were developed.¹¹²

On the other hand, old problems remain and cast a shadow over the new "digital dream", at least in terms of journalism and news production. As will be discussed in Chapter V, despite the investments on Internet-based news services, Greek

¹¹² For an extensive discussion on the effect of digital technology on the Greek media scene, see Kamaras, D. (2000) "Mass Media and the Internet", in Gantzias, G. & Kamaras, D., *Digital*

Internet news media have not managed to explore the full range of web opportunities in news making. Web-journalism remains underdeveloped, being mostly close to traditional forms in terms of writing style and presentation. In addition, digital communication culture in Greece is developing slowly, especially after the slowdown in the global Internet scene. Internet penetration figures, as well as PC use, remain the lowest among EU countries.¹¹³ Moreover, the weakness of the national telecommunications infrastructure is commonly acknowledged.¹¹⁴

2.4 CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the history of the Athens-based press is heavily affected by the politicised developments in the local sociopolitical environment. Its partisan role in recording the news has been evident throughout its history as a whole. Political figures, publishers and journalists have always been in a state of close interaction, which, in many cases, went beyond the classic watchdog role of the press. On the other hand, the evolution of entrepreneurship and its course towards a progressive maturity in the 1990s has created serious repercussions for the newspaper business in general and newspaper journalism in particular.

In the following chapter, the profile of the Greek newspaper journalist is drawn and certain factors and characteristics are examined in order to define the dominant patterns of a very particular profession.

Communication, New Media and Information Society in Greece: Convergence, Electronic Commerce and Portals, London: Zeno Publishers (in Greek).

¹¹³ According to the first nationwide survey performed in June-July 2001 by the *Greek Research and Technology Network* (GRNET) regarding Internet and Mobile usage in the country, PC use reached 20% of total population and Internet users 10.1% (around 890,000 people). It is worth noting that 73% of Internet users started to use the new medium during the period 1999-2001. A second survey performed by GRNET at the end of 2002 has argued for a substantial increase in the use of the Internet by Greek people (19.3%). These figures do not correspond with the data published by Eurostat and the National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG). According to Eurostat, in 2001, there were 8 PCs per 100 inhabitants in Greece, whereas Internet users were 13.2% of total population (source: *Eurostat Statistics in Focus: Information Society Statistics*, released May 2003). Finally, according to structural indicators of NSSG, the percentage of Greek households with Internet access presented a decrease in 2002 to 9.2%, from 11.7% in 2001 (EU average: 40.4% and 36.1% respectively). Located at www.statistics.gr, accessed 15 March 2003).

¹¹⁴ ISDN penetration remains low. The National Telecommunications Organisation (OTE) started offering broadband services for business users as recent as January 2002. Private operators followed soon after, however ADSL prices remain high for the average Greek household.

III

The Greek newspaper journalist

A passive approach to journalistic activity can be interpreted as supporting the existing political and social system. An active, investigative or watchdog interpretation of journalistic activity implies that to some people the 'watchdog' will seem to be a wolf. (Tunstall, 1971)¹

But how dangerous are the watchdog's teeth? Or put another way, how strong is the journalistic profession in dealing with its ultimate social responsibilities? To what degree do personal education, training and values contribute to the strengthening of journalists' professional status? Moreover, in what way professional routines and practices, ethics and the allocation of power within the newsroom influence the various processes information goes through in order to become news? The profile and views of the Greek newspaper journalists, as well as widely accepted journalistic techniques, will assist in searching the answers to these questions.

In general, producing a clear definition as regards the journalistic profession is not an easy task. Tunstall (1971) has argued that the weakness of defining newsmaking as a single clear-cut activity results in journalism being seen as an "indeterminate" profession.² Therefore, it is not surprising that elements of professionalism, dominant in more conventional activities, are not always found in the case of journalism. Moreover, besides the vagueness of the professional activity attached to the work of news people, the dedication of professionals to journalism should be examined through the discussion of the characteristics that constitute the unique

¹ Tunstall, J. (1971) *Journalists at work. Specialist Correspondents: their news organisations, news sources, & competitor-colleagues*. London: Constable, p. 10.

character of the profession. Journalists play a key role in the general flow of information, but by writing in public those in the media also have a window of opportunity through which they can join the ranks of the powerful elites and themselves enjoy privileges and social and political prestige.

Educated and specialised journalists are becoming the norm in the media business, since progressively fewer people enter the media with absolutely no academic background. Since the beginning of the 1970s, when Tunstall coined the term “indeterminate” after investigating specialist correspondents in the UK media, a series of developments on a global level have lent journalism a more determinate character, at least in terms of the evaluation of the competence of its professionals. As previously argued in Chapter II, the traditionally defined characteristics of “talent” and “nose for news”, no matter how useful are for the average journalist in finding their way into the profession, today seem not to suffice as sole recruitment values. Developments in Western European markets, as well as the US, reflect a significant empowerment of the journalistic profession, a trend that various writers have traced in the profession for quite some time now. Nowadays, a university degree is required in most cases. As Stephenson and Mory (1990) have argued in their study on journalism training in Europe: “The proportion of those entering journalism with only a secondary school education has been dropping steadily”.³ According to the authors, journalists tend to enter the profession at an older age, having acquired “a much higher average level of formal education”.⁴

In general, journalism education at a university at an optimum stage is seen as a set of educational disciplines offering more than a mere training on the peculiarities of the craft. According to Cole (2002), journalism requires “reflective practitioners, capable not only of practising the necessary journalism skills but aware of the

² Ibid.

³ Stephenson, H. & Mory, P. (1990) *Journalism Training in Europe*. European Journalism Training Association & Commission of the European Communities, p. 27.

⁴ Ibid. p. 27.

responsibilities of journalists in an age in which they are properly held to account for their actions”.⁵ It may be questioned how far media courses adequately provide such awareness to their students. Certainly, mass media and communication courses in Greek universities are lacking the dynamic spirit that is needed to produce enlightened and powerful journalists who can combine occupational skills and market knowledge with philosophical concerns.

Addressing the question of professionalism in journalism is a complicated process. This is not mainly due to the “indeterminate” character of the profession, but to the normative views of media people, who tend to speak of their profession not as it is, but as they think it should be.⁶ Moreover, this is not exclusively observed in journalism. Research in the area of human resource management in Greece has shown that HRM executives, when asked about the HR practices and techniques applied in their companies, in most cases tend to present an adorned reality, which differs from actual practice.⁷

However, a series of characteristics drawn by Ginneken (1998) may assist towards the adoption of a more technocratic approach on the matter.⁸ More particularly, Ginneken suggests the following elements:

- the existence (and gradual expansion) of professional education,
- the existence of some kind of licensing or registration system,
- the existence of more or less representative professional organisations including a large part of the profession,

⁵ Cole, P. (2002) ‘A question of degrees’, in *Press Gazette* Supplement titled: ‘Journalism Training’, March (pp. 4-5).

⁶ Esaiasson, P. & Moring, T. (1994) ‘Codes of Professionalism: Journalists versus Politicians in Finland and Sweden’, *European Journal of Communication*. London: Sage, Vol. 9, pp. 271-289.

⁷ Theodorakopoulou, K. (2001) *Transferring Personnel Management Across National Boundaries: An Exploratory Study of Personnel Management Practice in Greece*. Unpublished MPhil thesis, Kingston University, Kingston Upon Thames.

⁸ See Chapter I.

- the proclamation of a “code of ethics” by the professional organisation and the “the introduction of some kind of limited jurisdiction to guard against breaking the rules: an ombudsman, or a special commission or council”,
- the success of the profession to have its view, to some degree, “accepted by most of society – or at least its elites”.⁹

It can be argued that all above criteria can be normally found in any organised media market in most developed countries around the world. Naturally, they are more or less present in the Greek media industry as well. What interests us in the Greek market however, is not the mere presence of these elements, but the quality and the effectiveness of their operation and the degree of their influence, if any, on the profession itself.

In Greece mass media education can be found in three public universities and a dozen private laboratories.¹⁰ Also, some kind of licensing system accompanied by an examination system is in operation, especially for the members of the *Journalists' Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers* (ESHEA).¹¹ Moreover, the representation of professionals is secured by a number of different journalistic unions that embrace all kinds of media workers, depending on the type of medium, as well as on geography, with ESHEA to be the most prominent one. The latter, as well as the *Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions* (POESY) has produced codes of ethics, which include broad guidelines and advice for professionals. Finally, the acceptance of journalism by “most of society” is quite debatable, since a series of opinion polls have shown that journalists are largely discredited in the

⁹ Ginneken, Jaap van (1998) *Understanding Global News: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage, pp. 74-5.

¹⁰ Private academic institutions are still prohibited by the Constitution in Greece. Those in operation are called ‘Non-Profit Laboratories of Liberal Studies’ [Me-Kerdoskopika Ergastiria Eleftheron Spoudon].

¹¹ See Chapter II.

eyes of the public; however, elites seem to enjoy good relations with media people.¹²

Therefore, embarking on Ginneken's criteria of professionalism, this chapter examines Greek newspaper journalists themselves, their general personal, education and professional profile and habits, as well as their views on a variety of news media issues. The present research focused also on particular characteristics and beliefs as regards various elements and processes that affect and largely determine newsmaking. In this chapter, a mainly quantitative approach is adopted, through the discussion of the evidence of our own fieldwork and research, which at the same time is setting crucial questions of qualitative nature synthesised to produce interesting results.

Despite the existence of most of Ginneken's criteria, Greek journalism concentrates all these characteristics in a way that makes it, in Tunstall's terminology, a typically "indeterminate" profession. This will be made evident by the analysis of a series of factors that can be used to evaluate the professional status of journalism as well as its capability to serve the public. Educational status, vocational training, official accreditation, as well as the initial personal drive that made journalists themselves to enter the profession, are important criteria in evaluating the profession and its representatives.

In this process, personal interviews with journalists and newspaper editors, as well as structured questionnaires, were utilised to tackle the research objectives.

¹² According to Eurobarometer 59, published in Spring 2003, 50% of Greek citizens do not trust newspapers. In this respect, Greece is placed third after United Kingdom (72%) and Sweden (58%). Located at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb.html> (Accessed 23 July 2003).

3.1 DRAWING GREEK NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS AND THEIR VIEWS

The personal profile, educational background and the professional dimension of Greek journalists remain largely unexplored. Sporadic writings included in various media books originate from professional journalists who either wrote about the industry through autobiographical accounts, or in response to the need to “theorize” on their profession in order to communicate various practical guidelines to the next generation. A practical view of the profession, accompanied by attempts at generalisations, can also be found in a small number of collective works usually edited by leading researchers or academics. In these publications, however, journalistic issues are not addressed through the use of empirical evidence or via the adaptation or testing of foreign theories against the Greek case.¹³ These testimonies, although generally useful as written accounts of the local journalistic reality, are characterised by the limitations inherent in seeing the profession exclusively through a practical prism. Moreover, it can be argued that any generalisations on Greek journalism projected by these writings are dominated by given personal values and beliefs, as well as by the presiding journalistic culture found within the news organisations in which each professional works, or has worked in the past.

It should be noted, however, that in the field of newspapers there has been more active research into how news is represented. Various writings, based on newspaper content analyses, have explored the way major events of national interest are

¹³ Writings of this sort can be found for instance in Kominis, L. (1990) *The Secrets of Journalism, Vol. 1 & 2*. Athens: Kastaniotis; Pasalaris, Ch. (1994) *Media Barons*. Athens: Zavranos Publications; Pasalaris, Ch. (1984) *A life of titles*. Athens: Kaktos; Kountouriotis, F. (1975) *Sixty Years of Journalism*. Athens: personal publication; Karagiorgas, G. (1995) *The Reporter's Manual*. Athens: Iris; Sklavounis, G. (1995) *Introduction to the Science of Journalism*. Athens: Ellin; Rezan, M. (2000) *With nostalgia...* Athens: Patakis. Also Basantis, D. & Stratos, K. (1991) *The World of News: From Newspaper to Television*. Athens: Gnosi and Papathanassopoulos, S. & Komninou, M. (eds) (1999) *Issues of Journalistic Deontology*. Athens: Kastaniotis (all in Greek).

represented in the press.¹⁴ However, even in this case, journalistic output is analysed more under a quantitative and morphological prism, rather than in terms of the particular factors that constitute and influence newsmaking. Although practical constraints and journalistic routines and practices are not included in these analyses, some arguments have been made on newspaper editorial policy, as well as on the local dominant social and economic culture, as factors influencing editorial decision making.¹⁵

Generally, when asked to comment on the professional status of journalism, Greek newspaper editors and journalists are unsure as to what they think. A sense of hesitation is observed in their attempts to draw an adequate picture, since most of them are thinking in traditional Greek-specific conventional terms largely of an “indeterminate” character. For instance, as argued in a previous research by the author, in reply to questions about the qualities required for entry into journalism, there is no clear idea of what is needed.¹⁶ This reflects the fact that, for many years, nepotism, social acquaintances and political channels have been widely employed as means for the recruitment of young journalists.

3.1.1 Greek journalists, their profession and the news media

It seems that almost all available data on the profile of Greek journalists originates from the initiative of a network of Greek women journalists who, in 1998, wanted to investigate the profile of the female members of the profession. This survey was later extended to include Greek journalism as a whole. The resulting quantitative

¹⁴ See for instance Alexopoulos, D. (1999) ‘The Media and Imia Crisis’ in Papathanassopoulos, S. & Komninou, M. (eds.), op. cit. Also Acheimastos, M. & Komninou, M. (1996) ‘News Agenda Setting: Press and Television in Greece’, Pagoulatos, G. (1996) ‘The Press and the Policy of Privatisation in Greece (1990-1993): Strategies of Support and Opposition from Four Daily Newspapers’, Panagiotopoulou, R. (1996) ‘The Press and the Macedonian Issue: Information and Effects’, in Panagiotopoulou, R. et. al. (eds) *The ‘Construction’ of Reality and the Mass Media*, Conference Transcripts, Athens: Alexandria Publications, 1998 (all in Greek).

¹⁵ See particularly Pagoulatos, G., 1996 and Panagiotopoulou, R., 1996, op. cit.

¹⁶ Kamaras, D. (1995) *News Production in Greece with special reference to the Athens News Agency*. Unpublished MA thesis, School of Social Science, Department of Sociology, City University, London.

survey of Greek journalism was performed by *V-PRC*¹⁷ on behalf of the *European Network of Greek Women Journalists* (EDED) and published in early 2002.¹⁸ This survey followed a smaller scale one, published in 1999 and an older one by the *Institute of Broadcast Media* (IOM) also for EDED, published in 1998, dealing however exclusively with female journalists.¹⁹ The main 2002 *V-PRC* research explored how Greek journalists evaluate their profession and the quality of news provided. The sample included 400 journalists nationwide, employed in newspapers, magazines, television, radio, news agencies and Internet news sites. The results from this survey are discussed further below.

The *V-PRC* survey (2002) contains some similarities with the one performed in 1998 (also by *V-PRC*), a fact that allows certain comparisons to be made over time. It should be noted however, that these accounts are largely descriptive, since no advanced theoretical or media-based analysis has been produced to evaluate these data in terms of their effect on the profession and the public communication process in general.²⁰ In the following, an attempt is made to fill this gap, through the discussion of basic *V-PRC* figures and their meaning.

These previous surveys have drawn a general picture concerning the basic characteristics of the journalistic profession, especially in terms of labour relations and the journalists' beliefs on the credibility of Greek media, as well as their

¹⁷ *V-Project Research Consulting* (VPRC) is a leading independent public opinion research organization in Greece (www.vprc.gr).

¹⁸ During our research and when the great bulk of the questionnaire had reached its targets in the journalistic offices of the Athens-based newspaper newsrooms, the results of a nationwide statistical research were announced.

¹⁹ Nationwide survey titled *Greek journalists evaluating their profession and the quality of news provided* by *V-PRC* & the *European Network of Greek Women Journalists* (EDED), February 2002. The other two surveys of smaller-scale were: *European Network of Greek Women Journalists* (1998) *The position of Greek Woman Journalist today*, Athens: IOM-EDED, and another also by *V-PRC*, performed in 1998, which was published in February 1999 in *Metro* magazine (issue no. 40), pp. 75-83 and in newspaper *Kathimerini*, January 1999, p. 30, which refers to Greek journalists as a whole.

²⁰ Besides the occasional reporting, in-depth discussion in the press was also limited. This is also noted by *VPRC* itself that has discovered (and presented in its official site) only two related analyses on this matter.

competence in the dissemination of information. Research questions included also the investigation of pressures put on journalists by media proprietors.

In the 2002 V-PRC survey, the 400 journalists in the sample were asked to evaluate their profession, as well as the quality of news provided. They were asked about the major problems of the Greek media, the quality of news, the accuracy of the representation of reality, the pressures journalists face in their daily activity, the characteristics of Greek professionals, their professional competence and skills, the extent of corruption in the profession, as well as the major characteristics of the press, radio and television.

In this survey, a series of demographic data were recorded. According to V-PRC, 61.5% of Greek journalists started to work in the period 1990-2001. This is significant for the profession and to our present discussion for the following reasons.

- First, the fact that around 2/3 of today's professionals have started their journalistic career during the 1990s reveals the young age of the profession; the average age is probably around 33.6 years. The dominance of relatively young people in Greek journalism is explained by the relatively recent advent of private broadcasting (radio in 1987 and television in 1989-1990). Demand was rapidly increased, a fact that led a great number of young people to seek employment in the media. Quite characteristically, 71.4% of journalists entered the profession since 1989. Therefore, given the long lasting structural problems of the Greek media industry as well as the heavily politicised character, it can be argued that the relatively young average age of the Greek journalist raises questions as regards the maturity and experience of the average professional in terms of professional practices and ethics, as well as in terms of professional competence in dealing with pressures inherent in the profession (independence).

- Second, the entrance of the bulk of Greek journalists to the profession during the 1990s means that they have acquired a professional identity during a period of crisis for the press and of regulatory chaos as regards broadcasting. The intense competition between broadcasting (especially television) and the press exposed these new journalists to the pressures involved in the corporate strategies being pursued by their employers.²¹
- Third, the dominance of corporate profit seeking and distorted competition that characterised particularly the broadcast media, but also the press, left little room for professional concerns.²²
- Fourth, low union membership and the general market crisis that characterised most of the 1990s have undermined ethical concerns, which could be evolved (as a starting point at least) by active union participation that would secure familiarity with the existing code of ethics, established by ESHEA and POESY as well as the accompanying disciplinary mechanisms.²³

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Greek journalism is parallel employment in various media. This phenomenon is generally attributed to low wages offered by the bulk of the print media and their consequently loose policy as regards exclusivity in employment. Other media, instead of employing all journalists on a full-time basis, prefer to divide their personnel into a small number of full-time staff and a number of experienced freelancers, who have already gained experience working in other media. Particularly in the case of television, most experienced and high profile reporters are newspaper people, who have been offered a second job in broadcasting.

According to the VPRC surveys, secondary employment in other media, on top of a primary job, was on an increasing trend in the period 1998-2002, with almost 47%

²¹ See comparisons between 1998 and 2002 surveys further below.

²² Union membership in Greek journalism is directly attached to the official accreditation of the professionals.

of all journalists so involved. These years represent significant developments in the field of the financial press and business reporting in general, since they cover the rapid rise and fall of the Athens Stock Exchange (ASE). As examined in Chapter II, during the first period of the ASE's growth, newspaper titles proliferated, along with the need for new blood in the profession. This rapid demand for journalists led young people to enter the profession, but also forced newspapers to seek experienced external contributors already working in other media.

Low wages offered by employers are certainly one of the key reasons for multi-employment in the profession. The V-PRC surveys suggest a relative stability over the period 1998-2002, since almost the same proportion of journalists place themselves in the common salary ranges in both surveys, at least as far as the lower wages are concerned (Table 3.1). In 2002, the income earned by the bulk of journalists (69.1%) is below 1,470 euros per month; moreover, a significant 38.2% is below the level of 880 euros that corresponds almost exactly to the minimum wage determined by the collective agreement of newspaper journalists.

Table 3.1
Income per month

	(%)	
	1998	2002
< 880 euros	40.0	38.2
880 – 1,470 euros	30.0	30.9
> 2,054 euros	14.7	n.a.
> 1,470 euros	n.a.	22.0

Source: V-PRC, 1998, 2002, op. cit.

The V-PRC surveys draw a general picture of the strongest characteristics of the work of Greek journalists and their professional evolution over time. (The reader should keep in mind that these are views expressed by professionals themselves.) “Exaggeration” is the dominant characteristic of journalistic output in both surveys reaching 29.8% in 2002, slightly increased from that observed in 1998 (28.9%). “Arrogance”, as the second most evident characteristic of journalists, rose

²³ However, as V-PRC 2002 Survey has shown, 91% of all professionals asked have maintained that

substantially, from 14.2% in 1998, to 19.3% in 2002. These results reflect the influx of television journalists and are heavily influenced by the rapid decline in the quality of content in private broadcasting, combined with the “star” system developed in Greek television journalism during the last decade. Moreover, “dependence / subordination” as a characteristic of the Greek journalist is placed third in both surveys, scoring 13.2% in 2002, as against 12.5% in 1998, with “cynicism” fourth with 10.6% and 12.2% in 2002 and 1998 respectively. Finally, a small change is observed when it comes to “seriousness”, which scored an increase from a low base, up from 4.6% in 1998 to 8.3% in 2002.

The VPRC surveys reveal also a serious problem for the profession: corruption. Although not easily backed with evidence, the existence of corruption is widely accepted as a fact among Greek journalists in private. In strictly private discussions, older professionals declare the existence of payrolls in major centres of political and financial power, such as banking institutions, private corporations, public enterprises and ministries. Occurrences of bribery, free travel and Christmas gifts are common stories amongst younger journalists as well. Therefore, it is not surprising that around half of respondents in the VPRC 2002 survey believe that there are “plenty” of corrupted professionals in Greek journalism (48.1%). On the other hand, those who argue that the corrupted professionals are “not many” were found to represent 43.8% of the profession. Finally, the proportion of professionals who believe that there is “almost no” corruption at all in Greek journalism remains significantly low (5.3%).

More and more journalists find the press to be dependent on economic interests, while others value pluralism and polyphony as important characteristics of the Greek press (see Table 3.2). As regards television, the proportion of journalists who consider the medium dependent from economic interests has increased from 18.9% in 1998 to 21.2% in 2002. Also, quite significant is the proportion of journalists

they possess knowledge of a code of ethics.

who consider abuse of power and irresponsibility to be the key-characteristics of television (14.8% and 13.5% for 1998 and 16.4% and 13.1% for 2002 respectively).

Table 3.2
Major characteristics of the Greek news media

	(%)	
	1998	2002
<i>PRESS</i>		
Dependence from economic Interests	19.7	20.8
Pluralism	9.6	11.4
Polyphony	6.9	11.2
<i>TELEVISION</i>		
Dependence from economic Interests	18.9	21.2
Abuse of power	14.8	16.4
Irresponsibility	13.5	13.1

Source: V-PRC, 1998, 2002, op. cit.

As shown later in Chapter IV, the freedom journalists enjoy in their professional activity plays a central role. Past survey data are quite fruitful in drawing the general picture of Greek journalism as a whole. The proportion of journalists who state that they face interventions in their job has increased from 65.7% in 1998 to 79.8% in 2002 (see Table 3.3). Although the nature of these interventions is not examined in the surveys, further discussion of the evidence of our own investigation will reveal useful accounts of how this process works. Finally, it is interesting to note that the percentage of journalists admitting the practice of self-censorship fell by half between 1998 and 2002 (down to 12.4% from 24.3%).

Table 3.3
Interventions and self-censorship

	(%)	
	1998	2002
They face Interventions	65.7	79.8
They practice self-censorship	24.3	12.4
They are free	7.9	6.8

Source: V-PRC, 1998, 2002, op. cit.

What are the reasons why journalists felt an increase in outside intervention when doing their jobs? This phenomenon can be attributed to a shift between 1998 and 2001 in the proprietors' interests from ideology and political goals to business pursuits and the search for profitability. The stock market revolutionary, as well as dramatic years of 1998-2001 have contributed to this phenomenon, since it was this

period during which non-media, as well as media-related business interests were placed high in the daily agenda of the media function. Hence, self-censorship, previously built upon traditionally defined criteria and owner's will, proved inadequate in promoting the new proprietors and editors interests. This shift meant that the self-censorship habits of previous years, reflecting the known political concerns and prejudices of that generation of newspaper owners, were no longer relevant to the new ownership interests. The result was less perceived self-censorship and more perceived direct intervention.

As shown in the previous chapter, a number of media groups were listed in the stock exchange, enjoying substantial funding from the public. These newspaper proprietors who placed public flotation high in their business agenda became active members of the business establishment and quite often ended up serving its interests. Business news was placed high in the daily news work and in many occasions was used as a means of playing the business game of the day.²⁴ In this "game" most journalists suffered from poor levels of specialisation and expertise, which gave even more power to senior editors and proprietors who "knew better". The maturing process of business reporting that started in the beginning of the 1990s was distorted to a great extent by the rapid infiltration of business interests and hidden agendas entailed in the affiliations between newspaper proprietors and the entrepreneurial establishment.

The general picture emerging from the V-PRC 2002 Survey provides a useful first overview of the journalistic profession in Greece. However, the systematic analysis of particular aspects of journalism, such as the educational and vocational background of professionals, daily routines and practices and the role of sources

²⁴ Journalists, especially in economic and business reporting were openly accused as participating in the business 'game', promoting certain stocks and business moves that have led to mass participation of the public in the stock market frenzy. For instance, see Kolmer, K. (2001) *The Great Robbery of the Stock Exchange*. Athens: Cactus Editions.

and newspaper proprietors in shaping the daily news product require further examination.

3.1.2 Newspaper journalists of the Athens daily press

The survey undertaken for this thesis, titled '*Survey on Journalism & Newsmaking in Greece 2002*' (henceforth S-JNG 2002), focused on a particularly dynamic group: the journalists employed in daily newspapers based in Athens. Newspaper journalists were selected for a series of reasons: first, the history of the press has shown that its evolution was heavily dictated by important sociopolitical developments; second, newspaper journalists are considered the most experienced group of professionals in the Greek media market (television news room staff are traditionally recruited from their ranks and even today television discussion programmes mostly use newspaper journalists for economic and political analysis); and, third, newspaper journalism has suffered less than television reporting as far as the deterioration of journalists' public image in society (television is broadly thought of as contributing most to the low prestige of the journalistic profession in Greece).

The target sample included 590 'active' journalists responsible for various kinds of reporting fields, whose bylines appear frequently in the 15 largest Athens-based newspapers. The method used was a self-respondent multiple-choice questionnaire circulated in the period June-July 2002. Newspapers were chosen to represent all major newspaper markets: morning, financial and afternoon.²⁵ The participation of newspaper journalists from these three newspaper markets has as follows:

²⁵ The newspapers are: *Kathimerini* (Daily), *Vima* (Tribune), *Avgi* (Dawn) from the morning market, *Naftemporiki* (Ship Trade), *Imerisia* (Daily), *Express*, *Kerdos* (Profit), *Hrimatistirio* (Stock market) from the financial market, and *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press), *Apogevmatini* (Afternoon),

*Table 3.4***Newspaper journalists participated in S-JNG 2002 per type of newspaper**

markets	number of journalists	% share
Morning newspapers (3) (<i>Kathimerini, To Vima, Avgi</i>)	35	27.8
Morning financial newspapers (5) (<i>Naftemporiki, Imerisia, Kerdos, Express, Chrimatistirio</i>)	46	36.5
Afternoon newspapers (7) (<i>Apogevmatini, Chora, Eleftheros Typos, Eleftherotypia, Ethnos, Ta Nea, Vradini</i>)	45	35.7
Total	126	100

Source: Kamaras (2002) Survey on Journalism & Newsmaking in Greece 2002 (S-JNG 2002).

At the end of 2002, the 10 morning and afternoon newspapers represented 89% and 90% of total nationwide copy sales in the respected markets, whereas in the case of the daily financial market, this was included as a whole (all 5 existing titles).²⁶ Out of the initial target pool of 590 newspaper journalists, a total of 126 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 21.4%.

Interesting results emerge from the opinions journalists themselves hold as regards the key characteristics of the news media. In S-JNG 2002, journalists were asked to state their views as regards the major characteristics of the function of the Greek news media. “Strong competition and continuous struggle for profit” and “attempts to promote political and economic interests” are considered to be the major characteristics of the Greek media by 60.8% of respondents; these are followed by the “absence of journalistic ideal and the malfunction of ethical values” (38.3%). Finally, a dramatically small minority of 3.3% of respondents attribute “objective and accurate reporting” as a major characteristic of the Greek news media (Table 3.5). The dominance of economic interests in the Greek news media function was also observed in both V-PRC surveys mentioned previously.

Eleftherotypia (Freedom of Press), Hora (Country), Ethnos (Nation), Ta Nea (The News), Vradini (Evening) from the afternoon titles.

²⁶ See circulation data by the Newspaper Proprietors' Union (www.eihea.gr).

*Table 3.5***Major characteristics of the Greek media**

	<i>(N=125)</i>
Strong competition and continuous struggle for profit	60.8%
Attempts to promote political and economic interests	60.8%
The absence of journalistic Ideal and the malfunction of ethical values	38.3%
Objective and accurate reporting	3.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'

Therefore, the bulk of newspaper reporters see the media struggling both for profit and the promotion of specific economic and political agendas. As shown in the next chapter, journalists and news media in Greece are close to the political and economic elites. The newspaper circulation crisis has altered the essential socially originated power base of the media, shifting their focus from seeking recognition from the public in general, via copy sales, to serving elite interests, aiming for their recognition and financial support. While in the case of political dailies, affiliation with political parties is a traditional phenomenon, the embracement of business elites is most evident in the case of the financial dailies that focus at particular audience groups. Moreover, advertising revenues, originating either from the advertising agencies, or directly from corporations as a result of the legal obligation on listed companies to publish their economic results twice a year in a specific number of dailies, enhance the connection with these elites. The repercussions of this development on news making will be addressed in detail in the following chapter.²⁷

Journalists were asked to state the dominant function of the Greek news media, having to choose between the accommodation of the media's own economic interests, the strong politicization and affiliation with political parties and, finally, their independence in serving the public interest. According to the S-JNG 2002 results, the accommodation of media's own economic interests scored as the most

important characteristic with 75.8% of the respondents (see Table 3.6). The affiliation with political parties and the strong politicization scored 40.8% with journalists responding. Finally, only 5% believed that the Greek news media are independent, serving the common good.

Table 3.6

The dominant function of the news media

	<i>(N=125)</i>
Accommodation of their own economic interests	75.8%
Strongly politicised, affiliated with political parties	40.8%
Independent, serving the common good	5.0%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'

This evidence from newspaper journalists does not vary significantly from the trends observed by the V-PRC survey for Greek journalism as a whole. The media's dependence on economic interests, either their own or those of the powerful elites, are observed in both cases. These data are also supported by another evidence of the V-PRC research, according to which around 83% of Greek journalists view journalism as being "little" or "not at all" independent of economic interests; moreover, 70% of Greek journalists view the profession as being more or less subordinate to political elites.²⁸

3.2 JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION

From the war accounts of Ancient Greece, through the revolutionary texts in the Vienna papers to contemporary writings, Greek *demosiographia* (journalism, from *demos*: community and *graphein*: writing) has gone through various phases, all of which were characterised by a strongly politicised character. This strong politicisation of Greek journalism caused the basic elements of professional journalism to be generally disregarded. These included education and professional

²⁷ Offerings that include newspaper coverage of the activity of views of advertising agencies' corporate clients in advertisement deals is the most common phenomenon in the relationship between advertisers and the Greek business dailies, which nowadays refer to one another as 'clients'.

²⁸ V-PRC 2002 Survey, op. cit.

training, as well as regard for the codes and rules aiming at the preservation of journalistic values and ethics.

The dominance of strong competition and the furthering of the media's own economic interests as key characteristics of Greek media behaviour, observed in S-JNG 2002, are a much more recent trend. As shown in the previous chapter, in the past, politics has always been central in Greek news media function. The dominance of politics and advocative behaviour as key characteristics in Greek professional life promoted aggressive dynamism, instinctive reaction and overt political partisanship as the basic qualities of the successful journalist. Thus the elements of journalistic "best practice", as defined in the international literature and discussed in various professional bodies, have been traditionally neglected in Greece. This is commonly reflected in journalistic output. For instance, in Greek journalism, the borders between facts and views are often blurred to the extent that non-opinionated journalism to be considered "weak" or "passive", or even not journalism at all.

Before getting into the detailed analysis of the evidence from S-JNG 2002, it is useful to briefly draw the profile of the journalists participating in the survey. Their demographics are then compared with past research in order to identify differences and similarities between newspaper journalists and the general news media working population.

In S-JNG 2002, the average age of the Greek journalist working in the Athens-based daily press is found to be almost 38 years old (37.8). In our sample, 62.5% are male and 37.5% are female, whilst in terms of age, 58.9% of journalists are under the age of 40. In addition, 46.8% of the respondents are married, 47.7% single and 5.4% divorced (the categorisation by sex, age and marital status is included in Table 3.7).

Table 3.7
S-JNG 2002 participants by sex, age & marital status

<i>Sex</i>		<i>Age</i>		<i>Marital status</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>years</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>status</i>	<i>%</i>
male	62.5	22-29	24.3	married	46.8
female	37.5	30-39	34.6	single	47.7
		40-49	27.1	divorced	5.4
		50-59	10.3		
		60+	3.7		

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=121).

The male and female percentages in S-JNG 2002 figures are pretty close to those included in the nationwide 2002 V-PRC survey (58.7% male and 41.3% female). Also, in terms of age, the results appear relatively close, especially in the age group of 25-44 (80.7% and 71% for V-PRC and S-JNG 2002 respectively). In the following Table 3.8, data from the two surveys are presented, showing that newspaper journalists are on average a little older than the average for all media. This is not surprising, given the recent developments, particularly in broadcasting and the Internet media.

Table 3.8
Journalists' age: the 2 surveys

<i>years</i>	<i>VPRC 2002</i>	<i>S-JNG 2002</i>
18-24	9.7	5.6
25-34	50.9	38.3
35-44	29.8	32.7
45-54	7.6	14.1
55-64	2.0	8.4

Sources: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' and V-PRC 2002, op. cit.

3.2.1 Fields of reporting

As shown in Chapter II, the era of “philological journalism” that thrived in the early decades of the 20th Century, gave way to the first examples of professional reporting, especially in Gavreilidis’ daily *Acropolis*, which introduced the coverage of crime, local news, investigative journalism and interviews with prestigious

people.²⁹ Since then, the quality of Greek journalism has improved significantly. In general, political reporting remained robust over the years, reflecting its subject matter. However, things are quite different in the case of economic and business journalism, which has only become a serious part of Greek newspapers during the last two decades. The maturing process of business reporting was interrupted and its credibility severely buffeted by the economic conjuncture in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

At a practical level, journalism in Greece has experienced many improvements. In the old days, journalists had to deal with serious problems emerging from poor transportation and communications infrastructure. These deficiencies made news gathering a difficult task, whilst keeping deadlines was extremely hard for reporters.³⁰ Nowadays, new technological applications in news gathering and reporting have transformed the business, allowing for expansion and specialisation.

Moreover, the number of newsroom staffers has increased significantly. In the 1930s, each large newspaper employed around thirty journalists on average.³¹ Today, the number of by-lines is much larger. In our research, newspaper staff varied from 20 in smaller papers to more than 90 in larger newsrooms, not including assistants and trainees.

Similarly, the range of reporting specialisations was broadened. In S-JNG 2002, respondents are traced in almost all fields of reporting. However, in some cases fields seem to mix, especially since older and more experienced professionals tend to be active in more than one area of reporting and commentary. Thus, it is not always possible to clearly categorize journalists in terms of particular fields of

²⁹ See Zioutos, G. (1995) *Introduction to the Science of the Press*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press (Originally published in Athens, 1954), p. 85. Also Karikopoulos (1984) and Mastoridis (1999), *op. cit.*

³⁰ Kountouriotis, F. (1975) *Sixty Years of Journalism*. Athens: personal publication. Particularly Chapter 2.

³¹ Devetzi, D. (2001) *Journalist's notes (1930-1981)*. Athens: Europubli, p. 18.

reporting. This is also the case with reporters who operate in the broad areas of economics and business (See Table 3.9). The particular aspects of news reporting specialization and the repercussions on the personal and professional evolution of journalists will be addressed in the final parts of the thesis.

Table 3.9

Areas of specialization in news reporting³²

<i>field</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>field</i>	<i>%</i>
Economics	34.2	General reporting	9.2
Business	24.2	International	9.2
Politics	21.7	Social Issues	8.3
Art	14.2	Investigative	2.5
Finance / stocks	13.3	Sports	4.2
Other	12.5		

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126).

In our survey sample, 34.2% of newspaper journalists report on economics, 24.2% on business and 14.2% on politics. S-JNG 2002 has found that 29.3% of newspaper journalists, who report on economics, report also on business affairs, whereas 17.1% of economic reporters write also on finance and the stock market. Also, 23.1% of journalists report on both areas of politics and economics, while a small proportion of journalists (15.4%) who report on politics also write about areas, such as social issues, art or even shipping. These results show that strict specialisation, especially in the fields of economics, business and stock market developments, has not yet gained too much ground in Greek newspapers. Given the short history of business reporting, it can be argued that specialized knowledge of economic and business affairs has been only recently required of newspaper reporters.

3.2.2 Entrance in the profession

Job advertisements for journalistic positions are extremely rare in the Greek press. Jobs are filled either via social acquaintances, or through university students who have been singled out by executives during their practicum. For a complete

³² In many cases, the respondents of the sample noted more than one areas of specialization. Therefore, data do not add up to 100%, since they reflect multiple areas of reporting and writing.

outsider, the most common way to enter the profession is through acquaintances with the right people in the right places. As Pantelis Kapsis, managing editor of the evening daily *Ta Nea*, put it a few years ago:

...practically in order to become a journalist in the established press, one must be closely acquainted [with somebody]... It is not easy for everyone [to enter the profession].³³

Of course politicians and their parliamentary representative organisations never ceased to serve those who are ready to be benefited and to remain obliged to their benefactor. In an earlier conversation, Dionysis Kefalacos, currently one of the two Managing Editors of the financial morning *Naftemporiki*, argued:

Political parties [act as] channels of entrance into the political press, into the political reporting in general. Through political parties, and leaning on political connections [young journalists] can enter the media (printed or electronic) and continue to develop their careers based on these connections.³⁴

It is widely accepted in Greece that hiring journalists is a process that rarely lends itself to classic recruitment and selection procedures, like advertisements in the press and structured interviews. Potential journalists follow the rules of the game in order to get employment as soon as possible.

But why do Greeks want to work in journalism in the first place? In S-JNG 2002, newspaper journalists were asked to offer reasons for choosing journalism as a profession. The primary reason put forward by 54.4% of the respondents was their wish to enjoy the benefits of a flexible working time-schedule and, therefore, to avoid working routines. The second strongest reason for entering the profession is pure luck (19.2%). Finally, another 16.8% entered journalism due to the

³³ Kapsis, P., Political Editor, 'TA NEA', personal interview, August 11, 1995. Currently, Mr. Kapsis is the Managing Editor of the newspaper. See Kamaras, D. (1995) op. cit.

³⁴ Kefalacos, D., Business Editor 'Naftemporiki' and Editor of 'New Europe', personal interview, August 8, 1995. See Kamaras, D. (1995) op. cit. Currently, Mr. Kefalacos is one of the two Managing Editors of the paper.

“opportunity of being the first to be informed about events”, while 6.4% sought publicity or a brilliant career (see Table 3.10).

Table 3.10

Why journalism?

My personal desire for a profession with no fixed routines and working hours	54.4%
An accidental coincidence	19.2%
The opportunity of being the first to be informed about events	16.8%
The potential of a brilliant career	4.0%
I followed the profession of my father or mother	3.2%
My personal desire for publicity	2.4%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=125)

Overall, 73.6% of newspaper professionals have stated that they have entered journalism for reasons not related to the communication function of the profession itself. These results are surprising since, theoretically, one would expect that career expectations, desire for personal publicity, the familiarity with journalism gained through one's parents' professional activity (3.2%), or even personal curiosity about news events could be stronger incentives for a youngster to enter the profession than flexible working hours or a coincidental conjuncture. This evidence suggests that journalism in Greece is used as a career path predominantly by people who appear to be more motivated by characteristics such as the relaxation in terms of personal qualifications and the lack of formal job prerequisites, strictly defined working hours and other white-collar routines.

In this framework, it is obvious that in Greece employment in journalism is not seen as the outcome of a systematic preparatory process. The lack of a well-organised vocational orientation system and the relative ease of entrance to the profession (for those who have strings to pull) have resulted journalism being used as a means of easily acquiring a professional identity.³⁵

³⁵ A similar view is held for politicians who are commonly considered as professionals who have failed to establish a successful career.

Naturally, these human resources could probably constitute the least powerful basis for quality performance and evolution on a personal and professional level. These structural weaknesses will be put against the increased demands of the profession as well as the various influences put upon it, when the factors affecting news production are addressed.

3.2.3 Work experience and multi-employment

It should be noted that, in contrast with V-PRC's figures for the profession as a whole, S-JNG 2002 evidence shows that newspaper journalism in Greece is to a great extent the product of quite experienced people. In our survey, 56.7% of respondents have a working experience in journalism of over a decade, while 35% of newspaper journalists entered the profession before the explosion of broadcast media in the country in the later 1980s. This compares with V-PRC's results, according to which 61.5% of Greek journalists started to work during the period 1990-2001.³⁶ Still, a significant 43.7% of newspaper journalists had been working less than 10 years in the profession (see Table 3.11). Overall, 56.3% of newspaper journalists entered the market in the early 1990s or earlier, a fact that is in agreement with their relative young age (almost 60% of respondents are under the age of 40).

Table 3.11 Years on the job

Less than 5	15.9%
5 to 10 years	27.8%
10 to 15 years	21.4%
More than 15 years	34.9%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Researching Greek journalism as a whole, V-PRC 2002 survey found that employment in other media, besides the primary job, reached 47% in 2002. In the case of newspaper journalists, multi-employment is substantially higher.

³⁶ The same survey concludes that in total, 70% of today's active professionals entered journalism after 1989.

Professionals were asked to state how many “full-time” or part-time jobs they had in various media. S-JNG 2002 found that only 1 out of 3 journalists was exclusively employed by one newspaper (30.2%). Multi-employment amongst newspaper reporters is found to be substantially above the V-PRC average, reaching almost 70%. More specifically, 42.9% of newspaper journalists held two jobs, while 27% held more than two jobs in various media (24.6% three jobs and 2.4% four jobs) (see Table 3.12).

Table 3.12 How many jobs

One job	30.2%
Two jobs	42.9%
Three jobs	24.6%
Four jobs	2.4%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Overall, 7 out of 10 professionals were working in more than one medium and more than a quarter of respondents in our sample held more than two full-time or part-time jobs in various media. It should be noted that, particularly in the case of newspaper journalists, multi-employment is a result of their advanced experience, which is highly esteemed by the other usually smaller media (e.g. magazines). As shown previously, S-JNG 2002 found that most newspaper journalists report in more than one specialized field. However, in many cases this is done on a supplementary basis. Thus, journalists, offered the chance by other news media to report on a field other than that officially assigned to by their primary employer, grasp the opportunity since, besides the extra cash, this expands their overall writing record.

According to our research, of those newspaper journalists who hold more than one job, 22.5% work for weekly newspaper titles and another 22.5% for magazines. Also, 17.1% work for television, another 18% work in radio and 8.1% work for Internet media (either in the newspaper site, or in independent ventures). Finally, 9% of newspaper journalists work also for both radio and TV. As shown, multi-

employment is predominantly observed within the press itself, mostly in weeklies and periodicals.

However, multi-employment has serious repercussions for the profession in terms of the quality of the journalistic product, a fact commonly acknowledged within the industry itself. As shown in Chapter IV, newspaper journalists who hold various jobs or who freelance for other media are considered by newspaper editors as one of the key-reasons for low quality in news reporting and writing.

3.2.4 Education of Journalists

Although nepotism and personal acquaintances remain strong paths towards employment in the Greek press, during the time of crisis, a shift in the recruitment criteria appeared to emerge. The importance attached to expertise and educational qualifications rose, particularly when these are directly reflected on news production. The increasing demand for specialised journalistic output and, therefore, the need for reporters with deeper knowledge on a particular field or scientific area is becoming increasingly evident in Greece, especially in the financial press. Today, newspapers and magazines specialised in economics, business and finance rarely offer a place to young people who are not university graduates. Although editors in established financial newspapers would definitely prefer new recruits to possess a degree in economics, the possession of any somehow relevant degree is always preferable than no degree at all.³⁷ In broader terms, it can be argued that specialisation in the area of news coverage and reporting has contributed to an increase in the qualifications necessary for someone to enter the profession.

Our survey found that almost 72% of newspaper journalists hold a bachelor degree in various academic fields (see Table 3.13). This result shows an increased level of

³⁷ Hristou, D., Editor of the financial daily 'Express', personal interview, August 7, 1995. See Kamaras, D. (1995) op. cit.

academic qualifications amongst newspaper journalists, which is, however, far below the figure for instance in the UK (98%).³⁸

Table 3.13

Bachelor Holders

Yes	72.2%
No	27.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

The academic background of newspaper journalists responding to S-JNG 2002 covered various fields, ranging from media, law, philosophy, to economics, technology, even physics and chemistry. Of this total, 30.2% of journalists had acquired a bachelor degree in the areas of economics and management, 20.9% in the areas of media and sociology (of which 14% media studies) and another 20.9% in the areas of law and political science. Finally, 15.1% of journalists had a bachelor degree in the areas of Philosophy, Philology, History, Archaeology, Theatre and Foreign Languages and an 8.1% in the areas of technology and mathematics (see Table 3.14).

Table 3.14

Bachelor holders (various fields)

Media / Sociology	20.9%
Law/ Political Science	20.9%
Philosophy-Philology-History-Archaeology- Theatre-Foreign Language	15.1%
Economics-Management	30.2%
Technology-Mathematics	8.1%
Physics-Chemistry	2.3%
Not specified	2.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=91)

The data allow us to relate journalists' academic background with fields of reporting. Fewer than 50% of newspaper journalists reporting on economics, for instance, had a degree in an economic subject, including management. The

³⁸ Hargreaves, I. (2002) 'Young, graduated and white', *Press Gazette*, July 17 (pp. 14-15). Discussion

majority of respondents had first degrees in media, sociology, philology, philosophy, law, technology, physics and chemistry. Again, in the important area of finance and the stock market more than 50% of the reporters had studied media, sociology, law and politics. With political reporting, less than a quarter of the journalists had studied law and politics (23.8%), while almost a half (47%) had first degrees in economics, management and technology studies.

Given the trends in Greek education, one would expect more non-graduates to be found in the ranks of older journalists. However, 61.3% of journalists without a bachelor degree were under 39 years old (see Table 3.15). While it is true that 40% of those with more than 15 years' professional experience had no first degree, a significant 37.5% of those with than a decade in the profession also fall into this category (see Table 3.16). Even though this proportion for the most recent recruits was down to 12.5%, it is clear that having a degree is still nothing like an essential prerequisite for entry into journalism.

Table 3.15

Non-university graduates in terms of age

20-29 years old	32.3%
30-39	29.0%
40-49	25.8%
50-59	9.7%
60+	3.2%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=35).

Table 3.16

No-university graduates / years of the job

Less than 5	12.5%
5 to 10 years	25.0%
10 to 15 years	21.9%
More than 15 years	40.6%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=35).

Surprisingly, perhaps, the bulk (68.4%) of non-university graduates under 40 years old were working in the areas of economics, business and stock market reporting (see Table 3.17). Of these, almost two thirds (61.6%) were recruited during the 1990s, when economics and business reporting started to become important on the Greek journalistic news agenda (see Table 3.18).

Table 3.17
Non-university graduates
under the age of 40 (field of reporting)

<i>area</i>	
Economics/Business/Stock	68.4%
Other	31.6%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N= 19)

Table 3.18
Non-university graduates,
business reporters under the age of 40

Less than 5 years on the job	23.1%
5 to 10 years	38.5%
10 to 15 years	30.8%
More than 15 years	7.7%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N= 13)

Table 3.19
Post-graduate education

Yes	22.2%
No	77.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Of those who responded to the survey, 20.8% had been involved in postgraduate studies of one kind or another, a figure that is almost half of that observed amongst UK journalists (43%).³⁹ This reflects the short history of post-graduate studies in Greece. Less than a third (28%) of those with a post-graduate qualification had

³⁹ Hargreaves, I. (2002) 'Young, graduated and white', *Press Gazette*, July 17 (pp. 14-15). Discussion of a survey performed by the Journalism Training Forum in 2001.

pursued such studies in the field of media and communications (see Tables 3.19 and 3.20).

Table 3.20

Post-graduate studies (field)

Media related	32.1%
Other	67.9%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=28)

3.2.4.1 Media education and training

Journalism education and its relationship to media and communication studies are controversial topics. In the United States they are closely linked and have become the main entry path into mainstream journalism. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, media studies has been widely seen by the profession as having little relevance to the real world of journalism.

However, a survey of journalism education in Europe performed by the *Forum for European Journalism Students*, covering 51 education institutions from 28 countries, argued that in Europe as a whole it “seems that basic journalist education emphasises journalist skills in various fields of media, in order that the students would have the basic knowledge and skills to work at least with radio, TV and print media”.⁴⁰

On both sides of the Atlantic, professional media training and the accreditation of media and journalism courses by a widely recognised media industry body are considered important elements of journalism education.⁴¹ In the case of Greece,

⁴⁰ FEJS stands for *Forum for European Journalism Students*. The survey on “Journalism Education in Europe” was performed in early 2002 and it was announced in FEJS’ Annual Meeting took place in Helsinki March 22nd–27th 2002.

⁴¹ The difference between Greece and the UK could easily be demonstrated by the existence of three bodies in the latter: the Periodicals Training Council, the Broadcasting Journalism Training Council and the National Council for the Training of Journalists, as against the total absence of such a form in the former. See also Hann, M. (2001) ‘Media studies? Do Yourself a Favour – Forget it’ *The Guardian*, September 3. (<http://education.guardian.co.uk/students/story/0,9860,546139,00>). Accessed 6/9/2002.

there is no accredited professional training. Academic courses in media studies began in the early 1990s, when the first media and communication departments appeared in three state universities. In 1990 the Department of Communication and Mass Media in the *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens* and the Communication and Media Department at *Panteion University* were established, followed by the School of Journalism and Mass Media Studies at *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki* in 1991. Post-graduate studies were not offered until the mid-1990s, when the media department of the *University of Athens* started to offer a Masters in 1996, followed by *Panteion*, which launched a post-graduate media programme in September 2002, focusing mainly on cultural studies.⁴² There is still effectively no advanced post-graduate research in journalism at a PhD level in Greece.

There are no post-graduate programmes in Greece offered purely in journalism or journalism studies. When the two Athenian mass media and communication departments were established in the early 1990s, all the emphasis was channeled into the general field of communications, previously entirely neglected in Greece. However, since the creation of these departments coincided with the advent of private broadcasting, academic and research interests were immediately focused in the areas of private radio and television, rather than newspapers and print journalism. Although students in these departments have the chance to gain some vocational training through internships in selected print and broadcast media, only the Journalism department at the *Aristotle University (Thessaloniki)* can claim a partial academic specialization in journalism, adopting a multiple approach that combines theory with practice. However, little research has been performed specifically on newspapers, the journalistic profession, journalistic routines and

⁴² The Department of Communication and Media Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (<http://www.media.uoa.gr/>) and the Communication and Media Department (recently renamed to Department of Communication, Media and Culture) at Panteion University were founded in 1990 (<http://www.panteion.gr/gr/tmimata/emme/mainpage.htm/>). One year later, in 1991, the Department of Journalism and Mass Media Studies was created in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (<http://www.jour.auth.gr/>).

practices, professional ethics, newspaper organisational structure or newspaper culture.⁴³ The limited research available in this field has been confined to historical accounts of the development of newspapers in Greece, using the national newspaper archives, or the examination of newspaper typography.⁴⁴

Outside the state education system there are an increasing number of independent “laboratories” of liberal studies and other non-academic training institutions in the field of journalism. Their legal status is blurred and their efficiency questionable. Their academic standards are not subject to scrutiny by the State or by any other official body. However, the participation of famous journalists and private television anchors in the teaching staff of these institutions has led to their legitimisation in the eyes of the public. The journalism education they provide is of a limited and strictly “skills only” kind.⁴⁵

These inadequacies and functional problems in the area of professional education and training in journalism are acknowledged by ESHEA, which has put pressure on the Ministry for Education, asking for some form of regulation. According to a former Union president, Aristides Manolakos, “the present operation of the academic mass media departments and the chaotic status of private journalism schools constitute an educational system that currently is not in a position to serve the needs of the profession”.⁴⁶ The Union itself has not managed to overcome these

⁴³ It should be noted that all three media departments in Greek state universities were staffed by academics, who were dispatched from other university departments, such as political studies, sociology, psychology, economics, etc. Ten years later, doctoral graduates in communications are rare amongst media faculty, whereas doctorates in journalism are completely absent.

⁴⁴ See Chapter II for literature on newspaper history.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the use of the journalists’ photographs in institutions’ advertisements has caused the intervention of ESHEA that asked the abolishment of this practice. Nonetheless advertisements continued and since the end of 2002, no journalist was indicted for this reason to the Union’s Disciplinary Committee.

⁴⁶ Manolakos, A. (2002) ‘Journalists and Ethics’. Speech delivered in the conference titled *Today’s role of the press and journalistic ethics*, organised in Volos by the Union of Journalists at the Daily Newspapers of Thessaly, Central Greece and Evia (June 1). Also, for early attempts for the establishment of a Journalism School in Greece, see Skamnakis, A. (2001) “Journalism Schools and Training”, *Imerisia*, 11 August, p.30.

difficulties, for instance through the organisation of journalistic seminars as a prerequisite for union membership.

During the 1990s, according to ESHEA estimates, the three media departments in state universities, along with the larger number of private laboratories offering journalistic studies produced a total of around 10,000 people who entered the communications sector as a whole.⁴⁷ This sudden increase in supply and demand, especially of and for people coming from private laboratories, has lowered the standards of journalism and has increased pressures on employers to take on cheaper employees, thus contributing to the proliferation of phenomena of “black” employment.⁴⁸

3.2.5 Role of the unions

The role of journalists’ unions in Greece and their contribution to the evolution of the journalistic profession is a matter of a long-standing debate. ESHEA is the strongest union in the profession, having close ties with politics and the government of the day. Union elections are embraced by political parties, which support specific candidates, although unofficially. This strong politicisation, along with other aspects of the union’s policy, is the main reason why many newspaper professionals are sceptical about it. They enjoy the various social benefits of membership, such as free passes to movies, theatres and festivities, as well as discounts in certain commercial services and products, rather than the participation in those union activities and debates related to the professional aspects of journalism.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Report of ESHEA’s Governing Board on the Union’s activities for the years 1997-1998. Athens: ESHEA (p. 10).

⁴⁸ Ibid. By ‘black’ employment are meant journalists working in newspapers for free or for very low wage, usually as a trial period that hopefully will lead to full-employment status. In many cases, newspaper owners used a rotation of trainees in order to avoid insurance and benefits.

Although, as we have seen, union membership is low for Greek journalism as a whole (non-union members are 52.1% of total journalistic population), this is not the case amongst newspaper journalists, where 73% of respondents were union members (almost all in ESHEA) (Table 3.21). Many of the 27% of respondents are not union members simply because they lack the length of working experience required for union membership.⁵⁰

Table 3.21
Union Membership

Yes	73%
No	27%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Despite the high proportion of union membership amongst newspaper journalists, the union's identity is weak. In S-JNG 2002, journalists were asked to evaluate the journalistic union's function in Greece. Its inefficiency and weakness in promoting the ideals of journalism and in protecting the profession was found to be the major perceived characteristic by 60% of respondents. Another 20% of respondents said that the union was primarily concerned with promoting personal interests of the union's leading players, while 10% thought that union leaders collaborate with the political and economic powers of the day. Only 16.7% of respondents thought that the union was concerned to protect the profession and further develop the journalistic function in the country (see Table 3.22).

Nevertheless, union membership is considered valuable for newspaper journalists, since besides material benefits, ESHEA is the most active and powerful union in the media market, securing better collective agreements and higher wages as compared with other sectors, such as the magazine press.

⁴⁹ A large proportion of discounts and benefits was abolished by Law passed by the Mitsotakis government in early 1990s. Later on, the Simitis government abolished also the 10% income tax discount enjoyed until mid-1990s by all ESHEA members.

⁵⁰ Traditionally, becoming a member in ESHEA requires a three-year period of paid work in a daily newspaper (for bachelor holders; five years working experience for Lyceum graduates) and participation in examinations held once a year. Discussions of relaxing these criteria were still in progress at the end of 2003.

*Table 3.22***Journalism Unions: primary characteristics**

Inefficiency and weakness to promote the ideals of journalism and to protect the profession	60.0%
Attempts of promoting personal interests of the union's leading players	20.0%
Attempts to promote exclusively work claims	19.2%
Struggle to protect and further develop the journalistic profession	16.7%
Collaboration with the political and economic powers of the day	10.0%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

Certainly, a high proportion of the Union's efforts has to do with attempts to increase the wages of its members. The survey found that around 50% of respondents thought their salaries from their primary employers satisfactory for the work performed (3.2% said that their wages were very satisfactory). However, 50% of newspaper journalists said that their wages were at the minimum level for the job being done (9.5% report that pay levels were unacceptable).

*Table 3.23***Satisfaction from wage**

Unacceptable	9.5%
The least possible	39.7%
Satisfactory	47.6%
Very satisfactory	3.2%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

As shown previously, multi-employment is the case for 70% of newspaper journalists. A great proportion of these are relatively satisfied by their monthly income. However, the proportion of newspaper journalists who are not satisfied by pay levels is equally substantial, especially if exclusive employment (observed in 30% of the total) is considered as a barrier to personal income increase.

From those newspaper journalists working exclusively in newspapers, around 60% consider their wage as unacceptable or the least possible for the job done. Interestingly, also 60% of those holding down multiple jobs in various news media are satisfied from the income they earn in their primary job (Table 3.24).

High profile and experienced professionals are obviously in a better position than their other colleagues to offer their services to various media, securing additional revenues that can reach high levels in comparison to normal newspaper journalism standards. In the present sample of newspaper journalists, 84% earn a monthly income of more than 900 euros in total. Moreover, almost 51% of all respondents state monthly revenues from all journalistic work to exceed 1,500 euros, a level that is considered as quite satisfactory by Greek standards (Table 3.25). In terms of the 2002 collective agreement signed between ESHEA and newspaper proprietors, this income corresponds to the salary of a newsroom journalist with 20 years in service.⁵¹

Table 3.24
Multi-employment and satisfaction from wage

	Satisfaction from wage				Total
	Unacceptable	The least possible	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	
Multi-employment	6	16	33	4	59
Exclusive employment	6	34	27	-	67
Total	12	50	60	4	126

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Table 3.25
Journalists' total monthly income

300-600 euros	4.0%
600-900 euros	11.9%
900-1,500 euros	33.3%
1,500 - 2,100 euros	15.9%
2,100 - 2.950 euros	11.1%
Over 2,950 euros	23.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

If multi-employment and total income earned from journalistic work are combined, it is observed that around 70% of newspaper journalists who keep multiple jobs in the news media earn a total of more than 1,500 euros, while around 66% of their

colleagues who are exclusively employed in their primary job earn less money than the given amount (Table 3.26).

Table 3.26

Multi-employment and total income earned

	Total income earned from all jobs						Total
	300-600 euros	600-900 euros	900- 1,500 euros	1,500 - 2,100 euros	2,100 - 2,950 euros	Over 2,950 euros	
Multi-employment	-	1	17	13	8	20	59
Exclusive employment	5	14	25	7	6	10	67
Total	5	15	42	20	14	30	126

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

The relatively sufficient revenue level newspaper journalists secure on a monthly basis is not observed in Greek journalism as a whole. According to the 2002 V-PRC survey, 70% of Greek journalists declare a monthly income of less than 1,470 euros despite multi-employment and the high average of working hours (55.5 hours).⁵²

These figures suggest intense inequalities in terms of wages in the journalistic profession, a phenomenon that directly boosts multi-employment and influences the quality of journalism.

⁵¹ See 2002 Collective agreement between ESHEA and the Newspaper Proprietors' Union (www.eihea.gr). Accessed September 10, 2002.

⁵² According to VPRC, the level of working hours in journalism (55.5) is the highest as compared to that observed in other sectors such as Communication-Transports (48 hours), Manufacturing (44.1) and Commerce (44.3). The working hours are substantially increased to 67.3 for those professionals who earn more than 2,900 euros and live exclusively by their work in journalism. Internationally, long working hours is not a rare phenomenon in the profession. A survey carried out in UK by the *Department of Trade and Industry's Work-Life Balance Campaign and Management Today* has shown that nearly a quarter of media employees are working more than 60 hours a week (See 'Media workers pressured to put in excessive hours', *Press Gazette*, 06.09.2002, p. 9). Finally, the average working hours of Greek journalists is more than that observed amongst their Italian colleagues (43.4%) a comparative study by V-PRC has found. Finally, it should be noted that the percentage of exclusive employment amongst all journalists in Greece (52%) is significant smaller than that observed in the neighbouring country (72%). See *Naftemporiki*, October, 5. 2002, p. 32.

3.2.6 Professional ethics

Dow Jones will suffer... if our customers cannot assume that our facts are accurate and fairly presented; our analyses represent our best independent judgments rather than our preferences, or those of our sources, advertisers or information providers; our opinions represent only our own editorial philosophies; or there are no hidden agendas in any of our journalistic undertakings.⁵³

The above quotation is a part of the *Dow Jones Code of Conduct* and it is intended “as a reaffirmation of enduring values and practice”.⁵⁴ It includes detailed policies on the treatment of confidential information, business relationships and activities, securities transactions, political and civic activities, employment, even environmental concerns. Of course, a code is one thing and actual performance is another. However, the existence per se of such a text, published openly on the web, declares a certain philosophy that in the case of Greece that is not mirrored in Greece. The web site of the *American Society of Newspaper Editors* hosts a great number of similar codes of ethics from different media all around the US. Consider the *Washington Post’s* Standards and Ethics for example, which states that the paper “is pledged to an aggressive, responsible and fair pursuit of the truth without fear of any special interest, and with favour to none”.⁵⁵ The *Post* recognises in writing that “...the power we have inherited [...] carries with it special responsibilities: to listen to the voiceless, to avoid any and all acts of arrogance, to face the public politely and candidly”.⁵⁶ In another example, *The New York Times* declares that

staff members should be vigilant in avoiding any activity that might pose an actual or apparent conflict of interest and thus threaten the newspaper’s ethical standing.⁵⁷

⁵³ *Dow Jones Code of Conduct*, published May 16, 2002 (<http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?ID=3555>). Accessed 30/5/2002.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *The Washington Post Standards and Ethics*, published February 16, 1999 (<http://www.asne.org/ideas/codes/washingtonpost.htm>). Accessed 30/5/2002.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The New York Times: Guidelines on Our Integrity*, published December 13, 2000 (<http://www.asne.org/ideas/codes/newyorktimesintegrity.htm>). Accessed 30/5/2002.

Respect on journalistic values and acknowledgement of the profession's social responsibility are common elements in many, internally designed, codes of ethics published by the US media.

The European news media seem to rely more on Codes of Ethics defined more generally by their national unions and other bodies, rather than by individual corporations. *EthicNet*, located in the website of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere (Finland), is a collection of codes of journalism ethics from most of the European countries.⁵⁸ In most cases, broad statements on freedom and guidelines regarding particular professional issues such as accuracy, fairness, social responsibility etc. define what each national journalism body considers appropriate for its professionals. Generally, the US-style precision and detail found in corporate codes is absent in Europe. It seems that European journalism relies more on personal integrity and professionalism than on detailed guidelines on how to conduct the job. At the same time, the various institutions involved with the media authorities in Europe embrace the exchange of ideas, cultivate ethical debates and publish research data on journalism and ethics in academic journals in print and on the web.

In the case of Greece, none of the above applies. Discussion of journalism ethics is rare. The sporadic and weak voice of ESHEA is limited to exhortations. The effect of this situation on how journalists perform their functions is discussed in the next chapter.

As a matter of fact, ESHEA and POESY have drawn codes of ethics, including statements and guidelines for their members. However, their practical effectiveness is doubtful. Ethical guidelines are either not implemented, or their practical effect is marginal; malpractices rarely result in any further action. This is partly due to the lack of any official mechanism such as the Press Complaints Commission in UK, to

which citizens may apply when felt insulted or mistreated. Attempts by ESHEA to form a relevant body still remain on paper. Central to the discussion of journalism ethics is the issue of conflict of interest. Specific guidelines included in codes of ethics developed by US media tackle the issue exhaustively. In the *Washington Post Standards and Ethics* it is argued:

This newspaper is pledged to avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest, wherever and whenever possible... We pay our own way... We accept no gifts from news sources. We accept no free trips. We neither seek nor accept preferential treatment that might be rendered because of the positions we hold... We work for no one except *The Washington Post* without permission from supervisors. Many outside activities and jobs are incompatible with the proper performance of work on an independent newspaper. Connections with government are among the most objectionable...⁵⁹

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the 2002 V-PRC Survey found corruption to be widespread amongst Greek professionals. More than half of respondents believe that there are “plenty” of corrupted professionals in Greek journalism. Therefore accepting “free” trips could be easily characterised as a minor offence in the Greek case. In S-JNG 2002, newspaper journalists were asked how many times during the last decade they had participated in trips abroad, whose expenses were covered by private companies. The answers varied, depending on the field of reporting. Reporters covering business tended to travel more than their counterparts in other fields. According to S-JNG 2002 findings, during the last decade, 68.9% of all respondents had participated in at least one trip abroad, whose expenses were covered by private companies; 42.1% had traveled up to twelve times; while 22.8% had traveled fifteen to fifty times. Only 35% of journalists have never participated in such trips (Table 3.27). Evidently, participation in travels abroad or within the national borders with the expenses covered by private companies is a routine practice for most newspaper journalists.

⁵⁸ *EthicNet* is a project by the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Tampere (<http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/>). Accessed 10/9/2002.

⁵⁹ “The Washington Post Standards and Ethics”. American Society of Newspaper Editors (www.asne.org). Accessed October 16, 2001.

Table 3.27
Journalists travelling abroad
through private company trips (last decade)

Never	35.1%
One to twelve times	42.1%
Fifteen to fifty times	22.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

The situation as regards the trips organised by various State departments or Ministries is similar. Journalists in the survey were also asked how many times during the last decade have they followed public figures, such as ministers or CEOs of public corporations, on their travels abroad. Again, answers varied depending on the field of reporting. Naturally, reporters covering ministry beats tended to be on flights most often. Overall, 55.7% of all respondents participated in trips abroad, following public figures, of which 32.7% participated in trips one to ten times and 23% thirty to fifty times. Finally, 44.2% of journalists have never participated in such trips (Table 3.28).

Table 3.28
Journalists travelling abroad following
politicians & public figures (last decade)

Never	44.2%
One to ten times	32.7%
Thirty to fifty times	23.0%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=126)

Participation in trips organised by private businesses or public corporations and Ministries entails the coverage of all expenses by the trip organizer. Journalists are guests and are treated as such, offered free accommodation, gifts, even petty cash for their expenses. Moreover, in these traveling groups, the journalists' relations with official figures and their press officers becoming even closer, inevitably having a progressive influence on reporting, especially if the journalist is keen on receiving this kind of treatment in the future.

In the Code of Ethics developed by the managing editors of the *Associated Press* it is argued that "...work by staff members for the people or institutions they cover

[...] should be avoided.”⁶⁰ In the Greek case, in Article 5 of ESHEA’s Code of Ethics it is stated that the journalist should “neither pursue not accept reward from private appropriations of state departments and public or private organizations for his journalistic work.”⁶¹ What AP is trying to avoid is the norm for Greek journalism. For many years now, although ESHEA declares the practice unethical, no disciplinary measures have ever been taken to enforce the code. A substantial proportion of active journalists work, in parallel with their main occupation, for the promotion of the communications policy of private businesses and public corporations (see Tables 3.29-3.30). Moreover, a great proportion of these people work for institutions they cover for their newspaper. Although not officially admitted, this phenomenon is so widespread that there are occasions in which the same newspaper journalist works in the press office of competitive financial groups!

Table 3.29
Journalists holding press office positions in private enterprises

		<i>(N=114)</i>
Yes	9.6%	
No	90.4%	
<i>In the case of those who do: how many years?</i>		
<i>(N=11)</i>		
Less than one year	18.2%	
One to three years	45.5%	
Several years (10-35)	36.4%	

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'

According to S-JNG 2002 findings, around a quarter of newspaper journalists work in PR or press officers’ positions in the private and public sector. More specifically, 9.6% and 13.2% of respondents are offering their services for the promotion of communications policy of private businesses and public corporations respectively.

⁶⁰ “Associated Press Managing Editors Code of Ethics”. Revised and Adopted 1995. American Society of Newspaper Editors (www.asne.org). Accessed October 16, 2001.

Table 3.30
Journalists holding press office
positions in public enterprises

	(N=114)
Yes	13.2%
No	86.8%
<i>In the case of those who did:</i>	
<i>how many years?</i>	(N=15)
Less than one year	20.0%
One to three years	53.3%
Several years	26.7%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'

At this point it is interesting to examine the views of journalists themselves on the following question: to what degree would an institutionalised code of ethics accompanied with regulatory steps to secure self-discipline and self-regulation be of any use to the industry? In S-JNG 2002, 79% of respondents saw great benefits for the profession; 35.3% said that an established and broadly accepted code of ethics and code of conduct would offer a great service to the development of the profession; while 43.7% thought that it would limit the worst excesses observed in the business reports. In contrast, 17.6% maintained that it would prove worthless in the current situation and 3.4% that it would limit the freedom of the press and of broadcast media (Table 3.31).

Table 3.31
The necessity of a code of ethics

Will limit excessive phenomena observed in the news business	43,7%
Will offer a great service to the development of the profession	35,3%
Will be proven worthless to the current situation	17,6%
Will limit the freedom of the press and of broadcast media	3,4%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=120)

Self-regulation is commonly suggested in academic media writings as the most appropriate regulatory means in the communications business. When it comes to the Greek newspaper market, however, journalists severely question its effectiveness. More specifically, in our survey, when journalists were asked about

⁶¹ ESHEA "Deontology Code". Article 5, para b (www.esiea.gr). Accessed September 2, 2002.

self-regulation in the newspaper market, almost 70% argued that it is not an effective course of action; 39.3% supported the view that self-regulation is a useless idea in the case of Greece (Table 3.32). However, if Greek journalists have little faith in the power of self-regulation, where do they think that the answer lies?

Table 3.32

Self-regulation in the press...

...Is a useless idea in the case of Greece	39.3%
...Is generally the best way to protect the public	31.3%
...Is not an effective means of protecting the public	29.5%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=120)

Not surprisingly, it is clear that newspaper journalists seem to accept State intervention, since more than 69% argue in favour of some kind of initiative by the government. Only 18.7% of respondents maintain that the government should remain completely neutral. More specifically, 41.1% argue that the government should create a stricter legal framework concerning the press and 28% argue that the State should proceed to a minimal intervention in terms of the protection of privacy and fair play in the news media market. Finally, 12.1% argue that the government should only intervene in extreme cases, such as publication of classified information, invasion of privacy, etc (Table 3.33).

Table 3.33

As far as the function of the press, the government should...

...remain completely neutral	18.7%
...proceed to a minimal intervention in terms of the protection of privacy and fair play in the news media market	28.0%
...create a more strict legal framework concerning the press	41.1%
...Intervene in extreme cases, such as publication of classified information, invasion of privacy, etc.	12.1%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

Greek history and, more particularly, the paternalistic role of the State in the country, discussed in Chapter II, offer strong explanations as to why Greek journalists feel that their profession should be protected by government action. By

suggesting State intervention in newspaper journalism, Greek journalists seem willing to abandon a great part of the power of the press and transfer it to the legislating authorities.

3.2.7 Proprietors, Editors and Journalists

Do newspaper proprietors intervene in news production and representation? 91.7% of S-JNG 2002 participants say yes. However, whereas in the past, personal ideology and political views were the major reasons for such interventions, today, interventions originate from business interests. This is quite clear in the minds of newspaper journalists. The bulk of the respondents argue that the most important reason press proprietors intervene is to serve their other non-media entrepreneurial interests (78.3%). A quarter of the respondents argued that personal ideology still plays a role, whilst only 8.3% recognised this intervention as a means of improving the newspaper's journalistic function. Finally, another 8.3% argued that proprietors play a neutral role (Table 3.34).

Table 3.34

Press proprietors Intervene In order to:

...serve their other non-media entrepreneurial interests	78.3%
...serve their own personal Ideology	24.2%
...Improve journalistic functions	8.3%
They play a neutral role	8.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

The same picture is drawn when newspaper reporters were asked to estimate how often their proprietor intervenes - directly or indirectly - in the way news is covered and presented in their newspapers (Table 3.35). 90.6% of all respondents declare that they are aware of proprietor's intervention; 27.3% say that proprietor intervenes often (or very often), 36.8% are aware of occasional interventions and 26.5% say that they do it rarely. Finally, only 9.4% of journalists state that they are not aware of any proprietor's interventions.

Table 3.35
How often your proprietor intervenes?

Very often	9.4%
Often	17.9%
Occasionally	36.8%
Rarely	26.5%
Never	9.4%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

Within each newspaper, the non-media interests of the individual proprietor-entrepreneur are common knowledge. Moreover, the newspaper itself is a business that needs to be protected. Of our respondents, 80% argued that owners intervene in order to serve their business interests that often mix with news coverage; while 60.8% argued that such interventions were intended to serve the business interests of media themselves. Finally, personal beliefs and ideology are considered as reasons only by 16.7% of respondents (Table 3.36).

Table 3.36

Why do you think media owners intervene in the production of news?

To serve their business interests that often mix with news coverage	80.0%
To serve the business interests of media themselves	60.8%
To serve their personal beliefs and ideology	16.7%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

In the following chapter, further discussion will reveal the reasons behind newspaper owners' interventions in news work, while the examination of particular characteristics of newspaper newsrooms' and the editors' role in the whole news production process will establish the ways this strategy is implemented.

3.3 NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS AND THE QUALITY OF NEWS

It is generally argued that the professional dimension of journalism is nationally and culturally defined to reflect a series of key characteristics inherent to the traditional values of the given market. From professional ritualism in the US to the

more liberal and less regulated journalism environments in Europe, differences are evident in the way journalists define their task as well as their social responsibility. In a paper on journalism codes, Esaiasson and Moring (1994) refer to the existence of differences between European countries in the way journalists around the world perceive their role. For instance, British professionals have always seem themselves as watchdogs, pursuing information that they feel society should be aware of; German reporters are trying to interpret the news for the public, whilst their Swedish and Finnish colleagues have adopted the approach of an "active examiner who explains complicated events to the audience".⁶²

In the case of Greece, the role journalism should play within society cannot be easily defined by its representatives, since they do not share any consensus on the subject. According to S-JNG 2002 findings, newspaper reporters' views as regards the dominant role of the journalist are divided in half. Almost 49% of respondents argued that the dominant role of the journalist should be to produce reliable but neutrally presented information, thus letting the public decide about the truth. On the other hand, an equally significant proportion (around 48%) maintained that the dominant role is to try to discover the truth by cross checking information, offering to the public the journalists' best version of the truth (Table 3.37).

Table 3.37

The dominant role of the journalist

To produce reliable but neutrally presented Information, so the public itself to be able to decide about the truth	48.8%
to try to discover the truth by cross checking Information, offering to the public its best version according to his/her estimations	47.9%
other	3.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002' (N=122)

⁶² Esaiasson, P. & Moring, T. (1994) 'Codes of Professionalism: Journalists versus Politicians in Finland and Sweden', *European Journal of Communication*. London: Sage, Vol. 9, pp. 271-289. Esaiasson & Moring refer to previous work done by Kocher (1985, 1986), Fjaestad & Holmlöv (1977), Melin (1991), Weibull (1991), Aula (1992), Kuutti (1992), Uimonen (1992) and others.

As argued earlier, certain factors can be used to identify the professional status of journalism as well its capability to serve the public. In this study so far, a qualitative approach has been attempted in order to investigate crucial characteristics of the dynamic group of newspaper reporters who shape the nation's view on news. The status of employment, the tight connection with powerful officials, educational background, vocational training, the role of the unions, as well as the initial personal drive that made journalists themselves to enter the profession comprise a set of factors whose further analysis will reveal their influence on news production.

This is the purpose of the following chapter, when specific journalistic practices and routines are put against organisational structure and culture, the editorial policy expressed by leading executives, the power of sources, as well as the role of newspaper owners in setting the daily news agenda.

According to an ESHEA report, journalists in Greece are both victims and victimisers. They are victims because, out of professional insecurity, they tend to be influenced by the interests of newspaper owners and they are victimisers because they play an active part to the discredit of cultural values in the private as well as in the public sphere.⁶³

Hence, the real question is whether or not Greek newspaper reporters are in a position to inform the public accurately and, if so, by what means is this made feasible. S-JNG 2002 has found that newspaper reporters are not sure about the competence of the profession to fulfil such a task. Although 54.4% of respondents believe that the average Greek journalist is capable of informing the public accurately, 45.6% think exactly the opposite. When newspaper reporters were asked about the general quality of news presented in the Greek media, the existence of accuracy and objectivity was maintained by only 7.5% of respondents.

3.4 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Examining journalists through the prism of their personal characteristics and beliefs can prove productive, if compared with the actual practice observed in today's newspaper newsrooms.

Hence, the present research proceeds by focusing on the organisational aspect of news production, namely the newspaper newsroom and the factors affecting the daily news work. The conflict between the human factor and the corporation will be central to this discussion.

⁶³ Report of the ESHEA Governing Board on the Union's activities for the years 1997-1998. Athens: 1999, ESHEA.

IV

News Making in the Greek press

In the previous chapter, analysis was focused on some of the core characteristics of the journalistic profession, such as criteria of professionalism and status of employment, the initial personal drive that made journalists themselves to enter the profession, the profile of newspaper reporters, their general personal, education and professional background, vocational training, their routines and habits and the role of the unions. In this chapter, discussion is concentrated on a series of aspects of news production process in the Athens-based dailies, as well as on various factors that influence news content. Research tackled issues stemming from the internal organisation of newspapers, the allocation of power within the newsroom, the role of the human factor, the routines of news gathering and processing, as well as the role of news values in selecting information that later turns into news. Journalistic work is put against the power originating from organisational structure and culture, the editorial policy expressed by leading news executives, as well as the influence of newspaper proprietors on news agenda setting. Also, external factors of influence are considered, such as the power of official sources and the close relationships of reporters with corporate sources (i.e. communication and public relation officers in private and public corporations) and centres of political and economic power, pressures on news work originating from the advertising sector, the relations between journalists, politicians and the business community, as well as the role of the audience in the determination of the editorial line.

Finally, a part of the present chapter is dedicated to the examination of economic and business reporting. This sector, which played a determining role in the general shaping of contemporary journalism in the country, is examined through a brief historic account of the early days in the 1960s, followed by a detailed analysis of today's scene.

4.1 THE NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED

Currently, 83 Athens-based commercially exploited newspaper titles are officially included in the catalogue of the Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (EIHEA).¹ These, dailies, weeklies and Sunday editions cover various fields, ranging from serious political and financial titles and free distributed dailies, to gossip tabloid and classified weeklies. According to EIHEA, the distribution of titles per type of newspaper is as follows:

- Morning market: 9 titles (including two free distributed titles)
- Afternoon market: 15 titles
- Sunday editions: 22 titles
- Weekly market: 12 titles (of which 8 on economy and business)
- Economic / business daily market: 6 titles
- Sports daily market: 10 titles
- Sports weekly market: 9 titles.

The present research has focused on the political and economic newspaper markets, examining a total of 12 titles, which includes almost all major daily newspapers and two leading weeklies. The latter were selected to support the analysis of contemporary economic and business reporting in the final part of the chapter.

In the case of the political market, which at the end of 2002 was represented by 20 morning and afternoon daily titles,² only six newspapers have managed to maintain a nationwide circulation of over 30,000 copies (see Appendix). These are: *Kathimerini* (Daily - 43,930), *To Vima* (The Tribune - 52,167), *Ethnos* (Nation - 57,190), *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press - 39,769), *Eleftherotypia* (Press Freedom - 69,832), and *Ta Nea* (The News - 75,541).³ The circulation of these top six

¹ For a complete list of titles, see the Internet site of the *Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association* (EIHEA), located at http://www.eihea.gr/default_en.htm (Accessed 10 June 2003). The EIHEA site was not updated to include the free distributed *City Press*.

² The tabloid gossip daily titles *Espresso* and *Traffic News* are not included in the political market.

³ The figures correspond to average daily sales in December 2002. Source: Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (EIHEA).

corresponds to 75% of total average daily copy sales of the political dailies for 2002 as a whole. *Kathimerini*, *To Vima*, *Ethnos*, *Eleftheros Typos* and *Eleftherotypia* publish Sunday editions, while *Ta Nea* publishes its fat weekly volume on Saturday.⁴

As stated in Chapter III, the V-PRC 2002 survey was the first systematic quantitative exploration of Greek journalists.⁵ However, until now there has been no such analysis of the daily print news business and the professionals working in newspaper newsrooms. Besides drawing the profile of the average newspaper reporter, included in the previous chapter, my S-JNG 2002 survey also explored the views of newspaper professionals as regards various aspects of their daily work, some of which were presented previously in a programmatic form. Research results included a ranking for the sources most commonly used by journalists, the sources journalists turn to each time an important story breaks, and their views as regards their newsroom superiors and the quality of editing and their owner's interventions within the newsroom. Journalists were asked to express their opinion on newspaper self-regulation and on the potential role of the Government in the area of press regulation. Finally, the necessity of a journalistic code of ethics was explored along with the role journalists themselves should play as regards the infiltration of commentary in news items.

More in-depth investigation of the newspaper business required another shorter survey, which was conducted amongst 15 newspaper editors working in the eight largest political and financial dailies.⁶ Newspaper editors were asked face-to-face to fill a structured multiple-choice questionnaire that covered the most important aspects of news work, as well as to provide general views on the characteristics of Greek journalism. Questions from the first part of the S-JNG 2002 were also included in the second part of the survey, performed in the offices of newspaper

⁴ 'Kathimerini tis Kyriakis' (Daily on Sunday) for *Kathimerini*, 'Vima tis Kyriakis' (Tribune on Sunday) for *Vima*, 'Ethnos tis Kyriakis' (Nation on Sunday) for *Ethnos*, 'Eleftheros Typos tis Kyriakis' (Free Press on Sunday) for *Eleftheros Typos* and 'Kyriakakatiki Eleftherotypia' (Sunday Press Freedom) for *Eleftherotypia*.

⁵ For more details, see Chapter III.

⁶ *Imerisia*, *Express*, *Nafemporiki*, *Kathimerini*, *Eleftheros Typos*, *Apogevmatini*, *Ethnos*, *Ta Nea*

editors. Thus certain comparisons were made possible in order to examine crucial journalism issues within newsrooms. Finally, any significant differences observed between the way news executives and reporters see their professional environment, are presented.

For the purposes of the examination of economic and business reporting, an additional group of 10 economic editors and newspaper department heads was interviewed. These, along with a small number of the previous group of the 15 editors, constituted the vital sample of the news executives used for analysing this specific journalism sector. The list of the newspapers involved, presented in the final part of the chapter, are three of the most powerful financial dailies, a leading economic weekly, as well as the economic sections of three leading political titles. These seven newsrooms constitute the bulk of the economic and financial journalistic reporting in the Greek newspaper business.

The newspapers involved in the second shorter survey are the most important titles in their field. They are: *Ta Nea*, *Ethnos*, *Eleftheros Typos*, *Apogevmatini* (political afternoon) and *Kathimerini* (political morning). Finally, for the purposes of the case study on the economic and business reporting, the sample included: *Imerisia*, *Express*, and *Naftemporiki* (financial dailies), *Kosmos Ependyti* (Investor's World), a leading economic weekly and the Economic/Business news desks of *Kathimerini*, *To Vima* and *Sunday Eleftherotypia*.⁷

In all above cases, editors or news editors were interviewed or asked to fill a structured questionnaire (see Appendix). In some cases, more than one news executive was contacted for further information on the paper's internal organisation. Although those interviewed were guaranteed anonymity, certain arguments are identified as originating from the given newspaper in order to synthesise the most crucial observations with the specific editorial policy operating in each newsroom.

⁷ Overall, 6 dailies (*Express*, *Naftemporiki*, *Kerdos*, *Financial BOX*, *Imerisia*) and 8 financial weeklies are currently (June 2003) in circulation in the local market: *Kosmos Ependyti*, *Axla* (Value), *Isotimia*

4.2 FACTORS OF INFLUENCE ON NEWS PRODUCTION

As argued in Chapter I, the theories on news production are not mutually exclusive.⁸ Looking through the prism of either Schudson's categorisation⁹ or Shoemaker and Reese's perspective,¹⁰ the main ideas remain the same: news is directly or indirectly influenced by a series of factors that have to do with the profession itself and its surroundings.

Therefore, following the presentation in Chapter I, the internal factors considered here are: *first*, news values and the role of journalists themselves, their personal ideology and the stock of knowledge and professional training on which they build upon; *second*, the professional routines and practices employed either by journalists themselves or dictated by newsroom rules and habits; *third*, the organisational structure and culture of the news media, and the influence and control which spring from media ownership and news executives; and, *fourth*, the professional ethics prevailing in the exercise of journalism.

The external factors of influence on news making considered here are: *first*, the role of sources and their power in determining the dominant journalistic views; *second*, the role of advertising and competition as pressures on journalistic work and final output; and, *third*, the sociopolitical environment within which journalists work and profess journalism, as well as the dominant culture and ideology that play an important role in determining news values.

4.2.1 Internal factors

This section discusses professional routines and practices employed within newsrooms, the organisational structure and culture of the selected newspapers, and the influence and control that originates from owners' personal agenda and the

(Exchange Rate), *Metohos* (Shareholder), *Epixeiro* (Enterprising), *Evro-oikonomia* (Euro-economy), *Oikonomia* (Economy) and *Simvoulos* (Consultant).

⁸ See chapter I, especially Schlesinger, P. & Tumber, H. (1994) *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁹ Schudson, Michael (1991) "The Sociology of News Revisited" in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch: *Mass Media and Society* (London: Edward Arnold).

¹⁰ Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D. (1991) *Mediating the Message*. New York: Longman.

professional ethics prevailing in the exercise of local newspaper journalism. But, first, we begin with a discussion of the human factor: the journalists and the news editors that supervise the whole news production process.

As one editor has put it, "...Do not take it the wrong way, but if I am not here, nothing works properly."¹¹ He wanted to stress the editor's role as the information and managerial hub within the newsroom. The editor's other role as "the long arm of the owner" will be considered in the final parts of section 4.

4.2.1.1 The human factor

Though there has been little original research into the ranks of Greek newspaper journalists, there are some prominent exceptions. For instance, *Greek Newspapers and Journalists* by Psarakis (1993) presents the history of the largest Greek newspapers through interviews with journalists themselves. Although no further analysis is offered, the mere recording by an independent researcher of journalists talking about their jobs and newspapers is useful in itself.¹² Such books provide anecdotes and descriptions of Greek journalists' lives in past decades. As we saw in Chapter II, in the pre-1960s era the life of newspaper journalists in Greece reflected the country's general state of underdevelopment. Low wages and professional insecurity governed the life of most of the professionals, who at the same time had to produce a huge daily output. "Back then, a journalist did not get on with a single piece per day", an old journalist told Psarakis.¹³ "He had to write at least half a kilo of manuscripts on a daily basis. Back then there were no luxuries and [specific] areas of responsibilities. Everybody had to write everything."¹⁴

¹¹ Editor in a large financial daily that pledged for anonymity. He referred to himself as an example in order to illustrate the point.

¹² Psarakis, T. (1993) *Newspapers and Journalists*. Athens: Livanis publications. Thus, only a small number of accounts can be found in the small sections informed downtown bookstores dedicate to Greek literature on journalism and the press. Produced mainly by older journalists, some times in a form of a professional diary, these writings rely either on translated material, without proper referencing to allow further research, or personal memoirs on journalistic activity and assignments abroad, or even records of journalistic interviews with prominent people. Those few that refer strictly to the profession seem, to some extent, to act as practical textbooks, in a way tackling the gap created by the lack of any academic ones. They include empirical generalisations, guidelines for younger professionals, as well as occasional insights of a media business that kept its secrets hidden for many years, willingly or not.

¹³ Ibid. p. 15

¹⁴ Ibid.

These traditional characteristics of Greek journalism began to change dramatically in the 1980s. According to Leandros (1992), changes concerned news production and the representation process, as well as the general structure of the sector, ownership status and labour relations.¹⁵ In turn, journalists adapted to technological developments and to the new labour caused by the increasing commercialisation of the newspaper business.

Before the 1980s, searching for information was quite an arduous process for Greek journalists, especially observed in the case of economic and business reporting. For instance, press releases, issued by private companies or public organisations and ministries, were rare, and public relations was not yet organised as a distinct professional field. "Writings were exclusively the result of the brain and the hands of the reporter, who had to go deep in each subject" in order to gather all necessary information.¹⁶ Nowadays, though the journalists' job is a lot easier, the general "modernisation" of the information flow has brought new problems to the profession. The initial establishment of press offices during the Junta period was followed by their progressive expansion to all major private and public corporations. This new communications function secured a daily inflow of information in newspaper newsrooms, which led to a kind of specialisation in news gathering and processing. This development has strengthened the capability of sources to dictate the daily news agenda.

On the other hand, journalists became better educated, both academically and technically. Today, around 70% of newspaper journalists have a bachelor degree in some subject area; 22% have pursued post-graduate studies; and 92% declare that they are using the Internet for journalistic purposes.¹⁷ Almost all newspaper

¹⁵ Leandros, N, (1992) *Mass Printed Media in Greece* (Athens: Dolphin).

¹⁶ Devetzi, D. (2001) *Journalist's Notes (1930-1981)*. Athens: Europubli, p.32.

¹⁷ See S-JNG 2002 survey results in previous chapter. It should be noted that this rapid transition, from the traditional forms to the new technological norms of contemporary journalism, is not a spectacular phenomenon observed exclusively in the profession. The Greeks' willingness to embrace new technology – that they consider essential to their personal or professional lives – is widely seen as one of their key characteristics of the inhabitants of this country. One of the most characteristic examples is the penetration of mobile telephony that reached 85% of the population at the end of 2002. (Source:

journalists are concentrating their professional energy on a specialised reporting area or news beat, as opposed to general reporting.

Have these changes enabled Greek journalists to do a better professional job? Based on Tuchman's work, McQuail (1994) argues that, "professionalism is a degree of accomplishment which cannot be measured by tests or examinations and can only be recognised by fellow professionals".¹⁸ In the Greek case, examining the views that Greek newspaper journalists hold of their colleagues, the S-JNG 2002 survey has revealed a profession divided. Around 46% of newspaper journalists believe that the average journalist is not capable of informing the public accurately. From those 54% who believe that the average Greek journalists is capable of informing the public accurately, the main reasons given are: personal education and expertise (56,5%); on the job-training and personal values and beliefs (both 43.5%); other explanations from a small minority included talent, self-discipline, peer recognition (as an incentive), hard work etc.

Table 4.1

**Capability of newspaper reporters
In informing the public accurately**

(N=114)

Yes	54.4%
No	45.6%

If yes, where does this ability come from?

(N=62)

Personal education & expertise	56.5%
On the job-training	43.5%
Personal values & beliefs	43.5%
Other factors	11.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'. Note: In the second part of the question, journalists were asked to mark all applicable options.

Finally, when 15 news editors at eight large political and financial dailies were asked to answer the same question, 11 said that the average newspaper journalist was callable of informing the public properly, giving personal education and expertise, personal values and beliefs and on the job training as the key factors for success.

data published by the three major mobile telephony providers: Vodafone, Cosmote, Telestet. See corporate sites: www.vodafone.gr, www.cosmote.gr and www.telestet.gr). Still remains to be investigated, however, the reason why Greek population falls behind in the adoption of the Internet.

¹⁸ McQuail, D. (1994) *Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage (third edition), p. 198.

However, around half of newspaper journalists and one third of their superiors seem to question the capability of the average professional. But so does the public. As 2003 Eurobarometer figures have suggested, only 30% of Greek people say that they get their news from the press (82% from television), while newspapers are discredited in the eyes of half of Greek citizens who argue that they do not trust the industry.¹⁹ This situation is also reflected in the political daily newspapers' national circulation figures, which have recorded a decrease of 58% in the period 1985-2002.²⁰

Tackling analytically the reasons behind these social trends is beyond the scope of the present thesis. My main interest here is to analyse the organisational aspect of newspaper firms, professional routines and practices, the power of the human factor in defining news production in contemporary journalism, the proprietors' influence, the value of journalism ethics, as well as other factors such as the role of sources and advertising as the major source of income for newspapers.

In this context, some particular aspects of journalistic human resources need to be stressed. For instance, as S-JNG 2002 has shown, 70% of newspaper journalists have entered the profession either by accident coincidence, or due their personal desire for a profession with no fixed routines and working hours.²¹ This trend was also observed amongst news executives, since 10 out of 15 newspaper editors claimed the same reasons for entering journalism.²² Although these data do not by themselves prove a weak professional identity, they demonstrate the general loose conditions that characterise the journalistic profession in Greece. They also suggest a shortage of people determined to serve the profession and its social mission, as well as the absence of an organised educational and vocational path that leads educated and trained young people towards employment as journalists.

¹⁹ Eurobarometer 59, published in Spring 2003. Located at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb.html> (Accessed 23 July 2003).

²⁰ For newspaper circulation figures, see chapter II and Appendix.

²¹ See chapter III, Table 3.10.

²² For a complete presentation of the newspaper editors survey, see Appendix.

As the S-JNG 2002 survey has revealed, almost a third of journalists are not university graduates. In the case of news executives, all were found to have a bachelor degree, whilst a third again (five out of 15) had also pursued post-graduate studies (compared with less than 21% of journalists).²³ On the other hand, nine out of 15 news editors had never received any vocational training (exactly the same ratio - 60% - as for the newspaper journalist under them). Unfortunately, the absence of any other past research data (V-PRC has not dealt with educational background and vocational training) deprives us of the opportunity to make comparisons over time.

A correlation between bachelor degree holders and the actual fields of reporting, based on S-JNG 2002 data, reveals serious discrepancies between fields of knowledge and areas of journalistic practice (Table 4.2). This evidence strengthens the value of on-the-job training previously claimed by journalists and editors, as one of the primary tools for journalistic effectiveness. For instance, in the case of political reporting, journalists who have followed studies on law and politics represent only a quarter of reporters in the field. In journalism dealing with the economy, the situation is better, with 45% of economic reporters having specialised knowledge in the areas of economics and management. In the sensitive area of finance and the stock market, a third of the journalists involved are media and sociology graduates. The educational background of professionals reporting on art issues is quite balanced, with 46% coming from media-sociology studies and 38% from studies on the areas of Philology, Philosophy, History and Languages.

This does not, of course, mean that journalists with an educational background in a field other than the one to which they are professionally assigned are poor performers. The data, however, demonstrates the limitations of the in-depth knowledge of the subject matter that they are writing about. Especially in fields like politics, economics or the stock market, this may make journalists heavily dependent on sources. On-the-job training may be a fruitful process in the case of learning writing techniques and tricks of the trade. However, it cannot make up for

²³ See Chapter II for newspaper journalists' post-graduate studies and Appendix for the editors' data.

lack of the necessary underlying knowledge of a given field. All of this increases the dependence of journalists on newsroom culture, specialised sources and authoritative figures.

Table 4.2

Relation between news reporting areas and field of academic education

Bachelor	FIELD OF REPORTING (%)					
	Politics	Economics	Business	Finance / Stock Exchange	Foreign news	Art
Media-Sociology	15%	19%	38%	33%	-	46%
Philology-Philosophy-History-Languages	5%	10%	-	-	27%	38%
Law-Politics	25%	13%	19%	22%	27%	8%
Economics-Management	45%	45%	38%	44%	36%	-
Mathematics-Physics-Chemistry	5%	6%	-	-	9%	-
Technology	5%	6%	6%	-	-	8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'S-JNG 2002'

On the other hand, dependence on one employer is something Greek journalists try hard to avoid at every step of their professional lives. Multi-employment is one of the key characteristics of Greek journalism. The V-PRC 2002 survey found that around 47% of Greek journalists work for other media, besides their primary job. In the case of newspaper journalists, this figure is higher. Only 33% of journalists is employed on the basis of exclusivity; 70% of journalists employed in daily newspapers hold at least two jobs.²⁴ This practice remains powerful even after journalists are assigned executive roles in the newsroom. Our research found that 7 out of 15 editors offer their journalistic services in other media. At the same time, the great majority of them (12 out of 15) maintain that multi-employment has negative effects on the quality of newspaper news. When editors were asked to grade various factors that have negative influence on the quality of news produced by their newspaper, they ranked multi-employment as the third most powerful reason, after the inadequate level of journalists' professional ability (first) and the inadequate journalists' general level of education (second).²⁵

²⁴ See Chapter III for more details. It should be noted that multi-employment is a widely spread phenomenon in the Greek market. A recent survey performed by the Periodical and Electronic Press Union (ESPHT) has found one case in which a journalist held simultaneously 29 different jobs!

²⁵ See Appendix.

Despite the editors' negative views on parallel employment, newsroom policies remain quite relaxed. As all newspaper editors have claimed, their newspaper has not adopted any official policy against multi-employment. Each journalist is treated on an ad hoc basis, depending on his or her profile and competence. Unofficially, however, pressure appears when journalists establish professional relationships with competitive media. Moreover, in one case, an editor argued that he discourages journalists to work in television, since he considers broadcasting as a totally different environment, which could affect reporters' efficiency and dedication to the newspaper.²⁶ Despite criticism of multi-employment, a general consensus is observed between newspaper proprietors, who cannot afford the high wages that exclusivity implemented on their newsroom staffs would require, news executives who are trying to get the job done and journalists who are constantly pursuing new sources of revenue. The same consensus is observed also in the case of journalists employed in press offices of private and public organisations. Although most editors (10 out of 15) consider the affiliation of journalists with the communication strategy of businesses and their interaction with PR officials to be a distorting factor in news production, hundreds of newspaper journalists are currently offering their services to private companies, public organisations and Ministries (4% for the profession as a whole, according to the V-PRC 2002 and 23% of newspaper journalists according to S-JNG 2002).²⁷

In the case of news executives, the situation is more interesting. As S-JNG 2002 found, most editors refrain from this practice, declaring that their professional status does not allow such behaviour.²⁸ In almost all cases, this practice was abandoned when news editors were promoted to their present position. Before

²⁶ Discouraging multi-employment amongst journalists in a newspaper is more a matter of subjective evaluation of the given situation on behalf of each news executive and less an issue of pre-determined newspaper policy. For instance, a newspaper editor working also in television will never argue against a journalist's claim to work there as a second job. The only case an official policy against multi-employment was found is in the political daily *To Vima*. However, in its sister-paper *Ta Nea*, this issue is quite relaxed, since there is no policy against this practice.

²⁷ According to estimations by Ch. Vernardakis, V-PRC CEO, there are around 400 journalists working in press offices, the bulk of whom are ESHEA members. Source: *Eleftherotypia*, 18 May 2003 (www.iospress.gr/ios2003/ios20030518a.htm - Accessed 25/7/2003). For S-JNG 2003 data, see chapter III.

entering their current state of employment, 6 out of the 15 news editors interviewed had worked in the past in press offices in the private or public sector. However, if official employment in press offices constitutes a practice that almost all editors refrain from, just under half (6 out of 15)²⁹ continued to offer their services unofficially, as content providers or communications consultants to private businesses, social and political groups, research institutes or think tanks.³⁰

This evidence is of particular significance, since it reveals the level of the links between institutional sources and the higher levels of Greek journalism. Being more experienced and sophisticated, newspaper editors constitute a target for particular interests groups that need educated and specialised people to serve their ends. Therefore, given the relaxed attitude of ESHEA on the matter, journalists' affiliation with various centres of power and interest groups seems unavoidable.

Failing to discourage the journalists' affiliation with businesses, public corporations and Ministries is one of the weaknesses of the journalists' unions in promoting the credibility of the profession. Thus, it is not surprising that the bulk of newspaper journalists and their editors evaluate union activity as being ineffective in its goals. According to S-JNG 2002, 60% of newspaper journalists think that their unions are characterised by inefficiency and weakness in promoting the ideals of journalism and in protecting the profession. Less than 20% believe that their union is struggling to protect and further develop standards in journalism.³¹ Similarly, newspaper editors view union activity as ineffective and weak in promoting the ideals of journalism. They stress the way in which leading figures in the unions promote personal interests.³²

²⁸ Only one out of 15 news editors was found to be officially employed in a press office in a Ministry.

²⁹ Amongst these, two are different persons than the previous six, who in the past have worked in press offices.

³⁰ See Appendix.

³¹ See Chapter III.

³² See Appendix. It should be mentioned that although amongst newspaper journalists, union membership is as high as 76% (all news editors are ESHEA members for a period of 10 years on average), for the profession as a whole, things are quite different (according to V-PRC 2002, union membership in Greek journalism reaches a modest 46%). Unionism in the journalistic profession is a matter that needs to be explored further by media specialists. Few articles however have presented the situation strongly. See for instance Kopsini Chr. and Kimbouroopoulos, G. (2003) 'When unionism becomes a power', *Kathimerini*, 2 February, p. 6.

Overall, Greek newspaper journalism is dominated by structural weaknesses, contradictions and lax professional regulations. It is clearly an “indeterminate” profession in Greece today.

The following section looks at journalistic routines and practices, both inside and outside the newsroom. Journalists’ habits and editors’ views on the efficiency of the workforce they manage contribute another piece of the puzzle of contemporary journalism practised in the Athens newspaper market.

4.2.1.2 Professional routines and practices

According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), journalistic routines are “...those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs”.³³ This concept includes the notion that journalists are part of a larger system of widely accepted and largely pre-determined practices that are commonly considered as necessary in order for news to be produced on a daily basis. As Tuchman (1978) has argued, “... news is a depletable consumer product that must be made fresh daily and depends upon ongoing activities for its raw material”.³⁴ Thus, journalists

... typify events-as-news to transform the problematic events of they everyday world into raw material which can be subjected to routine processing and dissemination.³⁵

As argued in Chapter I, the standardization of journalistic activities and news processing mechanisms is an operational necessity. The daily tasks of journalists cover a steady circle of activity, ranging from appearing on their beat, discussions with sources, collecting press releases and additional information, to sitting down in their newspaper office and writing to a deadline.

³³ Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D., 1991, op. cit., p. 85. Also, see Gans, H. (1980), op. cit., p. 52.

³⁴ Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. London: The Free Press, p. 31.

³⁵ Tuchman, G. (1973) ‘Making News by Doing Work: Routinising the Unexpected’, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 110-131, (124).

In this process, news values constitute a mental mechanism via which the “value” of news events is assessed, in order for them to be published. In this field, various approaches, put forward by theorists and researchers in the past, have set the base for further empirical research.³⁶ For instance, the notion of gatekeeping, initially explored in the 1950s, focused on the investigation and analysis of the criteria found in the minds of contemporary information managers that are responsible for evaluating and selecting information that is then turned into news.³⁷ These criteria are influenced by a series of factors, such as the editors’ knowledge of the profile, interests, views and values of their readers, the editorial line of the newspaper and by other more practical concerns, such as the capability of newsrooms to grasp, analyse and process last minute information and to relate this to already processed and finalised news material. These factors constitute a set of news values that govern all journalistic and editorial decisions during news selection.³⁸ This institutionalised practice is essential for newsrooms’ ability to deal with the daily overload of information that needs to be assessed in order for today’s news to appear in tomorrow’s paper. As argued by McQuail (1994), despite the variations that can be traced between various national cultures and different media, the overall pattern of news is “naturally responsive to major events [with] the stability of news content often remarkable”.³⁹

In the Greek case, newspaper editors were asked to evaluate a series of “qualities” of news events, in terms of their influence on their decision-making during the news selection process. They selected between the ease of processing information on news events to match pre-determined deadlines; the magnitude of the event; clarity of the event (easy-to-handle information); the expectedness of the event (scheduled event); the cultural / geographical proximity of the event; the peculiarity of the event (unexpectedness factor); the possibility of follow-ups (continuous

³⁶ For instance, see Gans, H., 1980, Galtung, L. & Ruge, M., 1973, Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D., 1991 as cited in Chapter I.

³⁷ Dexter, L.A. & White, D.M. (1964) *People, Society and Mass Communications*. USA: The Free Press of Glencoe. First published in *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, Fall, 1950, p. 170. A newer analysis can be found in Shoemaker, P.J. (1991) *Gatekeeping*. Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage.

³⁸ See Gans, H., 1980, as well as Galtung, L. and Ruge, M., 1973, as cited in Chapter I.

³⁹ See Chapter I. McQuail, D., 1994, op. cit, p. 270.

story); the thematic conformity to existing material; and the presence of prominent figures (or celebrities) as key-players. The results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
News values

	Total grading
Magnitude of the event	145
Possibility of follow-ups (continuous story)	105
Cultural / geographical proximity of event	99
Peculiarity of event (unexpectedness factor)	96
Scheduled (expected) event	72
Clarity of event (easy-to-handle information)	64
Prominent figures (or celebrities) as key-players	64
Ease of processing news event data to match deadlines	55
Thematic conformity to existing material	47

Note: Editors (N=15) were instructed to grade from 1 to 10 (10 as the best choice); they were also asked to avoid the same grading of factors. Those who did not recognise some factors as influential in their news decisions were allowed to leave them blank.

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'.

The inclusion of the criterion “magnitude of the event” was admittedly a kind of “safe harbour” for those unable or unwilling to evaluate their daily practices. However, its first place in the Table connotes the simplicity of the process by which the average newspaper editor makes decisions. It also suggests that the power of events themselves appears to take precedence over all other factors involved.

Table 4.3 also shows that most news editors, when assessing the importance of news events, particularly value the possibility of “follow-ups” in future newspaper editions. The “cultural / geographical proximity” of a news event was also considered important by many. By contrast, other criteria, such as the expectedness of events, clarity, easiness in matching deadlines, or thematic conformity to existing material, were claimed by most editors to be of secondary importance.

However, despite the claim that Greek newspaper newsrooms are ready to deal with the unexpected, the existence of certain, pre-determined and well-tested routines, practices and techniques are in operation, in order newsroom tasks to be

accomplished on a daily basis. Moreover, being in a state of alert, requires competent staffers to fulfil the task.

Editors are the people who receive the journalistic product on a daily basis; thus their views on the quality of the outcome are significant. S-JNG 2002 asked newspaper editors to grade those factors that they found had the most negative influence on the quality of news coverage. The main purpose was to identify the effectiveness of what Shoemaker and Reese have called “institutionalised means”, which journalists routinely use in their job.⁴⁰

Table 4.4 sets out the views that editors have on their staffs. In the top-5 list of negative influences on news quality, editors have ranked four that are directly related to their staffs' competence to deal with their daily tasks. Editors consider both the level of general education and professional ability of their journalists to be inadequate, above multi-employment and not respecting deadlines.

Table 4.4

Factors exercising negative influence on the quality of news

	Total grading
Inadequate level of journalists' professional competence	93
Inadequate journalists' general education	91
Limited News space	72
Journalists' multi-employment	65
Deadlines not respected by journalists	59
Competition with other newspapers	51
Communication strategy of Press Offices and PR Officers	46
News executives philosophy	44
Newspaper owner's interventions	33
Readers' demands	29

Note: Editors (N=15) were instructed to grade from 1 to 10 (10 goes to that factor that has the most negative influence); they were also asked to avoid the same grading of factors. Those who did not recognise some factors as influential in their news decisions were allowed to leave them blank.

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.

Quite high in the editors' mind is also the limited space they have at their disposal for the coverage of news. Further discussions with news executives have revealed that this is due to advertisements placed in the newspaper, as well to the insufficient number of pages in general. Editors have considered limited news space as a negative pressure on the way news is handled. They consider that they lack the space for a fuller analysis of information and data that is required for the complete presentation of events.

On the other hand, asking editors to evaluate the weight of negative influences on the quality of the news they produce assumes that they accept that there are problems. Greek newspaper editors, in fact, had difficulty in accepting this view. Although they were more than willing to discuss problems as regards the way journalism is generally practiced in the country, most of them were quite sceptical when asked to identify the nature of these problems within their newsroom. However, although certain factors were neglected altogether, such as the negative influence stemming from the owner's interventions, there were cases in which this factor was reported as being the most significant.⁴¹ The reasons and the extent of newspaper owner's intervention in the production of news are tackled later in this chapter.

Finally, readers' demands as a factor of negative influence scored last in the list, a fact that offers a hint of the value placed on the wishes of newspaper audiences in editorial decision-making. When editors were asked about the weight various factors have on the determination of the editorial line, the "views and values of newspaper's readers" was the factor placed clearly first by almost all newspaper editors.

⁴⁰ Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D., 1991, op. cit., p. 86. On how news work practices may distort news, see Altheide, D. L. (1976) *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

⁴¹ The editor of one of the largest political dailies ranked 'owner's interventions' as the most powerful factor that negatively affects the quality of news produced in his newsroom. This case has risen total grading of the specific factor to a higher level than the average situation would reflect.

So far as journalistic practices and routines are concerned, the evidence presented here suggests that these are heavily influenced by the readers' personal values and beliefs, at least in terms of the way news is handled. Evidence coming from another direction reinforces the argument even further. As admitted by the bulk of news executives interviewed, readers' reactions that reach the editors' ears in the form of remarks expressed over the phone, or via letters and emails, are divided between the expression of their disagreement with the newspaper's opinion and the demand for more aggressive articles that would reinforce the preceding editorial line, usually in the field of party politics.⁴²

As argued in Chapter II, politicisation is a strong characteristic of contemporary journalism in the country. Thus, the affiliation of newspapers with specific political parties has affected journalistic practices to a great extent. As Kominis (1993) has argued, this is quite evident in the case of political reporting:

In the relationship between [Greek] political reporters and politicians, very few acquaintances lack the interdependence caused by friendliness. This leads most newspapers to an even more intense dependence from the political party to which they subscribe.⁴³

When Kominis first published his book in 1991, politics was the central issue in the newspapers' daily news agenda. The country had just left a period of continuous political crisis and successive elections and a new administration was just concluding its first year in government. A decade later, while politics never ceased to be considered as central, the phenomenon of journalist-source "interdependence" emerged in the economic and financial sector. As we shall see, journalists' acquaintances with financial and business sources had a profound effect on the practices and routines that governed news coverage at that period.

⁴² See Appendix.

⁴³ Kominis, L. (1993) *The Secrets of Journalism: 2. Applied Journalism*. Athens: Kastaniotis (2nd edition), p. 217. Lykourgos Kominis is an experienced journalist who has produced interesting descriptions of the practices and routines of journalists that operate in various reporting fields. Despite his reliance on personal experience, Kominis has tackled most of the issues surrounding the Greek journalist's professional life: from professional responsibilities, routine activities and the necessities of beat coverage, to relationships with sources that have become friendlier than the completion of the job would require.

Moreover, the affiliation of newspaper journalists and editors with press offices and various centres of power (and their active participation as content producers or communications strategy advisers) indicates a profound adaptation by news organisations “to the entire bureaucratic structure of source institutions”.⁴⁴ This is not only achieved in the framework of news-gathering (i.e. beat routines and press conferences), but quite often on the basis of journalists’ ideology as well as their personal desire for securing an advanced level of life style. Thus, the phenomenon of multi-employment in various media as well as in other sectors of the communication industry, such as press offices of private or public corporations, to some extent acts as a means of enhancing media workers’ affiliation with the elites and the power system in general.

This environment narrows the space available for in-depth journalistic research. For instance, as analysis on business reporting argues further below, investigative reporting on the Greek corporate environment is non-existent, unless dictated by a particular political conjuncture.⁴⁵ Journalists, however, project a different picture. As S-JNG 2002 has found, 90% of newspaper journalists claim that, at some point in their professional lives, they have participated in investigative journalism. Around 43% of them claim that they do it “very often”, whilst 39% that they are engaged a few times (only 7.5% of the total say that they “rarely” have done so) (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Practicing Investigative Journalism?	<i>(N=120)</i> %
Yes, very often	43.3%
Yes, a few times	39.2%
Yes, but rarely	7.5%
Never	10.0%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.

⁴⁴ Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D., 1991, op. cit., p. 110.

⁴⁵ Certain exceptions do exist however, such as “Ios” [Virus], a long-standing column at *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia* [Freedom of Press on Sunday], staffed by a team of journalists who tackle (admittedly through a rather extreme and conspiratorial prism) various subjects that are not usually met in the mainstream press. See www.iospress.gr.

These responses do not seem to reflect reality. Almost all editors interviewed by the author expressed particular concerns for the absence of in-depth journalistic research in the Greek market, giving as the main causes their inability to employ journalists prepared to operate on single, time-consuming assignments and limited budgets. A view commonly expressed by editors is that “we cannot afford to spare journalists that would research a subject for a sufficient period of time, to end up, after a week or a month, contributing a single journalistic piece”.⁴⁶ Therefore, Greek journalists tend to mix standard journalistic activity with special assignments that might be categorized as “investigative journalism”.⁴⁷

The view that investigative journalism is absent from the Greek market is shared by Aristides Manolakos, former president of the ESHEA. He admits that journalistic research and crosschecking of information constitute rare practices in the profession, except for a few isolated cases.⁴⁸

Overall, the professional environment within which Greek newspaper workers profess journalism is dominated by quite particular structural characteristics. The traditional phenomena of multi-employment in various media, the lack of specialised academic education in the field of journalism and the strong affiliation of news people with press offices in the private and public sector seem to dictate, to a great extent, the prevailing practices and journalistic techniques in the profession. Thus, a growing departure from the ideals of journalistic professionalism seems to be the norm among Greek journalists.

⁴⁶ Budget limitations was presented as the most powerful reason for the underdevelopment of investigative journalism in the country by all editors interviews in the framework of this research.

⁴⁷ See for instance Burgh de, H. (2001) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge. Also Weinberg, S. (1996) *The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques*. New York: St. Martin's Press. For a result of investigative journalism on a global scale, see for instance Pilger, J. (2002) *The New Rulers of the World*. London: Verso.

⁴⁸ Aristides Manolakos, former President of ESHEA in a personal interview, while he was still the head of the Union, 16 July 2001. Also, as Vangelis Delipetros, former Special Secretary of ESHEA Board and Content Editor in *Eleftherotypla*, has argued, in the last decade the investigative journalism departments have lost ground in the press, in terms of status and staff. Editors prefer to assign journalists to specific areas of reporting (accreditation), rather than having them chasing news in the streets (personal interview, 20 July 2001).

4.2.1.3 Newsroom structure and culture

The number of journalists employed in newspaper newsrooms depends on the size, as well as the total publishing activities, of the news organisation. For instance the economic dailies *Express*, *Imerisia* and *Naftemporiki* employ between 60 and 120 journalists each.⁴⁹ In the political press, figures are larger, since in most cases, daily and Sunday editions are served by distinct staffs: *Ethnos* and *Eleftherotypia* have the largest personnel with 330 and 300 people respectively, followed by *Ta Nea* (200), *Eleftheros Typos* (150), *Kathimerini* (150) and *Apogevmatini* (100).

All Athens dailies examined are typically organised to serve all areas of reporting, with economic and political journalism placed at the newsroom battlefield. It should be noted, however, that not all Athens daily newspapers enjoy this extensive personnel and organisation. The decreasing figure of total copy sales has resulted in half of all newspapers operating with minimum staff and limited news production resources.⁵⁰

Research within the newsrooms of the nine dailies has shown that the work of most journalists is continuous, including either daily writing tasks (such as processing of press releases and official announcements) or contacts with sources and investigation of research materials for longer articles and features assigned by news editors. Arriving at their office between 2 and 4 pm, according to each newsroom's rules, their tasks begin by checking emails, getting informed about news agency material or news items on local and international developments, published on Greek and foreign Internet news sites. Their time in the newsroom ranges from 3 to 9 hours, depending on their position in the production process. However, their working day begins earlier, with their participation in press conferences or scheduled public events to which they have been assigned. When material is gathered by all possible sources, editors who are already in the newspaper

⁴⁹ *Naftemporiki* employs 60 journalists, *Express* 70 and *Imerisia* 120.

⁵⁰ According to EIHEA figures, in December 2002, from a total of 20 morning (6) and afternoon (14) political dailies in circulation, 13 titles were selling nationwide less than 10,000 copies on average. Since the economic dailies' circulation is based mostly on subscriptions, these are not included in official sales figures (with the exceptions of *Imerisia* (12,092 copies) and *Hrimatistirio* - Stock Market (6,051). See circulation figures in Chapter II and Appendix.

newsroom are informed on latest developments and news pieces are assigned, along with specific guidelines on how to handle them.

Both before and during the news production process, editorial meetings are held for department heads and editors to discuss the daily news agenda. The frequency of these meetings varies. For instance, in the morning political *Kathimerini*, news meetings start at 1 pm and continue throughout the afternoon. In total, two general news meetings (1 and 8 pm) and two on departmental level (4 and 5 pm) are held. In the financial morning *Express* three meetings occur (2 pm, 6 pm and 8 pm), while editors in its competitor *Nastemporiki* are met twice during the afternoon (5 and 7 pm).

These formal communication procedures are not kept in all newsrooms. For instance, in financial *Imerisia*, one meeting, around 4 pm in the afternoon is considered enough for the arrangement of all issues, which are then handled on the basis of personal communication and casual discussions, a practice followed by its sister afternoon political *Ethnos* (2 and 5 pm) and the competing afternoon title *Apogevmatini*.

On the other hand, *Eleftheros Typos*' editors meet three times on a general and departmental level (1 pm, 4 pm and 9.30 pm), whereas in the case of *Ta Nea*, the editors' formal interpersonal communication is constant. The newspaper executives are met five times per day, starting from the morning meeting (11:30), followed by a noon editorial gathering at 12:00, another held half an hour later (12:30), to end with two afternoon meetings in 5:30 and 6:30.

Editors of the financial dailies were more willing to grant access to their editorial meetings than their counterparts in the political press, who preferred to discuss

editorial policy in private.⁵¹ It should be noted, however, that interviews with editors occurred in a period of strong political controversy.⁵²

The survey asked journalists for their views on the job done by their editors. Eight out of 10 newspaper journalists stated that they are always or often satisfied by the way editors handle what they have written (Table 4.6) and this is in accordance with past research performed within the organisational framework of newspaper newsrooms. For instance, Argyris (1974) argued that subordinates maintain a high degree of respect towards newspaper executives.⁵³ This, however, does not eliminate negative views as regards editors' personal competence as newsroom leaders. Almost as high a proportion of journalists expressed doubts on the communication ability and leadership effectiveness of news executives.

As Brooks and Sissors (2001) have argued, creative conflict, fast decision-making, constant interaction of egos, competition, teamwork and individuality, along with high-speed production values, constitute a dynamic mix within contemporary newsrooms.⁵⁴ In this particular environment, recognition and respect from subordinates is considered as an important element of the editor's success in managing the production process.

Table 4.6

Journalists' satisfaction by the editing practiced in the newspaper (handling of news items, use of headlines, etc.)

Satisfied	43.7%
Often satisfied	38.7%
Rarely satisfied	8.4%
Not satisfied	9.2%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002' (N=119)

⁵¹ Requests for attending editorial meetings were denied in many cases. For instance, in a large afternoon title, although such a request was initially encouraged by the editor-in-chief, the editor never replied to the researcher's claim.

⁵² In the first half of 2003, the political struggle in the country has reached a peak, with the New Democracy party to accuse the PaSoK government for corruption and failure in economic policy. The possibility for early elections was widely discussed and Simitis government was preparing to regroup in order to handle its deteriorating position in opinion polls. As it is always the case in Greece, pre-election period had started at least a year prior to official elections date (May 2004).

⁵³ Argyris, C. (1974) *Behind the Front Page*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

⁵⁴ Brooks, B.S. and Sissors, J.Z. (2001) *The Art of Editing*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

If this evidence is related to journalists' ages, it can be observed that the majority of those rarely or not at all satisfied are found in the 24-36 age range (see Table 4.7). It should be noted that these results are partly biased by the generally young age of the profession (almost 60% of the present sample of newspaper journalists are between 22 and 39 years of age).⁵⁵ The lack of complaints by older journalists can be partially explained by the news editors' relatively young age, as well as their hesitation to intervene in the writings produced by more experienced journalists, who have already established positions in the newspaper's comment columns. News editors rarely have the power to go against older journalists.

Table 4.7
Journalists' satisfaction by the editing practiced in the newspaper in terms of age

	Satisfied	Often satisfied	Rarely satisfied	Not satisfied
22-29	10	10	5	1
30-39	12	18	3	4
40-49	13	10	2	4
50-59	8	2	-	2
60+	4	-	-	-
	47	40	10	11

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002' (N=108)

Table 4.8
Journalists' satisfaction by the editing practiced in the newspaper in terms of years on the job

(N=119)	< 5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	> 15 years
Satisfied	9	8	12	23
Often satisfied	6	17	10	13
Rarely satisfied	3	4	1	2
Not satisfied	2	3	2	4
	20	32	25	42

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.

The control journalists have over their own writings increases over time. As seen in Table 4.8, 50% of newspaper journalists who claim to be satisfied or often satisfied by the quality of editing have more than 10 years of experience on the job. The increased presence of satisfied journalists in this age group suggests that editors

⁵⁵ See Chapter III, Table 3.7.

(who according to S-JNG data, have an average of 19 years in the profession, but only five years in their current position) handle senior reporters as equals.⁵⁶

As Table 4.4 has shown, amongst the factors recognized by editors as having negative influence on the quality of news, the inadequate level of journalists' professional competence is ranked first in the list. This is in accordance with the finding that most newspaper editors (10 out of 15) claim that they re-write articles when necessary. However, all editors have argued that some times they return articles to journalists for further improvement. The dominant impression was that they do not do it as often as they would want to, mainly due to deadline pressures. Poor writing and insufficient research are the main reason for journalists being called into the editor's office and being asked to revise what they have written. Another reason some editors put forward, in both political and financial titles, was the need for fresh story angles, as well as the use of simple language in journalistic texts.

In the same context, newspaper editors have argued that multi-employment (evident in 70% of newspaper journalists) is a factor that has a negative effect on the quality of news produce. Evidently, journalists are dealing with an increased workload caused by their professional responsibilities to various employers that includes different deadline schedules and variations in writing style. However, earning more money is not the only reason that boosts this practice.⁵⁷ Increasing specialisation within newsrooms and allocation of responsibility of reporting areas has led to an imbalance of material available and material utilised by their editors. For instance, large industry reports or analyses that may appear in the newspaper in the form of a 600-word article can be re-used to a monthly magazine in full, perhaps enriched with industry interviews and further analysis. In another case, journalists may find an opportunity to explore areas that interest them personally, something that they cannot do in the newspaper, due to a different working specialisation they are assigned to by their editor. Moreover, journalists may write for other media due to

⁵⁶ See Appendix.

⁵⁷ Almost 50% of S-JNG 2002 respondents argue that in relation to the amount of work they are producing their salary is the less possible or completely unacceptable. See Table 3.26 in Chapter III.

restrictions put by the editorial line that is in effect in the medium in which they are primarily employed. S-JNG 2002 has found that almost 45% of newspaper journalists are contributing to other media due to editorial line restrictions, as well as due to the fact that they were offered the opportunity to work in alternative areas of reporting (Table 4.9). Finally, it is worth mentioning that 2 out of 10 journalists write in other media under a pseudonym, or anonymously, for the same reason.

Table 4.9

**Working in other media due to editorial restrictions
in the primary medium, or because offered the opportunity
to explore new thematic areas**

Yes, using my name	24.3%
Yes, anonymously	9.6%
Yes, with the use of pseudonym	11.3%
No	54.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002' (N=115)

The introduction of information technology in journalism has made things easier for those with multiple jobs. The use of word-processing software packages and electronic archives, as well as electronic mail, have boosted re-packaging of news texts or analytical pieces, allowing moonlighters to work from a distance.

In general, during the 1990s, the advent of information technology, and particularly of the Internet, has started to play an important role in the way Greek journalism is practised. The introduction of new computer technology, the setting up of intranet networks in almost all Athens dailies and the provision of Internet connections have altered newsroom practices in a significant way. The effects of the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) in the newsroom, as well as the views of journalists and editors on the influence of technological advancements on news production techniques and practices, are discussed further in the next section.

4.2.1.3.1 New technology; newsroom IT and the Internet

A survey by the *Freedom Forum Media Studies Center* performed in the US amongst news executives who participated in technology studies seminars in the period 1991-1993 has revealed their thoughts as regards technologically driven changes that were about to occur within the newsroom. According to the survey,

news executives saw ten years ago that developments in real-time news information could redefine news and the life of journalists themselves. This is not surprising since one of the key aims of journalism is to track down and communicate to society new trends and innovations that would affect the public's life. Therefore, acknowledging the potential of new technology in people's lives in general and the journalistic profession in particular should be considered not an accomplishment, but a fulfilment of an important task.

In 1997, another survey on online newsgathering trends in US newspapers by Bruce Garrison of the University of Miami stressed that

...the Internet is not just a new distribution vehicle for journalists. It has become a highly valuable resource for newsgathering and, in time, the World Wide Web, electronic mail, and other Internet tools most often used will take their place at all newspapers alongside other time-tested resources of newsrooms, such as reference books and the telephone.⁵⁸

In the US, research evidence has shown that the great expansion of computer use in newspaper newsrooms took place in the second half of the 1990s. However the awakening started much earlier. Research by the *University of Miami* showed that general computer use for news gathering in US dailies grew from 66% in 1994 to 90% in 1998, whereas use of on-line news gathering tools increased from 57% in 1994 to 97% in 1998.⁵⁹ Moreover, the use of Internet for serving newsroom needs followed a more rapid pace of growth. Evidence has shown that newsroom penetration of the web as a news and information source moved from 25% in 1994 to 92% in 1998.⁶⁰

In general, Internet has proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of journalists. A survey conducted by the *Pew Research Centre* for the *American Society of News Editors (ASNE)* has shown that at the end of the 1990s, 90% of the US newsrooms

⁵⁸ Pavlik, J. (1996) *New Media Technology and the Information Superhighway*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon and Garrison, B. (1997) 'Online Newsgathering Trends in 1994-1996'. Paper presented to the Communication Technology and Policy Division, spring conference, *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication*, St. Petersburg, Fla., February 8. <http://gchon.ir.miami.edu/com/car/stpete.htm> (Accessed 21/10/202).

⁵⁹ Garrison, B. (1998) 'Coping with New Technologies in the Newsroom', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 18-25.

had an Internet access and 54% of journalists in the mainstream press believed that Internet use had improved journalism.⁶¹ According to Pew, from 20 in 1994, the number of newspapers publishing an electronic edition had reached 4,925 by the end of the 1990s, of which 2,799 were located in the US.⁶²

According to Garrison (1998), the spread of computer assisted reporting (CAR) can be described as a “re-computerisation of newsrooms”, since the initial introduction of computer technology in the US that took place in the 1970s and the 1980s in the field of mainframe front-end editorial production systems.⁶³

In the case of the Greek newspaper business, newsroom computerization started in the early 1980s. However, some major developments of a technological nature had occurred half a decade earlier. The introduction of new technology in the Greek press is traced in mid-1970s, when the first offset printing applications were utilized in 1974 by the Thessaloniki newspaper, *Ellinikos Voras* (Hellenic North), followed later by Athenian magazines run by major publishers. At the same time, the first attempts to introduce offset applications in the Athens-based press occurred in the newspapers *Ta Nea* and *Apogevmatini*, a prospect that was not welcomed by the technicians unions.⁶⁴ At the end of the 1970s, the introduction of offset technology started to expand to all major newspapers.⁶⁵ The re-launch of *Ethnos* in September 1981 is considered as a landmark for the Greek press, in terms of production organisation and the utilization of new technology. It was the first Greek large coloured newspaper, published in a tabloid format and produced exclusively electronically.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (1999) *Striking the Balance: Audience Interests, Business Pressures and Journalists' Values*, May (www.people-press.org).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Garrison, B. (1998) ‘Coping with New Technologies in the Newsroom’, *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 18-25.

⁶⁴ The introduction of new technologies in Greek newspapers was accompanied by severe strike activity on behalf of the press technicians all throughout the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s. For a detailed analysis of the labour relations of that period, see Leandros, 1992, op. cit., particularly Chapter 7.

⁶⁵ Pasalaris, C. (1994) *Media Barons*. Athens: Zarvanos, pp. 283-284. See also Leandros, N, (1992) *Mass Printed Media in Greece* (Athens: Dolphin), pp. 160-161.

⁶⁶ The re-launch of *Ethnos* is quite significant for another reason: the establishment of G. Bobolas as the first entrepreneur-publisher in the local newspaper business, signaling the passing of newspaper

However, expansion of new technology to the newspaper industry as a whole did not occur until the 1990s. According to Basantis (2000), the technological modernization of journalism that followed the computerization of newspaper accounting departments and distribution mechanisms.⁶⁷ In general, as Leandros (1992) has argued, the introduction of new technology in Greek newspapers has offered considerable improvements to the newspaper industry; it decreased the production cost, increased the newspaper's flexibility and general capabilities and finally improved printing quality.⁶⁸

In 1988, in the newsroom of newspaper *24 Ores* (24 Hours), owned by George Koskotas, a controversial banker turned media mogul who was later charged with financial fraud, there was a short-lived revolution.⁶⁹ The paper survived for 10 months and in its newsroom journalists had to write their stories on screen, directly on the desktop publishing software, within predetermined layouts. Makis Andronopoulos, currently the chief editor of the financial weekly *Kosmos tou Ependyti* (Investor's World), was at that time the senior financial reporter for *24 Ores*. He says: "It was something completely new for us. We were the first to use and test, on-the-job, a new technology that later was expanded in many newspapers and magazines."⁷⁰

However, despite the overall progress, the introduction of new technology in the Greek press was considered more as a means of reducing production costs, rather than a new frontier for the modernization of journalism practices. As Leandros (1992) has stressed, it did not include further utilization of information sources, such as the electronic organisation of databases, or the modernization of internal

ownership from traditional publishers to the hands of businessmen with sufficient economic power to finance demanding publishing projects. See Leandros, N, (1992) *Mass Printed Media in Greece* (Athens: Dolphin), pp. 160-161.

⁶⁷ Basantis, D. (2002) *The Daily Press: From the 18th to the 21st Century*. Athens: Gregory publications.

⁶⁸ Leandros (1992), op. cit.

⁶⁹ *24 Ores* was launched in February 1988 and closed down at the end of December in the same year.

⁷⁰ Makis Andronopoulos, Managing Editor, *Kosmos tou Ependiti* (Investor's World). Personal interview, August 1, 2001. See also Basantis, D. (2002), op. cit., pp.117-8.

organisation and administration.⁷¹ Therefore, the reinforcement of journalistic research practices in the paradigm that Fleming (2000) has promoted (i.e. Internet, commercial information services, spreadsheets and databases) has been substantially delayed in the case of Greek journalism.⁷²

Today, the picture emerging from newspaper new technology strategies seems the same. For instance, in June 2003, out of a total of 52 daily and weekly Athens-based titles included in EIHEA's list, less than half (22 titles) had constructed newspaper web sites. These ranged from offering some information as regards the print publication, certain basic services, to the provision of premium, subscription-based news services.⁷³

Moreover, as research within newsrooms has shown, not all journalists are yet offered access to the Internet or email accounts for their correspondence. In the beginning, some dial-up connections were offered in certain newsroom offices (mainly to news editors or department heads in the international news desk). Although currently the situation is being improved quite rapidly, the pace of utilization of digital technology in news gathering and processing depends on the individual's own initiative to persuade superiors for the need of introducing more sophisticated applications and more efficient computer devices.

It could be argued that the introduction of the Internet in contemporary newspaper newsrooms seems to be treated more as a tool and less as an opportunity for further growth. Moreover, for the time being, the utilization of content management techniques, based on sophisticated digital platforms, is a concept that, although professionally reported by journalists as an important trend in the framework of electronic business, remains in the periphery of newspaper executives' thinking.

⁷¹ Leandros (1992), op. cit.

⁷² Fleming, C. (2000) 'Journalism and New Technology', in Hugo de Burgh (ed.) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge, p. 189.

⁷³ See also the Internet site of the *Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association* (EIHEA). Located at <http://www.eihea.gr> (Accessed 5 June 2003).

It is not surprising, therefore, that, walking through the newsrooms of the largest Athens dailies, the dominant impression is that most journalists are working in a spatial chaos governed by old habits and paper-based resources. In most newsrooms, journalists' heads can still barely be seen over piles of paper that cover almost the same amount of space occupied by computer terminals, printers and other devices. In most newsrooms, things appear, in essence, to work the old way. Despite the introduction of personal computers, the operation of intranets and Internet connections, journalists and editors seem still to live under the spell of the paper as regards crucial parts of the news production process. In most newsrooms, finished news articles are printed and handed over to the editor's desk. This material is read and evaluated by the news editor and then handled over to the content editor, who is responsible for further processing.⁷⁴ Then headlines are produced, photographs are added, captions are written and, after proof editors have finished checking for language and typographical errors, the first newspaper layout printouts are delivered to the news editor for approval. Although almost all production processes are computerized, content management and distribution between news desks seem to rely on printed material, rather than on software applications.

Some newspapers, however, have already proceeded to a more advanced mode of newsroom content management. In some cases, second generation software applications offer editors the opportunity to closely monitor the pace of news writing production. For instance, during an interview with Nikos Frantzis, news editor in financial daily *Naftemporiki*, his eyes never stopped checking new newsroom material appearing on his computer screen. As soon as journalists saved their work, the file containing the news piece, accompanied by the journalist's name, was appearing in an automatically refreshed window permanently located on his computer desktop. This allowed him to keep track of news items being written, while he was checking online resources for developments and going through the day's press. Special software made the editing operation possible. Similar news

⁷⁴ As 'content editor' here it is meant the editor responsible for the processing of news articles, headline, photographic material, layout, etc. (*Arhisintaktis Ylis* in Greek).

writing and editing software applications are being created in other newsrooms as well.⁷⁵

Overall, the computerization of Athens-based newspaper newsrooms is seen as a positive development for the work of journalists. Editors interviewed argued that the introduction of information technology has improved major aspects of their daily routines and practices. As seen in Table 4.10, the benefits for the human factor and the newspaper's product cycle are ranked highly in the list. Increase of productivity in news production processes is considered as the most important effect, with positive effects on the newspaper's printing time next. News quality, however, seems to remain relatively unaffected by new technology. If this is the dominant view amongst newspaper editors, what has happened with the advent of the Internet and the proliferation of its use by newsroom staff?

The present research found both Greek newspaper journalists and their editors to be quite familiar with new technology and particularly the Internet. S-JNG 2002 has found that 77.5% of journalists declare that they often use the Internet as a source of information, whilst 14.2% of respondents say that they use it sometimes (Table 4.11).

Table 4.10
Effects from the Introduction of Information technology (IT)
in newspaper newsrooms

Journalists' productivity was increased	122
Newspaper's publishing cycle was improved	122
Journalists' job made easier	120
Editors' duties made easier	103
News quality improved	69

*Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.
Note: Editors (N=15) were instructed to grade from 1 to 10 (10 goes to that factor that has the most negative influence); they were also asked to avoid the same grading of factors. Those who did not recognise some factors as influential in their news decisions were allowed to leave them blank (N=15 editors).*

⁷⁵ Nikos Frantzis, editor in chief in financial daily *Naftemporiki*. Personal interview, 5 June 2003.

Table 4.11
Journalists using the Internet
as a source of information

<i>(N=119)</i>	
I often use it	77.5%
I use it sometimes	14.2%
I rarely use it	2.5%
Never use it	5.8%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.

Similarly, almost all editors interviewed declare that the Internet is more than a necessity in their professional lives. News editors that resist technological developments are scarce in the industry and are usually of an older age. During our research in newspaper newsrooms, only one department head did not make use of the Net, arguing that she couldn't use the "damn thing". Her assistants, however, did the job for her, researching the web and printing out necessary texts and email messages. Almost all news editors interviewed have recognised the Internet as a source of information that should be utilized by journalists. In terms of the Net's usefulness, the editors' views are divided; half are arguing for the Net's particular usefulness as an information source, while half consider the web as just a supplementary source of information.⁷⁶

Nowadays, new technology is being introduced in a rapid pace, with each newspaper newsroom at a different stage. Journalists have welcomed these developments, embracing enthusiastically the new tools of the craft. The number of those professionals still resisting the advent of new technology, especially the Internet, is very small (according to S-JNG 2002, less than 6%).

In general, newsroom practices and routines traced in the stages of information collection and processing are profoundly affected by the introduction of new technology. This is quite evident amongst newspaper editors. As most of them have recognised, since the introduction of Internet connections within newsrooms, journalists are increasingly getting ready-to-use material from various sources,

⁷⁶ See Appendix.

especially via institutional press offices. In this respect, half of editors interviewed argued that this practice has negatively affected the journalists' job; in particular, 7 out of 15 declared that electronic ready-to-use material has resulted to even less journalistic processing and cross checking of information.

In general, Internet's potential as a tool of information provision and exploration of various data found on-line and as a means of communication between journalists, sources and readers is of great significance. This is quite evident in the case of investigative journalism, at least in those markets where digital content is developed and where newspapers, or news media in general, serve a worldwide audience. As Greg Palast, a well-known investigative journalist at the *Observer*, the *Guardian* and the *BBC* has put it:

My work would be impossible, without the Net ... e-mail especially... I get reports, photos, documents from the hills of Bolivia, the gold mines of Tanzania and the offices of the World Bank in Washington... The web also allows me to have a large international community of helpers, researchers and investigators, mostly volunteers. This allows journalists to break down the wall between reader and writer... and to get all kinds of help and information for major reports impossible on limited newspaper budgets...⁷⁷

Naturally, journalists working in the Athens press should not hold their breath expecting e-mails from readers abroad, because such readers do not exist in any significant numbers. But e-mails coming from readers in Greece are scarce as well. As newspaper editors have maintained, very few stories have started from readers using electronic mail in order to provide information to the papers about a subject, to give hints on a wrongdoing, or even state their opinion on current affairs. One of the reasons for this lack of electronic communication between journalists and the public, or even between sources willing to break information to journalists is that by-lines printed in newspaper articles are rarely accompanied by an electronic address.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Greg Palast, personal interview (via e-mail), 31 May 2002. For a profile story on Greg Palast, see also *Press Gazette*, "Columbo with attitude", 3 May 2002, p. 19. For a collection of journalistic articles, see Palast, G. (2002) *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. London: Pluto Press.

⁷⁸ In June 2002, an empirical research amongst journalists employed in five Athens newspapers was performed in Panteion University, exploring the use of the Internet by Greek journalists. In this research, although 88% of journalists have acknowledged Internet access within newsrooms, half of them have revealed a certain difficulty in the utilisation of Internet connection. This was either due to

Although the usefulness of the Internet as a means of breaking new frontiers in journalism is not observed in the Greek press, in general, as S-JNG 2002 and other empirical research has shown, Internet use by journalists is growing significantly. In our survey, almost 80% of newspaper journalists often make use of the Net, a figure that could be characterised as satisfactory, if solid proof on quality improvements on journalism texts, or enhanced communications with readers could be established. As previously argued, editors have not seen any worth-mentioning progress in the quality of news writing. However important changes have occurred. A few years ago, accessing foreign institutions and downloading reports was something unimaginable for most Greek professionals. Nowadays it constitutes a daily practice. However, problems still exist, mainly in terms of connected computer devices availability within newsrooms, e-mail use on behalf of the audience, as well as the limited availability of advanced and sophisticated digital content in State or institutional websites for research purposes.

4.2.1.3.2 Owners, editors and journalists

Investigating journalistic practices, organisational structures as well as the application of news technology in newspapers offers some partial view of journalism routines applied within newsroom walls. But drawing the whole picture of operational influences on news making requires examining editorial policy and the owner's role, as well as the effects all the aforementioned elements have on journalistic ethics and moral reasoning.

In general, as Tiffen (1989) has argued, understanding the organisational context is necessary in order to specify the manipulation of news, "...either internally via managerial intervention or journalistic prejudice, or externally by particular news

limited resources (the specific connected PC was located outside the news desk), or due to time-consuming processes (queuing to go online). Also, as it was found by the same research, one PC for one journalist is a situation met in only 30% of the cases. Most journalists share connected PCs among each other. Source: Pliakos, K. (2002) *"Internet and Journalists"*. Panteion University. Located at <http://www.panteion.gr/~nleandr/works.htm> (Accessed 5 May 2003).

sources".⁷⁹ In this final part on the effect of organisational culture on news making, we analyse the influence newspaper owners have on journalists' professional lives.

It is widely accepted that newspaper owners constitute the most powerful figures in newspaper business.⁸⁰ They define policy according to their personal ideology, business interests or even likes or dislikes. Most importantly, they demand the conformity of their subordinates to various decisions made that are based on the above criteria. This is accomplished through the utilisation of a series of means that exercise pressure on news executives and journalists, such as the economic power that goes along with their entrepreneurial role and their acquaintances with powerful figures. These characteristics produce the power necessary to dictate and determine editorial policy, thus newspaper content.

As Snoddy (1993) has argued, "in most cases the freedom of editors to edit is largely a myth".⁸¹ They enjoy as much freedom as newspaper proprietors have decided to allow them. On the other hand, newspaper staffers have little choice but to follow the guidelines sketched by editors as regards the ways news should be handled.⁸²

This by no means suggests that conflict is commonly observed within newsrooms. Conformity to the owner's wishes and, even more, the legitimacy of interventions are accomplished through esoteric mental processes that in most cases lead to self-censorship. In the context of organisational culture and the effect culture developed within organisation has on their members, Epstein (1973) has argued that "... members of [large] organisations eventually [modify] their own personal values in accordance with the requisites of the organisation..."⁸³

⁷⁹ Tiffen, R. (1989), op. cit.

⁸⁰ For instance, see Evans, H. (1994) *Good Times, Bad Times*. London: Phoenix, Snoddy, R. (1993) *The Good, The Bad and The Unacceptable*. London: Faber and Faber, and others.

⁸¹ Snoddy, R. (1993) *The Good, The Bad and The Unacceptable*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 193.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Epstein, E.J. (1973) *News From Nowhere*. New York: Vintage Books, p. xiv.

In the case of Greek dailies, newspaper proprietors and the editors' role as the long arm of the owner are of particular significance. Although not widely acknowledged outside the profession, the influence of newspaper owners over news content is an issue commonly discussed amongst journalists. The weight journalists put on the owners' personal policies as a source of influence on news making depends highly on the character of the owners themselves, as well as on the proprietors' business interests in non-media entrepreneurial fields.

For a researcher, one of the main usefulness of Greek journalism literature lies in the provision of clues on the close relations newspaper proprietors, editors and journalists have always held with representatives of political, economic and entrepreneurial power. For instance, in the case of Christos Pasalaris, a long-experienced journalist, his interaction with various politicians, industrialists, and 26 media publishers over a period of almost 60 years has given his writings the authority of an experienced professional living close to the decision makers of his era. In his book *Media Barons*, Pasalaris (1994) argues:

The [Greek] history of 50 post-war years is characterised by a struggle between political power and the Press, between prime ministers and publishers, between political leaders and media barons.⁸⁴

Such accounts are utilised to complement other approaches employed, illustrating the traditional, as well as the contemporary, authoritative system that exists between a powerful triangle: newspapers, politics and the business environment. According to Pasalaris (1994):

Nowhere else in the civilized world, have the Lords of the Press had the power and the authority that is observed in the case of Greece. Nowhere else in the world have two to three large media houses managed to control public opinion as a whole, to such a degree as they have managed to do in Greece. Nowhere else has so much money been channelled to invisible and illegal transactions between the political system, major entrepreneurs and the Press.⁸⁵

Although the above statement seems quite extreme, it comes from a person with many years of experience in the journalistic profession. It also suggests an

⁸⁴ Pasalaris, C. (1994) *Media Barons*. Athens: Zarvanos, p. 49.

advanced role of Greek media barons in the political life of the country. And, if this influence is easily exercised in closed rooms and private meetings with prominent public figures, at a newsroom level things are more complicated. Besides, the editorial line expressed by news executives, the existence of self-disciplinary measures that secure the journalists' conformity to the newspaper's way of seeing things is noticed in almost all cases examined.

As media theorists have observed, working in a newspaper newsroom ensures a thorough understanding of the internal culture of the newspaper, as well as the owner's and top editor's wishes on how news should be treated. As all newspaper editors interviewed have admitted, the exercise of self-censorship is a common practice amongst journalists. This does not match the results of the V-PRC survey, discussed in the previous chapter, which showed that only a small proportion of professionals that prefer to censor themselves, rather than confront the presiding rules and guidelines (see Chapter III, Table 3.3). Moreover, according to V-PRC 2002, around 80% of journalists working in all sorts of Greek media face interventions in their job. The power of self-censorship as a practice was found diminished from 24% in 1999 to 12% in 2002. However, the transformation of traditional newspaper units into business oriented companies listed in the Stock Exchange constituted a period characterised by the reinforcement of interventions and the weakening of journalists' self-disciplinary function. This does not suggest the abolishment of self-censorship as a newsroom mechanism; in our view, it implies a transitional period in which new rules and guidelines had to be incorporated into daily journalistic practice.

In this process, journalists seem to express some kind of a resistance, at least in terms of what they consider as "best practice". Thus, in the framework of S-JNG 2002, journalists were asked if the articles they write expressed their professional conclusions alone, or followed the general editorial line of the newspaper, or finally they are a result of self-censorship. As seen in Table 4.12, 64.4% of all respondents claim that the articles they write express their professional conclusions alone, while

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 27.

a significant 35.6% argues that news writing is influenced either by the official editorial line, or by their personal mental self-disciplinary process. The proportion of newspaper journalists practicing self-censorship, in order to conform to the demands of the official editorial line of the newspaper, appears to have increased in the daily press, if compared with V-PRC's all media survey.

Table 4.12
News articles express...

...my professional conclusions alone	64.4%
...the official editorial line	9.3%
I practice self-censorship	26.3%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002' (N= 120)

As presented in Chapter III - Table 3.38, almost 90% of newspaper journalists declare that they are aware of proprietor's interventions in the production of news. However, more than 64% of respondents coming from the same professional group have argued that news articles express their professional conclusions alone. This evidence suggests that direct control over news writing is not always the case in Greek newsrooms.⁸⁶

An interesting observation emerges when previous data are compared with newspaper journalists' on-the-job experience. The following Table 4.13 combines evidence of Table 4.12, combined with the years of professional experience presented in Chapter III. Expressed in percentages, this evidence suggest a change in the behaviour of journalists over time and particularly in the way they see their role in relation to newsroom policies and guidelines. This is graphically presented in the accompanying Figure 4.1.

Table 4.13
Independence, conformity to the editorial line and self-censorship in relation to working experience

News articles express...	Less than 5	5 to 10 years	10 to 15 years	More than 15 years
Practice self-censorship / years on job	31,6%	21,9%	24,0%	28,6%
Independence / years on job	57,9%	71,9%	68,0%	59,5%
Conformity to editorial line / years on job	10,5%	6,3%	8,0%	11,9%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002' (N= 122)

⁸⁶ Moreover, cross tabulation of data has shown that these figures do not vary significantly in term of sex, age and education.

It seems that degrees of journalistic independence, conformity to the editorial line and self-censorship depend greatly on the years a journalist has worked within newsrooms. More importantly, in terms of these characteristics, a cycle is observed in the professional life of Greek newspaper journalists.

In the early stages of the journalists' professional life (less than 5 years of working experience) a low degree of independent thinking and a high degree of conformity to the editorial line and a significant trend towards self-censorship are observed. Progression in the profession (5 to 10 years on the job) seems to result in an increase in the independence journalists feel they possess and less conformity to the editorial line and self-censorship. This reaches a peak by the time that they have been 10 years on the job. After a decade or so (10-15 years), the average Greek journalist feels less confident to declare that he or she is independent, to promote more conformity to the editorial line and to argue that they practice self-censorship, a trend that is strengthened even more in the case of those with more than 15 years on the job.

Entering the journalistic profession in a relatively young age and being poorly qualified as regards the practical aspects of the job, younger Greek journalists seem willing to go along with the particularities of the newspaper environment. Their inexperience to newsroom practices and routines leads them to increased conformity, which they gradually acknowledge as the tricks of the trade. Therefore, they consider themselves as being less independent thinkers; they seem to obey more the editorial guidelines promoted by supervisors; and they are willing to practice self-censorship to the highest possible level.

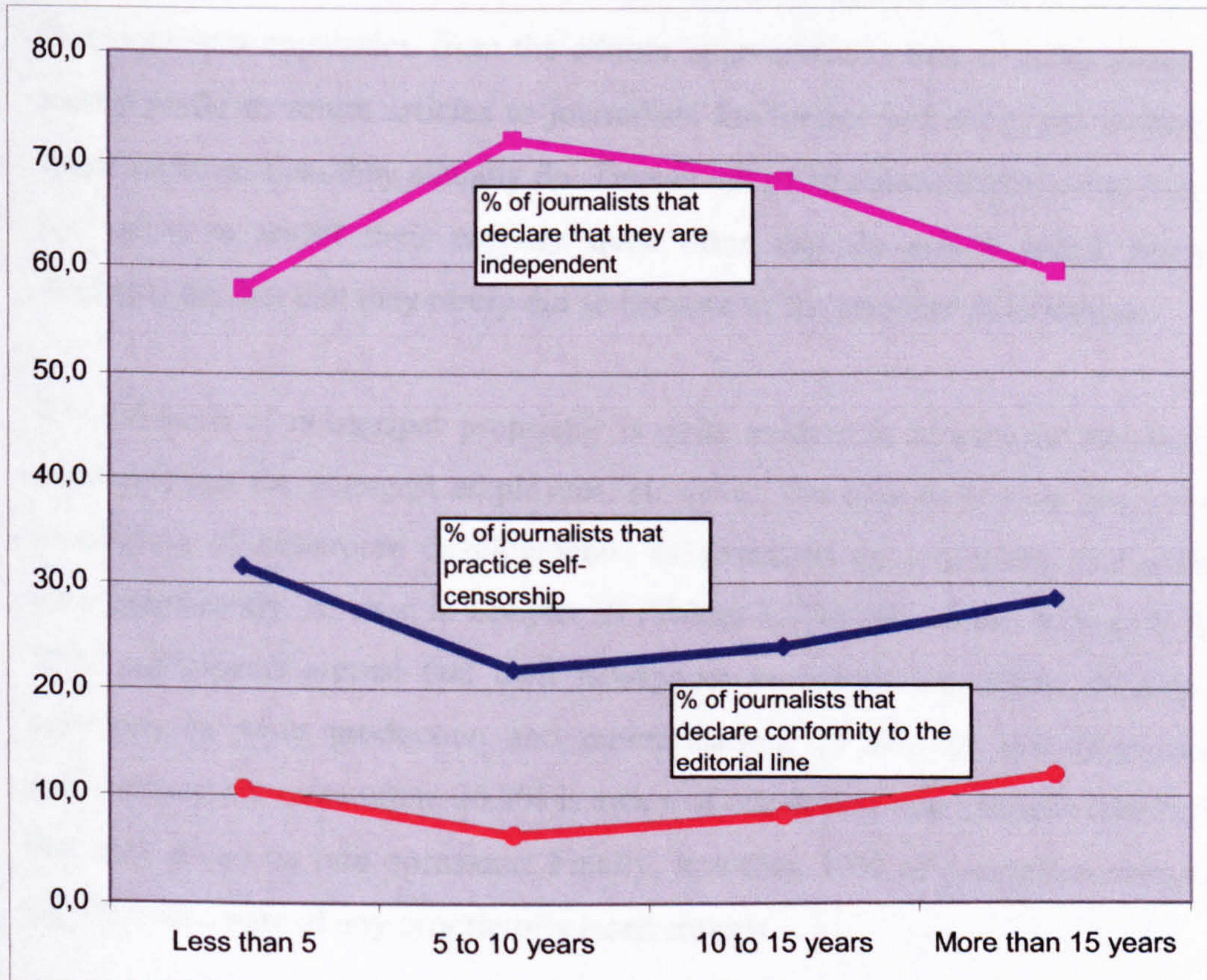
After a few years of work in a high-profile profession, journalists seem to move towards independence (or at least this is what they prefer to state) and conformity to the editorial line as a clearly evident practice, as well as self-censorship, appear to fall significantly. After a decade, their co-existence with powerful figures and the gradual building of acquaintances and source contacts makes them think twice about their initial notion of independence, since conflict of interests amongst

prominent figures and various agenda setting mechanisms eventually make them take sides in a battle already lost for the average media worker. Their impression of independence falls rapidly and conformity to editorial line and self-censorship rise again as the dominant forces affecting journalists as they move towards retirement.⁸⁷

Figure 4.1

The Life-Cycle of the Greek Newspaper Journalist

Independence, conformity to the editorial line and self-censorship in relation to working experience



Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News making in Greece 2002'.

In the journalists' eyes, the editors are the most powerful figures of the newsroom system. They are responsible for all news production procedures; they make decisions on a daily basis; and they participate in almost all evolutionary stages of the journalists' life. Almost all editors in the daily newspapers examined participate in recruitment processes and they regularly meet with the owner or publisher of the

⁸⁷ It should be noted however, that further research amongst a larger population of professionals is necessary in order to confirm this suggested trend in Greek journalism. Nonetheless, our present argument seems to reflect reality and to be confirmed by the comments of experienced journalists.

newspaper to discuss current affairs, strategy and managerial as well as journalistic issues.⁸⁸

Editorial line is communicated to journalists through face-to-face comments and guidelines on the way news should be written. The proactive manner is preferred in most cases, whilst interventions are occasionally performed after the news piece is written and, as stated by all editors, with full knowledge on behalf of the reporter. The dominant impression from the editors interviewed is that all news executives would prefer to return articles to journalists for further polishing and research in more instances than they actually do. Twelve out of 15 editors declare that they ask journalists to revisit their writings quite often and the others stated that they lamented the fact that they rarely did so because of the pressure of deadlines.

The presence of newspaper proprietor is quite evident in newspaper newsrooms, even amongst the youngest employees. However, the reasons behind the owner's monitoring of newsroom developments, as described by journalists and editors, vary significantly. As seen in Chapter III (Tables 3.37-3.39), almost 92% of S-JNG 2002 participants argued that their newspaper proprietor intervenes, directly or indirectly in news production and representation; 27.3% say that proprietor's interventions are quite often, 36.8% is aware of occasional interventions and 26.5% that they do so on rare occasions. Finally, less than 10% of journalists state that they are not aware of any proprietor's interventions.

From those newspaper journalists that have acknowledged owner's intervention, the great majority (78.3%) have promoted the promotion (and protection) of owners' non-media entrepreneurial interests as the most important reason. However, this is not in accordance to what the editors in the same newspapers have argued.

First of all, 11 out of the 15 editors maintained that newspaper proprietors rarely intervene in the news process. Of course, as it became apparent from discussions,

⁸⁸ In certain cases, the owner and the publisher are different persons. The latter, usually an experienced

direct intervention is probably unnecessary, since frequent meetings held between the owner and the news executives secure the exchange of views and guidelines needed for safeguarding the editorial line. In all newsroom cases, a general consensus between editors and newspaper ownership was observed, in terms of ideological as well as newspaper business goals. According to our research, the ideology of news executives is ranked second in terms of importance amongst a list of factors that are considered as influential to the formulation of newspaper's editorial line (see Table 4.14). Thus, the issue of ideology should be considered of significant importance not only on a proprietor's level, but also for the editors. The source of control over news content, therefore, can be primarily found in the proprietor-editor alliance that is formed in order to protect, not only newspaper's business interests, but also the dominant political ideology served by the paper.⁸⁹

Table 4.14

**Newspaper editors grade major factors
Influencing the editorial line**

Views and values of the newspaper's audience	132
Ideology of top news executives	115
Proprietor's personal Ideology	86
The circulation figures of the newspaper	83
Non-media business interests of newspaper owner	39
The advertisers' demands	37

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'. Note: Editors (N=15) were instructed to grade from 1 to 10 (10 goes to that factor that has the most negative influence); they were also asked to avoid the same grading of factors. Those who did not recognise some factors as influential in their news decisions were allowed to leave them blank.

It is widely argued amongst Greek media specialists and academics that one of the main changes in the Greek newspaper industry in recent decades is the entrance of entrepreneurs into the business.⁹⁰ This observation is historically connected with the issue of *diaplekomena symferonta* ("vested interests"), which suggests the inter-connection of newspaper ownership with State procurement. According to this argument, newspapers and other media such as television and radio stations, are

journalist, is a person of absolute trust of the former.

⁸⁹ Further analysis will show that newspapers in Greece are strongly or loosely attached to political parties. In S-JNG 2002, editors argued that their newspaper's editorial line is formed on a particular ideological basis.

⁹⁰ For instance, see Psihogios, D. (1992) *The Uncertain Future of the Athens Press* (Athens: Diavlos Publications), Leandros, N, (1992) *Mass Printed Media in Greece* (Athens: Dolphin) and others.

used by their proprietors for boosting their entrepreneurial interests in other, non-media business fields, such as construction, weapons, civil aviation, maritime, tourism etc.

However, when the issue of proprietorial intervention was raised in discussions with newspaper editors, most of them appeared relaxed, arguing that they were lucky to work for newspaper owners with no non-media business interests. This was the case in five out of the six leading Athens daily newspapers. Editors in *Ta Nea*, *Eleftherotypia*, *To Vima*, *Kathimerini* and *Eleftheros Typos*, although strongly of the view that ideological factors are a source of influence on the way news is handled (including here specific political party affiliations), refused to accept that their owner's non-media entrepreneurial interests affected their daily news coverage. The same was true of senior journalists interviewed in *Express*, *Nastemporiki*, *Kosmos tou Ependyti*, *Apogevmatini* and other newspapers.⁹¹

The owner of *Kathimerini*, Aristides Alafouzos, who has invested heavily in shipping, although ideologically concerned with the paper's editorial line, does not mix his entrepreneurial activities with news coverage.⁹² *Ethnos* and its sister paper *Imerisia* constitute a separate case, since their owner Giorgos Bobolas is directly involved (through a construction company run by family members) in a large number of major public works of national importance. Therefore, supporting the governing party is commonly considered to be of paramount importance for Bobolas' entrepreneurial interests. However, even in this case of clearly defined corporate interests, the ideological criterion is still powerful. Their newspaper editors are ideologically placed on the socialist and left wings, securing not only support for the PaSoK government, but also an appropriate editorial line in tune with the newspaper's readership of predominantly PaSoK's voters.⁹³

⁹¹ Interviews with editors at these newspapers.

⁹² Antonis Karakousis, editor of *Kathimerini*, personal interview, June 9, 2001.

⁹³ For a categorisation of Greek political dailies in terms of their political affiliations, see Kominis, L. (1993), *The Secrets of journalism: Applied Journalism* (Volume II), Athens: Kastaniotis (2nd edition), pp. 72-103. When the present thesis was completed, PaSoK party was still in power. In March 7 2004, New Democracy party came into power.

Taking the six highest circulation Athens dailies, it seems that serving the non-media entrepreneurial interests of their owners, is not clearly the dominant source of influence for newsroom editorial line, even though the journalists responding say that they think that this is the case for the industry as a whole. Politics and the publishers' personal ideology still play a vital role (see Table 4.15). Only two of these newspaper owners have entrepreneurial interests that are traced outside the media sector. The owners of the titles *Ta Nea*, *To Vima*, *Eleftherotypia*, and *Eleftheros Typos* are traditional publishers. The three first are politically affiliated to the centre-left and the fourth is governed by a right-wing Foundation.⁹⁴ Only the owners of *Ethnos* (centre-left) and *Kathimerini* (centre-right) hold interests in the construction and shipping sectors respectively. However, as research has shown, even in these cases, political ideology plays a prominent role each time newspaper owners put forward arguments concerning the editorial line.

Table 4.15

Top-6 Athens daily political newspapers (year average nationwide daily copy sales)

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
2001	<i>Ta Nea</i> 84,464	<i>Eleftherotypia</i> 79,287	<i>Ethnos</i> 53,705	<i>To Vima</i> 50,473	<i>Kathimerini</i> 40,509	<i>Eleftheros Typos</i> 36,986
2002	<i>Ta Nea</i> 83,073	<i>Eleftherotypia</i> 79,005	<i>Ethnos</i> 50,882	<i>To Vima</i> 48,806	<i>Kathimerini</i> 42,426	<i>Eleftheros Typos</i> 39,597

Source: Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association. Note: for a full representation of the period 1975-2002, see Appendix.

Finally, when editors were asked to offer explanations for the "rare" interventions on behalf of the owner, the major reasons they gave for this practice were, first, serving the business interests of the newspaper itself and, second, serving their personal ideology and views (see Appendix).

⁹⁴ According to Law 2328/95, media owners or stakeholders are not allowed to participate in public procurement. In the case of newspapers, the law is respected. Only a few cases are found to have violated the relevant legislation: first, the case of Christos Lambrakis, owner of newspapers *To Vima* and *Ta Nea*, who owns also a travel agency that was found to supply travel services to government services (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Telecommunications Organisation) and second, the case of C. Tegopoulos, owner of newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, who via his company participates in *Mediaphone*, a telecommunications joint venture with state-owned Commercial Bank. See Psihogios, D. (2001) "The myth and the truth about vested interests", *To Vima*, February 2, 2001. In June 2003, the previous law was amended by Law 3021/2002, which provides for restrictions (of the previous character) for people who are "major shareholder" in media organisations. For details, see *Ministry of Press and Mass Media* (<http://www.minpress.gr/epopteia/meson.htm>). Accessed 10 July 2003.

Overall, the owner's presence in the formulation of the daily news agenda has been substantiated from all possible sources of information. However, the views promoted by journalists and editors vary. Of great interest are the editor's views on the general situation that governs the newspapers proprietors' influence on news making. When news executives were asked about their opinion on the newspaper industry as a whole, all of them argued that owners intervene in order to promote non-media related corporate affairs and goals. But who are these people newspaper editors refer to? If we exclude the clear-cut cases of Bobolas, (*Ethnos, Imerisia*), the publisher of *Aneksartitos* (Independent), mentioned in Chapter II, and the alleged publisher of the financial daily *Kerdos* (Th. Liakounakos, who is traditionally involved in arms deals with the Ministry of Defence)⁹⁵ and a handful of other minor players, then no major figure are left to fit the notion of entrepreneurs who invest in the press to support other personal goals.

Thus, it could be argued that major newspapers in Greece are owned by people who meet primarily the description of the traditional publisher: one who is heavily politicised, keeps strong relations with political parties and is more interested in promoting their personal well being, rather than investing in non-media corporate fields. In any case, their influence on news content and the way journalists perform their daily tasks is quite significant and their senior editors ensure that it reaches into all facets of the newsroom's daily operation.

4.2.1.4 Professional ethics

A thorough exploration of the human factor in the journalistic profession requires an inter-disciplinary approach to all the various pressures exercised on the average journalistic mind. In this particularly complex environment, personal values, education and expertise, along with on-the-job training seem to play a significant role in a profession characterised by flexible rules and procedures.

⁹⁵ See *Eleftherotypia*, 10 June 1997. Located at <http://www.hri.org/E/1997/97-06-10.dir/keimena/greece/greece1.htm> (accessed 5 June 2003). Also *Eleftherotypia* 24 February 2001. Located at http://www.enet.gr/online/online_hprint.jsp?q=%EB%E9%E1%EA%EF%F5%ED%DC%EA%EF%F2&a=&id=51755540 (accessed 5 June 2003).

In the Greek newspaper market, codes of ethics are not unknown. However, their existence is relatively recent. The current code of ethics of ESHEA was introduced in 1997 and in July 1998 was adopted by the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions (POESY) as the primary text governing the journalism profession as a whole.⁹⁶ The formulation of this code was the first part of a general plan that, in a second phase, would include the establishment of a Press Council, which would acquire a regulatory role, dealing with the examination of the public's complaints, misbehaviour and unprofessional attitudes of journalists and other journalism issues of importance for the profession.⁹⁷ The whole plan remains incomplete; despite discussions since the mid-1990s, the Council has still not been created in mid-2003.⁹⁸

The protective mechanism for the public from the press' extreme behaviour still relies solely on principles of civil law as well as complaints put forward to the First Level Disciplinary Committee of ESHEA. This essentially means that people's complaints against journalistic practices are examined and handled by journalists themselves. Finally, when lawsuits of people, who consider that they were harmed by the press, end up to be heard by civil courts, the letter of the law does not include the examination of "actual malice" (as in the case of the US).⁹⁹

⁹⁶ The discussion about the need to draw a code of ethics has been a long-standing one in Greek journalism. The Greek press has a long history of interventions that have caused scepticism as regards the necessity of a set of guidelines that perhaps could give room to the Government to intervene (as it has already happened in the case of television). The creation of the ESHEA Code of Ethics was an initiative of the then President Aristides Manolakos.

⁹⁷ Vangelis Delipetros, former Special Secretary of ESHEA Board, personal interview, 20 July 2001.

⁹⁸ For the time being, the Press Council is unofficially replaced by the joint session of the First and Second Level Disciplinary Committees that examines and takes decisions on all issues of increased importance and produces policy. The two Disciplinary Committees basically examine disputes between journalists. See for instance *Kaneli vs Kakaounakis* case in ESHEA archives, located at <http://www.esiea.gr/gr/2arxeio/2003/06/02.htm> (Accessed 2 July 2003). This particular case illustrates also the argument, expressed in Chapter III, about the relaxed disciplinary measures taken by ESHEA. In this case, although Kakaounakis was found guilty for verbally insulting (Mrs.) Kaneli on television and he was initially punished with six months expulsion from the Union, finally he escaped with a simple reprimand after appealing to a Second Level.

⁹⁹ However, in some cases the concept of "actual malice" does play a role. For instance, when *Eleftherotypia* published a wrong photograph in a piece that accused famous athletes involved in racketeering, the paper was convicted in Court. The Court acknowledged, however, that the publication of the wrong photograph was clearly a result of a technical mistake. Finally, according to special legislation drawn for the case of defamation, civil courts are obliged to process cases as soon as possible. This is of particular significance, since a major problem of the Greek judicial system is the extremely long delays in the examination of cases that can sometimes take longer than a year to be heard.

Analysis of journalism ethics requires the consideration of a series of factors. Identifying their presence and ways of functioning could assist in evaluating the level of ethical standards in the profession. These, already sketched briefly in Chapter II, are here elaborated by looking at the following elements.

- First, academic literature and advanced research on media ethics in general and journalism in particular;
- Second, specialised professional education which approaches journalism through a holistic view that, inter alia, would stress its social responsibility and goals;
- Third, acknowledgement amongst journalists of a dynamic role for professional bodies and of their power in the efficient consulting and guiding of the profession;
- Fourth, relevant discussions within newsrooms as well as the existence of clearly defined, written points of reference drawn by the leading professionals in the newspaper who could inspire the young; more importantly the operation of safeguarding mechanisms (e.g. newspaper ombudsman, written codes of practice, etc.);
- Fifth, knowledge of foreign practices in the field;
- Sixth, the general socio-political situation in terms of presiding values as well as cultural elements that would reinforce the human factor to be involved in ethical behaviour.

As already argued in Chapter III, in-depth discussions, fieldwork and research publications on journalism ethics are rare for the Greek market, a fact that leaves journalists in practice with no defined or effective guidelines. Moreover, the general absence of specialised journalism studies deprives the profession of the analysis of case studies, guidance and fruitful debate. Also, the role of the most powerful union, ESHEA, is limited to sporadic advice and exhortations and lacks any serious disciplinary power.

Thus, it not surprising that newspaper journalists have a low opinion of the proactive, or even the reactive, interventional role of professional bodies. As S-JNG 2002 found, presented in Chapter III, Table 3.25, the union's inefficiency and weakness to promote the ideals of journalism and to protect the profession is cited as its major characteristic by 60% of respondents. Similarly newspaper editors cite the union's leading players' attempts to promote personal interests as a key characteristic of ESHEA.

This general picture is reflected within newsrooms, in which no written code of ethics or relevant guidelines for staffers are found to exist. As 12 out of 15 editors stated, ethical issues are never discussed amongst news executives. Moreover, half of the editors were not aware of the situation in mature newspaper markets, such as the US and even fewer editors had knowledge of the existence and the role of the newspaper ombudsman in the American press (see Appendix). This evidence reinforces the general view that journalists and editors know very little about foreign practice, something that is also backed up by the results of V-PRC 2002 survey, which suggested that around 82% of all Greek journalists have limited international experience.¹⁰⁰

Certain characteristics of Greek journalism are directly related to the ethical standards observed in the profession. The V-PRC 2002 survey revealed that 48% of Greek journalists believe that there is widespread corruption in Greek journalism. Moreover, research amongst newspaper journalists, presented in Chapter III, showed the extent of the participation of journalists in free trips as well as for their parallel employment in private and public press offices.¹⁰¹

In general, the journalists' weak belief in the potential of self-regulation of the press industry (almost 70% consider it useless in the case of Greece) and their

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter III.

¹⁰¹ More specifically, around 69% of all respondents have participated in trips abroad during the last decade, whose expenses were covered by private companies, 56% of all respondents have participated in trips abroad, following public figures, while a quarter of newspaper journalists staff PR or press officers positions in the private and public sector (a detailed discussion on conflict of interest is held when source-journalist relation as a factor of influence of news is tackled).

strong reliance on State intervention (more than 69% in favour) reveal a general lack of identification with the traditional beliefs and values of the profession in other western countries, such as freedom, independence and its social watchdog function.¹⁰² Direct and indirect benefits associated with the profession also play a significant role in undermining ethics.¹⁰³

The participation of journalists in trips financed by institutions that are sources of information is a characteristic example. As S-JNG 2002 found (see Tables 3.30 and 3.31 in Chapter III), around 60% of newspaper journalists have participated in trips abroad organised by private businesses or public corporations and Ministries during the last decade. The frequency of participation ranges from one to ten times (an average of once a year), to fifty or hundreds of times, depending on the area of reporting. Similarly, almost all newspaper editors have declared that they participate in these trips, with the expenses predominantly covered by the host.¹⁰⁴ During the preparation, as well as the period that follows the trip, the journalist-guest gets acquainted with a number of people throughout the institution's hierarchy. These are potential future contacts for the journalist. The press office is central in this process, since any positive published coverage that emerges from good relations with journalists constitutes evidence of success for the institution's top management. This is particularly evident in the area of business reporting.

This personal network for information retrieval is central in every Greek journalist's life. This is clearly illustrated by S-JNG 2002 evidence, according to which 83% of newspaper journalists have declared that personal contacts are the primary sources of information for their stories.¹⁰⁵ The journalists' relationships

¹⁰² It should be noted that the Ministry of Press and the Mass Media, following a *National Broadcasting Council* proposal, has introduced Presidential Decree 77/2003 (signed 28 March 2003) that provides for a "Code of Ethics as regards News and Other Journalistic and Political Broadcast Shows". Although it does not affect the press, it is the first time that a journalism code has been part of official legislation.

¹⁰³ For instance, journalists accredited to the Ministry of Mercantile Marine can travel for free with privately owned coastal ships. Moreover, journalists of the peripheral island press enjoy a 50% discount on fares (*Eleftherotypia*, 12 November 2002, p. 49).

¹⁰⁴ Around half of newspaper editors said that their newspaper covers some proportion of travelling costs. However, this relates to personal expenses and not to air tickets, hotels, etc, which are covered by the hosting corporation or Ministry.

¹⁰⁵ A full discussion on this matter is found in 2.2.1.

with press offices reinforce this practice, not only through personal affiliations, but also via friends and fellow reporters who can arrange appropriate connections in the framework of professional courtesy.¹⁰⁶ Taking into account factors like the small size of the Greek market, the presence of active journalists in press offices, and the part played by journalists in public relations, it is clear that reporting practices and routines in Greece are heavily dictated by the agendas set by the institutions employing those who provide journalists with their contacts.

Accepting free trips and gifts from private and public companies in return for journalistic news work is a practice that undoubtedly conflicts with the common view in other countries of the independence that a journalist should preserve.¹⁰⁷ For example, Kominis (1990) provides an interesting account:

As a young reporter I was invited to the opening of a factory. In the press kit distributed to the press by the Public Relations office a gold pocket watch was included. It was the first gift I accepted as a journalist... Returning to the newspaper (and without being obliged, or asked) I felt that I had to do my best to promote the news piece; to write it in a sympathetic way and to get it printed as lengthy as possible. This example illustrates the degree of emotional commitment that derives from the reception of a gift from someone who tries to gain as much access in the media as they possibly can...¹⁰⁸

This “emotional commitment” that derives from a gift passed to journalists from press offices in private corporations or public organisations can easily be transformed into the formulation of powerful and crude strings between news people and source institutions seeking to promote their own agendas. The influence of such gifts on journalistic work is one thing. The conflict of interest involved in journalists actually being on the payrolls of institutions while also working for newspapers is even clearer.

However, the journalistic profession is not unique in this respect. After all, journalists are members of their society. As argued in the literature chapter, society

¹⁰⁶ Discussions with journalists, as well as personal experience of the author indicate that when a journalist is asked by a colleague for assistance in reporting, the most probable response is the name of a press officer contact.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, see *The Washington Post Standards and Ethics*, published February 16, 1999 (<http://www.asne.org/ideas/codes/washingtonpost.htm>). Accessed 30/5/2002.

¹⁰⁸ Kominis, L. (1990) *The Secrets of Journalism – Vol. 1 Deontology*. Athens: Kastaniotis, p. 57.

and national culture could be seen as importance influences shaping the ethical concerns in journalism. Thus, the general socio-political situation, analysed further below, could be seen as playing a significant role in determining the ethical standards not only for journalists, but for the Greek society as a whole.

In the ESHEA “Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility”, it is stated that journalists are obliged:

- a) To neither pursue nor accept rewards from private appropriations of state departments and public or private organisations for his journalistic work;
- b) To neither pursue nor accept sinecure or rewarded position related to his specialty in the Press Office, public services or private enterprises, which place his professional autonomy and independence in doubt;
- c) To neither pursue nor accept promotional usage of his name, voice or image, except for purposes of public benefit;
- d) To neither report nor self-interestedly utilise exclusive information which influences the course of stock exchange values and the market;
- e) To neither pursue nor accept any financial or commodity bonus whatsoever which offends his credibility and dignity and which influences his independence and impartiality.¹⁰⁹

Journalists need to have contacts with prominent figures of politics, the economy and business. Therefore, socialising with the rich and the powerful may result in journalists imitating the attitudes of such people. Thus, the acceptance of rewards and gifts, the pursuit of paid positions in press or public relations offices, the “cashing in” of reputation by participation in advertising and marketing campaigns, and their inclusion in payrolls at large corporate institutions are means of tasting the wealth they are describing in their writings.¹¹⁰

However, the conflict of such behaviours with a journalist’s need to maintain independence and objectivity is only too obvious.

In the Greek market, all guidelines of ESHEA are ignored. In Chapter III, evidence of S-JNG 2002 suggested a close relationship of journalists with press offices and public relations mechanisms (analysed further in the part on sources). There is

¹⁰⁹ ESHEA “Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility”. Located at www.esiea.gr (accessed 2 May 2002).

¹¹⁰ Kamaras, D., 2003, op. cit.

overwhelming anecdotal evidence of journalists being on the payrolls of large banks, ministries and large corporations.¹¹¹ Moreover, despite ESHEA's clear guidelines, famous journalists do lend their names and their image in advertising campaigns of private companies, particularly in the case of broadcast journalism. Even here, some cases are more serious than others. For instance, seeing a television news anchor promoting vitamins is one thing, but watching a popular financial television reporter promoting a new name for a financial institution is another.¹¹² Finally, the active participation of financial journalists in rapid rise and fall of the Athens Stock Exchange (ASE) in the period 1999-2001 is asserted as a fact by almost all news executives interviewed here.¹¹³

All the above constitute elements that, combined with other factors of influence of an external nature, such as the power of sources, advertising revenues and the general socio-political situation in the country, lead us to argue that Greek journalists are significantly dominated by the actions and strategies emerging from the centres of political, economic and business power.

4.2.2 External factors

In the previous section, internal factors of influence of news, such as the human factor, professional routines and practices, newsroom structure and culture, the role of the owner as well as professional ethical standards were examined in order to illustrate the power of in-house parameters that affect news work. We now turn to the external factors of influence, such as the role of sources in determining news output, advertising as a primary source of income for newspapers and the weight newsrooms put on newspaper audience and the dominant beliefs and values of society.

¹¹¹ The existence of payroll lists in the profession is widely accepted by all experienced journalists and journalism union figures. Cross-checking of this information would be impossible.

¹¹² There are a lot of examples. For instance, Nikos Hatzinikolaou, general news director at Alpha TV, a prominent television station in Greece has repeatedly lent his image for the advertising need of a private journalism laboratory; Nikos Evangelatos, the chief anchorman of Alter (TV) Channel has advertised vitamins; Giorgos Aftias, a financial reporter at the country's leading television station Alpha TV has participated in an advertising campaign by Nationale Nederlanden that was recently renamed to ING (see advertisement in newspaper *To Vima*, 26 January 2002, page A21).

4.2.2.1 The role of sources

To begin, it is worth focusing on Schudson's (1991) perspective that traces the centre of the generation of news in

...the link between reporter and official, the interaction of the representatives of the news bureaucracies and the government bureaucracies.¹¹⁴

One of the most important rituals for Greek political reporters is the daily gathering in the pressroom of the Ministry of the Press and the Mass Media for the briefing. In the briefing, the Minister and Government Spokesperson informs journalists on the policies and activities of the Government, comments on statements coming from the Opposition, etc. In this gathering, the Spokesperson promotes government policy and gives it the official spin. This process constitutes the daily feeding process of political reporters with commonly distributed material. From then onwards, scoops and exclusive information are a matter of personal acquaintances, affiliations with sources and the journalists' competence. In this process, some sources are considered better than others.

As Tuchman (1978) has argued:

...Reporters negotiate their intricate relationships with one another and with sources. Through this ongoing interaction, they identify the sorts of people who will serve as good sources of information about occurrences at legitimated institutions.¹¹⁵

As further analysis will show, the reliance of Greek journalism on "legitimate" sources, usually personal acquaintances, has as the result that news treatment is increasingly dictated by sources. Also, in a breaking news situation, sources are utilised to offer explanations and reaction on developments. Essentially this means that, more and more, journalists rely on broadly accepted institutionalised sources

¹¹³ Kamaras, D. (2003) "Journalism, Corruption and the Public Interest". Speech in the Conference *Public Life and the Media: Symptoms of Corruption and Effects on Civil Society*, organised by the Institute of Journalism Studies & Research (IDME) and the Botsis Foundation, Athens 30/6-1/7/2003.

¹¹⁴ Schudson, M. (1991), op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. London: The Free Press, pp. 212-213.

for the identification and handling of news events. Sources on the other hand satisfy journalists by offering them appropriate information for handling any given event.

In the following section, an attempt is made to approach the journalist-source relationship through the views of newspaper journalists themselves. In S-JNG 2002, journalists were asked about their general perception of the role of official sources in news gathering (Table 4.16). According to survey results, more than half of respondents said that official sources play an equally important role as all other information sources; 22% of newspaper journalists attached to official sources the most important role in news gathering, while 25% said that they play a relatively small role.

Table 4.16

Official and accredited sources of Information play...

...an equally important role as all other information sources	53%
...a relatively small role	25%
...the most important role in news gathering	22%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002' (N=120)

Discussions with journalists and editors have illuminated further what the average Greek journalist considers as information emerging from “official and accredited sources”. In the journalist’s mind, this is information defined as the product of structured communication processes to the media, namely press releases and texts of speeches commonly distributed by press offices and PR specialists. It could be argued that the rapid organisation of public relations mechanisms in the Greek communication market has led journalists to separate the bureaucratic mechanisms found in various organisations (e.g. press offices in private and public sector) from their personal contacts with people employed in the same bureaucratic outlets. However, in both cases, sources are officials working in corporations and public services, who essentially serve the interests of their employers.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ These findings have been cross-checked through personal interviews with editors, as well as from face-to-face interaction with newspaper journalists as regards the role of “official and accredited sources”.

Therefore, when newspaper reporters were asked to state, according to their experience, what they consider to be their most usual initial source of information, their answers were: personal sources (65%), followed by press releases (52%) and official sources (49%). The Internet, which was dealt with separately in the questionnaire, came fourth in terms of preference at almost 27%.

Table 4.17

**Use of sources by the average Greek newspaper journalist
(the general view)**

Personal sources	65%
Press releases	52%
Official sources	49%
The Internet	27%
Other media	18 %

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'.

Note: Journalists were instructed to mark all possible choices (N=124)

The general impression of professionals as regards the dominance of personal sources in information gathering is even more reinforced when they were asked about their own personal habits during the collection of information and news investigation (Table 4.18). Personal sources are placed first in the preferences of respondents (83%), followed by their personal archive (72%) and official sources (67%). The Internet and media clippings follow with 65% and 45% respectively, whilst libraries, research centres and the academia are placed last with 32.5%.

Table 4.18

Use of sources in writing (personal practices)

Personal sources	83%
Personal archive	72%
Official sources	67%
Internet	65%
Media clippings	45%
Libraries, research centres, universities	32%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'.

Note: Journalists were instructed to mark all possible choices (N=124).

In this context, it is worth exploring Hall's concept of "primary definition" offered by accredited and widely legitimised people, who are used as sources by

journalists and whose primary explanation of events and occurrences is thought of as being exceptionally powerful.¹¹⁷ In the framework of S-JNG, journalists were asked:

Suppose a local news story breaks. What is the main source of information to which you usually address your request, in order to get the first details of the news event?

The responses are shown in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Sources for breaking story

My own personal sources	72%
Official sources (ministries, State departments, etc.)	62%
Journalists/friends working in other media	39%
Other media (e.g. radio, news agencies, Internet, etc.)	32%
Other fellow journalists working in the same medium	26%

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'. Note: Journalists were instructed to mark all possible choices (N=124).

It seems that the “primary definition” emerges from the journalists’ personal source network, as well as from official institutions that are in a position to offer credible information on the subject matter. Moreover, it is quite clear that in a situation where information is quickly needed, journalists prefer to resort to “safe harbours”, such as personal sources and official institutional outlets, rather than searching alternative information sources. Also, journalists seem to rely less to fellow professionals or other media for the initial definition of news, while fellow journalists working within the newsroom are rarely used for this purpose.

According to newspaper editors, primary research of journalists and news beats are considered the most important sources of information gathering, as a starting point for further journalistic research; news agencies (in the case of international news), Internet news sites and press releases follow in terms of importance. A certain amount of information interesting enough to be assigned to reporters for further work emerges from readers’ letters and emails (see Table 4.20).

¹¹⁷ Hall, S. et. al. (1978) ‘The Social Production of News: Mugging in the Media’ in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds.) *The Manufacture of News* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981, revised edition) - Extracts from

*Table 4.20***Major sources of primary information as a starting point for further journalistic research (the editors' view)**

Primary research	138
News beats (ministries, State departments, etc.)	125
News agencies	122
Internet news sites	89
Press releases	84
Readers' letters	70
Readers emails	64

Source: Kamaras (2002) 'Survey on Journalism & News Making in Greece 2002'. Note: Editors (N=15) were instructed to grade from 1 to 10 (10 goes to that factor that has the most negative influence); they were also asked to avoid the same grading of factors. Those who did not recognise some factors as influential in their news decisions were allowed to leave them blank.

Despite the fact that personal networking is generally considered as an element of best practice in the profession, the journalist-source relation observed in Greek journalism constitutes an area that most editors consider to be problematic. What seems to govern the mind of newspaper editors is that the close personal relationships of journalists with press offices and public relations specialists is a distorting factor for the production of news.¹¹⁸

The close relationship that journalists maintain with communication mechanisms in the private and public sector could be explained to a certain degree by the employment of active news reporters in press offices in the private and public sector, previously discussed.¹¹⁹ Thus, it is necessary to explore the role of the journalist–press officer in news making in order to fully understand the particularities of the Greek information flow. Journalists officially employed by private and public enterprises, along with those who are unofficially active in the public relations field, constitute a significant group of experienced professionals that hold a dual role: they are both journalists and sources of information for other journalists. Another aspect of this unique phenomenon is the potential distortion on

Hall, S. et. al. *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

¹¹⁸ See Appendix

¹¹⁹ S-JNG 2002 evidence, presented in Chapter III, has revealed that around a quarter of newspaper journalists are employed in press offices in private and public organisations, while 6 out of 15 newspaper editors interviews (40%) participate unofficially in the formation of communications strategy of various power groups; finally, according to V-PRC estimations, the total number of journalists employed as press officers reaches 400 professionals for the case of Athens alone.

the news caused by the possibility that the journalist's field of coverage may be similar that of the company in which he/she is employed as a press officer.

The fact that around 400 journalists in Athens are also employed in key PR positions in the private or public sector means that on many occasions journalists' quest for information, or the request for an interview with a prominent business or political figure, has to go through a fellow journalist. The fact that these positions are held in the most important and newsworthy organisations demonstrates the power certain professionals have over their colleagues and over the definition and production of the story itself. This kind of corrosion of independent journalistic reporting from within achieved on behalf of the rich and powerful institutions and business or political figures greatly affects the production of news, since Greek journalists seem to accept this operational mode as normal.¹²⁰

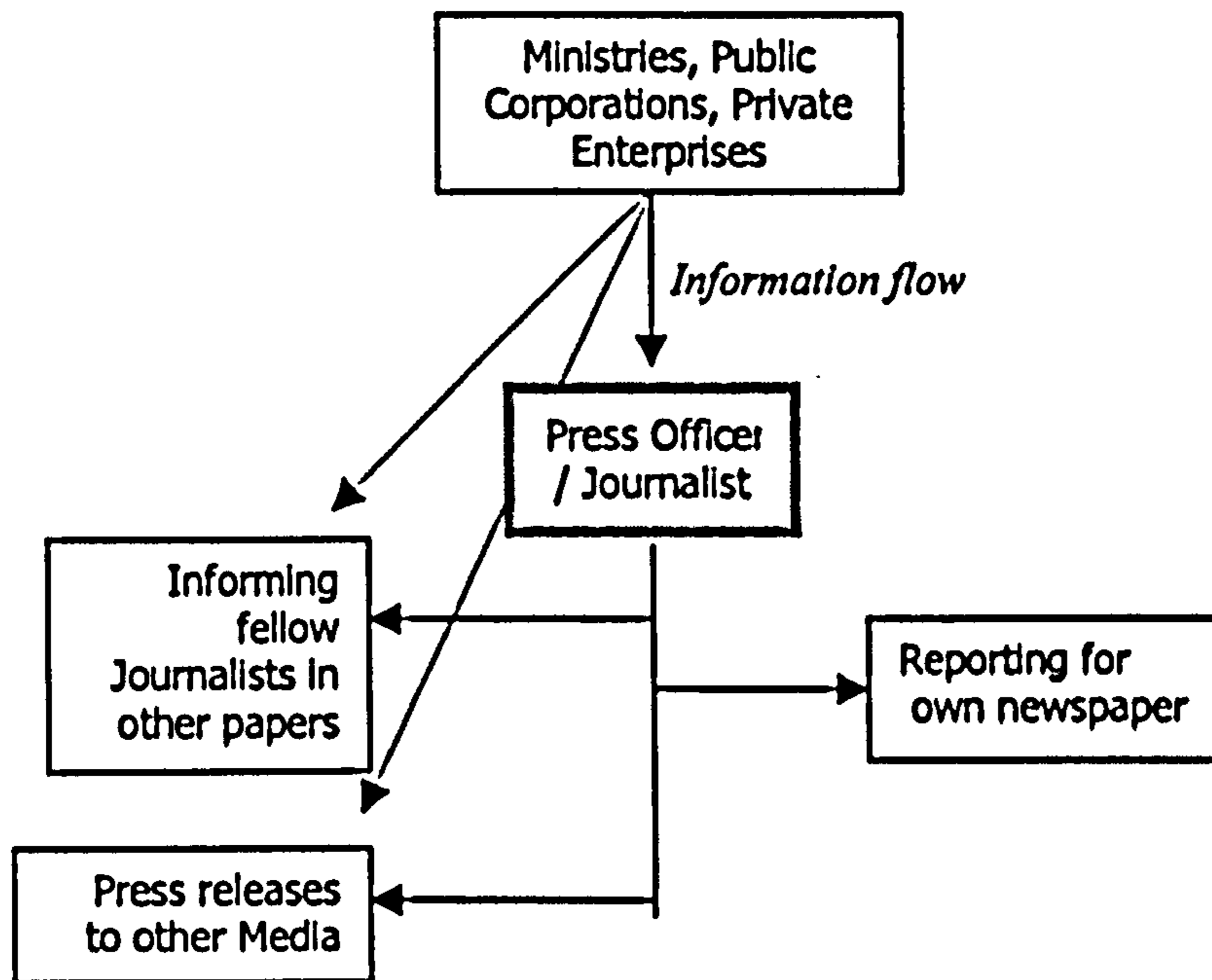
The multiple role of the journalist – press officers refers primarily to their participation in the implementation of corporate strategy for a third party, simultaneously with their occupation as active journalists (Figure 4.2). Occasionally, the third party is a public corporation run by government officials or large private corporations, to which newspaper journalists are supposed to address questions as regards their views, strategic policy and managerial effectiveness. Another crucial part of this role is the returning of favours at an appropriate moment. In some other cases the bargaining between the journalist as a source and the reporter who is pursuing a story is quite evident. As a business editor has put it:

It is a matter of balance ... because [there are cases in which] a journalist [working] in a press office, who is acquainted to you, asks you not to publish the story because it will make a great harm to him [and the company he works for] ... and in return he will give you something else exclusively in the future...¹²¹

¹²⁰ Kamaras, D. (1995) *News Production in Greece with special reference to the Athens News Agency*. Unpublished MA thesis, School of Social Science, Department of Sociology, City University, London.

¹²¹ Kasimatis, A., personal interview, July 14, 1995. Mr Kasimatis was then Business Editor of *Imerisia* (Daily). Currently he is working in the daily *To Vima*.

Figure 4.2
The Multiple Role of the Journalist – Press Officer



The close relationship of journalists with sources is not only established through the investigation of the proportion of professionals directly employed in institutional communication and public relations mechanisms, or through their general relationships with news dissemination channels. It can also be substantiated in more simple forms of journalistic functioning. For instance, in the area of political reporting, journalists assigned to the coverage of a specific political field can become accredited to the respective political parties. In this case, potential dilemma exists as concerns the political ideology of journalists themselves. Sometimes editors prefer to assign journalists to cover political parties that correspond with their personal ideology, since they gain more access and can produce more informative news pieces. On the other hand, in-depth and balanced analysis can only emerge from journalists who are independent thinkers, who can be more sceptical about the communications strategy of key political party figures.

As an editor in a large afternoon daily put it:

In essence, journalists are not reporting on PaSoK or New Democracy, or other parties' activities and views. They perform "source reporting", namely they report

what prominent figures, placed at the top of party hierarchy, are saying. Thus, preferential relationships are developed between journalists and sources, with the latter to search for every possible opportunity to channel their views to the news media.¹²²

In general, the controlling power of sources is evident in the case of Greek journalism. Close attachments of professionals with institutions and political parties, as a result of the strong politicisation of major Greek dailies, the absence of investigative reporting, the general weak professionalism of journalists, the limited academic research and public debate and ineffectiveness of professional bodies constitute a scene in which the press' role as a watchdog is significantly crippled.

In the next chapter, certain future prospects will be discussed that could raise hopes for the profession. For instance, the advent of new technology, particularly the Internet, has changed the news gathering process. The search for background information no longer has to pass necessarily through the sources filters.¹²³ However, in the Greek case, for the time being, poor on-line resources and limited digital content available have still maintained the powerful role of institutional sources and their representatives.

4.2.2.2 The role of advertising

In the literature chapter, a series of factors drew attention to increasing commercialism as a dominant trend in the newspaper industry. In this context, audience beliefs and values and the general socio-political environment, tackled in the next section, as well advertising constitute significant sources of influence on news making.

In the last 50 years, the Greek advertising sector has experienced a continuous growth, particularly during the 1990s.¹²⁴ According to *ICAP* (a research company that specialises in monitoring and analysis industrial sectors), in the period 1999-

¹²² Vangelis Delipetros, Content Editor in *Eleftherotypia*, personal interview, 20 July 2001.

¹²³ See also Fleming, C. (2000) 'Journalism and New Technology', in Hugo de Burgh (ed.) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge, p. 189.

¹²⁴ ICAP S.A. (2003) 'Guarded optimism in advertising sector', April. Located at http://www.icap.gr/news/index_uk_2318.asp (Accessed 20 July 2003).

2002, total advertising expenditure increased by 19% increase (there was a 13.4% increase in advertising expenditure in the main media and a substantial 89% for outdoor advertising).¹²⁵

According to *Media Services*, total advertising expenditure in the Greek media continued to increase throughout the 1996-2002 period (Table 4.21). In the newspaper market in particular, the three-year period 1998-2000 was characterised by an increase of almost 54%, which is higher than the figure observed for the press industry as a whole (47.5%, including magazines). In 2001 a downturn started, particularly for newspapers, a situation that continued into 2002. Moreover, if advertising is examined in terms of the share each medium holds as a percentage of total advertising expenditure, the situation is more disappointing for the oldest medium, newspapers (Figure 4.3). This trend can be explained by the influence of the rapid growth and decline of the Athens Stock Exchange, which initially boosted advertisements in the media, but then drained the market in the downturn.

Table 4.21

Advertising expense in the Greek media (million euros)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Newspapers	124.3	156.4	197.1	256.1	302.5	255.3	253.5
Magazines	173.2	244.3	326.7	380.8	470.4	532.2	604.8
Radio	54.5	46.5	55.8	69.0	70.5	70.8	87.7
Television	456.7	451.8	511.7	613.1	665.1	661.0	712.6
Other media*	63.7	96.4	120.3	161.4	241.5	278.4	323.7
Total	872.4	995.4	1,211.6	1,480.4	1,750.0	1,797.7	1,982.3

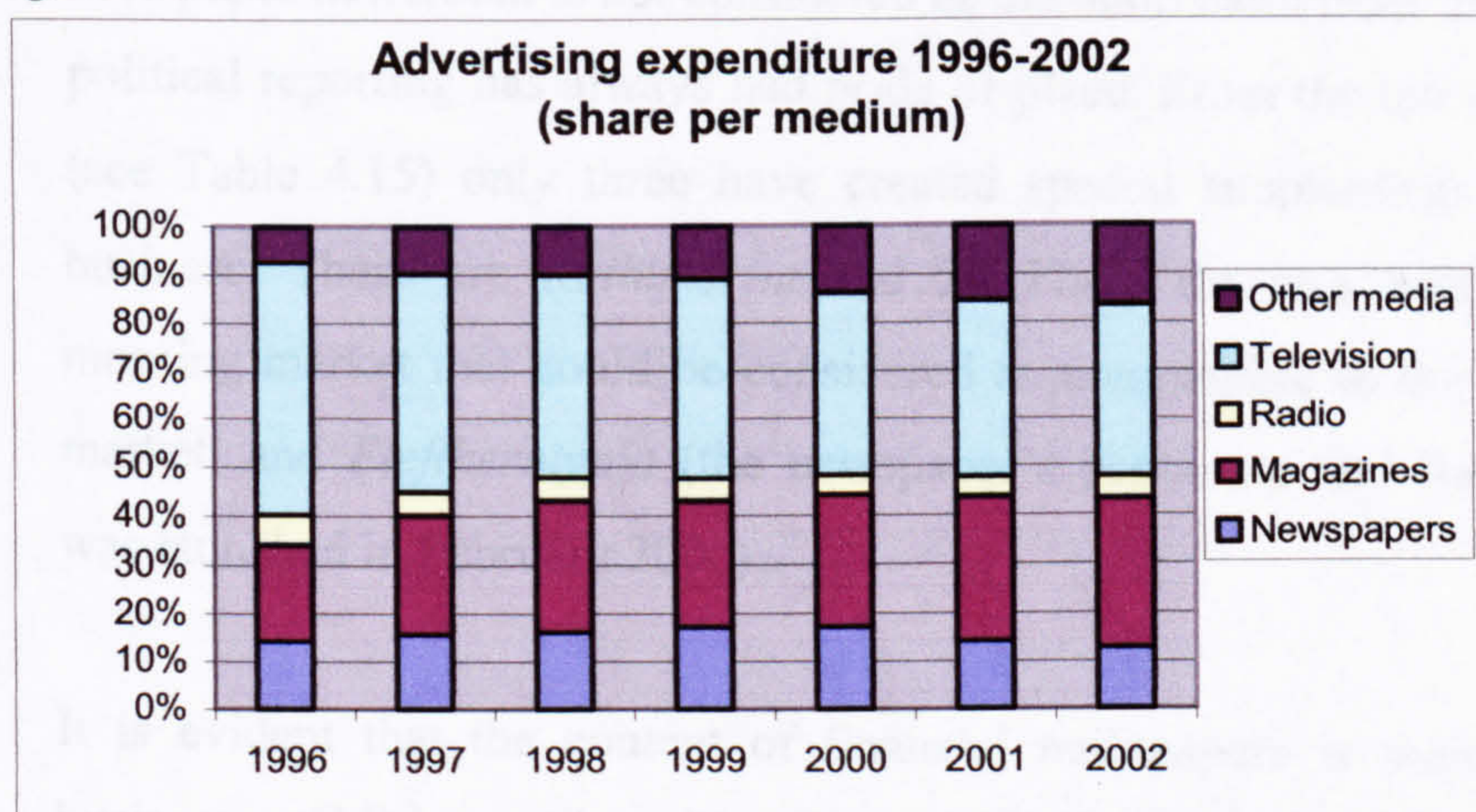
Source: Media Services SA in EIHEA's Internet site (www.eihe.gr). (*) Outdoor advertising.

Advertising revenues are generated from the entrepreneurial activity of private businesses (advertisements and the publication of financial reports) as well as by State's activities. This was particularly evident during the ASE's boom years in the case of the private sector. As regards central government, advertising originates from EU funding that is channelled into the national economy through the three major Community Support Frameworks (CSF), the promotional activities of the Athens 2004 Olympics Organising Committee and through the advertising budgets of large public corporations, such as the National Telecommunications

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Organisation (OTE), the Public Power Corporation (DEH), the Football Match Predictions Organisation (OPAP), state owned banking institutes and ministries. These institutions spent around 147.4 million euros in 2002 for promotional purposes in all types of media, with scheduled expenditure for 2003 rising to 171 million euros.¹²⁶ As shown in Figure 4.3, the bulk of advertising expense is channelled to television and the magazine sector.

Figure 4.3



Source: Media Services S.A. data (located at www.eihea.gr)

In the case of financial reports of private businesses, special legislation requires private sector companies to publish their financial results in at least three daily titles (one political, one financial and one local newspaper).¹²⁷

It is evident that the enormous flow of advertising funds into the media strengthened the power of advertisers over news content. Moreover, the dominance of authoritative sources in news reporting means that information and revenue originate from the same source. Pressures on news coverage vary, depending on the type of newspaper involved. In the framework of S-JNG 2002, when editors were asked to state if they faced pressures from the newspaper's advertising department, political editors claimed that they did not, whereas economic editors in the political press, as well as editors in the financial dailies, said that this was a common phenomenon. Those who admitted the existence of pressures from advertisers were

¹²⁶ Newspaper *Imerisia*, 14 June 2003, p.68.

eager to explain that interventions concerned more the publication of press releases and news items of minor importance, which normally would not have appeared in the newspaper's pages, rather than interventions on how articles and major press releases should be handled.¹²⁸

In general, it should be noted that the economy and business desk in a political newspaper newsroom is not considered as the main battlefield for news executives; political reporting has always had pride of place. From the top six political dailies (see Table 4.15) only three have created special supplements on economy and business. These are *Kathimerini* and *To Vima*, the two leading dailies in the morning market that could be considered as competitive to the morning financial market, and *Eleftherotypia* (the newspaper's economic and business supplement was launched in February 2000).

It is evident that the content of financial newspapers is more sensitive to the business establishment than that of the political newspapers. Editors in the financial press acknowledge pressures from the advertising department, while their colleagues in the political press seem not to be that affected by the general newspapers' need for increased advertising revenues. Further discussion in the case of business reporting will reveal that the danger of losing advertising revenues, as a result of critical or even mildly negative articles about the businesses concerned, make editors think carefully about the way they should handle such a content.

The flow of advertisements in the press is also affected by the strong affiliation of political newspapers to party politics and by the centralised role of Athens as regards political and economic developments and decision-making.

The PaSoK Government has long been accused by the opposition of preferential treatment as regards the allocation of state advertising to the pro-Government press and for the use of EU funds for political propaganda. This issue is more strongly raised especially during pre-election periods. This was the case in Spring 2003,

¹²⁷ See detailed discussion in the "Business Reporting" 4.3 part.

when the Government was accused of channelling advertising funds to the media for the promotion of the Ministry of Education activities, as a reaction to the announcement of the Opposition's educational programme in advance of the national elections scheduled for 2004.¹²⁹

The strong affiliation of newspapers with political parties has created an increased sense of power of central government over the press. Thus, political interventions by ministries or public corporation officials in pro-Government papers constitute a means of exercising pressure that exerts its power from the allocation of state advertising funds to these newspapers. Although these arrangements remain mostly secret, there are cases, especially when advertisements of state corporations are concerned, which have gained publicity. For instance, in 1998, during a PaSoK administration, an article in *Eleftherotypia* described an intervention by a top management representative in OTE, which included clear threats to cut advertisements, if publication of hostile articles on the National Telecommunications Organisation were to continue.¹³⁰

Finally, on many occasions, complaints have been put forward by provincial publishers about their exclusion from state advertising. Despite the relevant legal provision (according to Law 2328/95, 12% of state advertisements should be placed in provincial newspapers), ministries and public organisations do not include provincial newspapers in their advertising budgets.¹³¹

In general, attracting advertisements is considered a first priority for newspapers. Re-allocation of content and extensive re-writing occur when last minute

¹²⁸ See Appendix.

¹²⁹ Immediately after the announcement of New Democracy's educational strategy, the Government spent 4.2 million euros for the promotion of its education policy, partially funded by EU programmes. MPs of the Opposition accused the government of "unfair treatment of the political debate". See *Imerisia*, 14 June 2003, p. 68. See also a question addressed by ND MPs to the Government in the Parliament as regards the allocation of State advertisements. Located at <http://www.ppavlopoulos.gr/parliament3.html#1301>. Accessed 20 July 2003.

¹³⁰ See *Eleftherotypia*, 15 July 1998. Located at: <http://www.hri.org/E/1998/98-07-15.dir/keimena/politics/poll11.htm> (accessed 29/7/2003).

¹³¹ For instance, see article "Athens against the Periphery", by G. Amvrosios, publisher of *Proinos Typos* (Morning Press) in Karditsa, 26 October 2000. Located at <http://www.xronos.gr/>

advertisements emerge from the newspaper's commercial department. Newsrooms are not able to defend their news space when extra advertising comes in. As Delipetros, content editor in *Eleftherotypia* has argued: "It is very rare to retain news at the expense of advertisements; this is a rare occasion even in the case of free advertising exchanges with other media. If an advertisement appears at the last minute, the newsroom has to work hard to alter news content, usually downgrading news items in terms of the space assigned for their presentation."¹³²

4.2.2.3 The audience and the general sociopolitical environment

The circulation figures of the top ten Athens daily political newspapers (average daily copy sales nationwide) for 2002 reflect the situation in terms of the support society offers to its politicised press (Table 4.22). Amongst these ten newspapers, four titles support the PaSoK party (*Ta Nea*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Ethnos* and *To Vima*); these are the leading daily titles in the country in terms of circulation. Five titles support the Opposition, namely the New Democracy party (*Kathimerini*, *Eleftheros Typos*, *Apogevmatini*, *Adesmeftos Typos* and *Hora*) and one (*Rizospastis*) constitutes the official organ of the Communist party (KKE).¹³³

If the circulation share of the right wing-press is compared with that of newspapers supporting the socialists (*Rizospastis* is excluded as a pure Communist party organ), the four centre-left newspapers together account for 68% of total top-ten circulation. As Mandravelis (2003) has argued, a reason behind the weakness of the centre-right press could be the fragmentation of the right-centre newspaper reading public over a large number of papers. However, if the political daily market is examined as a whole (a total of 20 titles), the difference in the number of titles is not that significant. In essence, newspapers appear to be divided almost into two

arxeio/2000/october/athina.html (accessed 29/7/2003). For an extensive discussion on the provincial press, see Demertzis, N. and Skamnakis, A. (eds) (1998) *Regional Media in Europe*. Athens: Papazisis.

¹³² Vangelis Delipetros, content editor in *Eleftherotypia*, personal interview, 20 July 2001.

¹³³ For a political separation of the Athens-based press, see Psychogios, op. cit. as well as Kominis, L. (1993) *The Secrets of Journalism: 2. Applied Journalism*. Athens: Kastaniotis (2nd edition).

equal halves seven newspapers are found to support the centre-left wing (all of them the PaSoK party) and nine titles promote the centre-right ideology.¹³⁴

Table 4.22
Top-10 Athens Political Dailies

	Newspaper title	2002 average copy sales nationwide
1	TA NEA (<i>THE NEWS</i>)	83,073
2	ELEFTHERTYPIA (<i>FREEDOM OF PRESS</i>)	79,005
3	ETHNOS (<i>NATION</i>)	50,882
4	TO VIMA (<i>THE TRIBUNE</i>)	48,806
5	H KATHIMERINI (<i>THE DAILY</i>)	42,426
6	ELEFTHEROS TYPOS (<i>FREE PRESS</i>)	39,597
7	APOGEVMATINI (<i>AFTERNOON</i>)	21,488
8	RIZOSPASTIS (<i>RADICAL</i>)	10,466
9	ADESMEFTOS TYPOS (R)* (<i>INDEPENDENT PRESS</i>)	10,336
10	HORA (<i>COUNTRY</i>)	8,924

Source: Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association. Note: (R) stands for Dimitris Rizos, the paper's publisher; there is another paper under the same logo in circulation, published by Mitsis, after a disagreement between the two former partners.

It seems that the evident weakness of the group of centre-right newspapers can be better explained by the fact that, historically, all major political debate took place in the pages of the centre-left press, whereas the editorials of the centre-right's newspapers gradually became just "anti-centre-left" propaganda mechanisms.¹³⁵ Moreover, centre-right newspapers were heavily involved into intra-party politics, reflecting the struggles within the New Democracy party itself, thus, alienating readers who were in favour of party unity.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ From the total morning and afternoon political market, seven titles support the centre-left wing (*Niki* [Victory], *Logos* [Speech], *To Vima*, *Avriani* [Tomorrow's], *Ethnos*, *Eleftherotypla*, *Ta Nea*), nine titles support the centre-right (*Kathimerini*, *Apogevmatini*, *Eleftheros Typos*, *Adesmeftos* (two titles), *Apofasi* [Decision], *Vradini*, *Hora* and *Estia* [Hearth]), while two titles support the Communist Left (*Avgi* [Dawn], *Rizospastis*) and two the extreme right (*Eleftheros* [Free] and *Eleftheri Ora* [Free Hour]). The case of *Kathimerini* is not that straightforward. As Antonis Karakousis, editor of *Kathimerini* has argued, while in the past *Kathimerini* had supported the policy of PaSoK's leader and current Prime Minister Kostas Simitis, in the last couple of years it has been strongly critical and favouring the New Democracy policy and its leader, Kostas Karamanlis. In both cases, according to Karakousis, editorial policy was formed on the basis of the public interest (personal interview, July 9, 2001). However, journalists in competitor titles have argued that editorial policy was always affected by the entrepreneurial interests of the owner and his relationships with the government of day (see for instance Kyrtos, G. (2003) *The secret war of the powers*. Athens: Kastaniotis).

¹³⁵ See Mandravelis, P. (2003) 'The political misfortune of the Centre-Right Press', *Apogevmatini*, 10 May, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁶ See also newspapers *Axia* (Value), 19 August 2000, p. 8; *Imerisia*, 30 November 2002, pp. 38-39.

Traditionally, therefore, partisan journalism has served political ends in both sides of the political scene. In our examination of newspaper circulations for the period from the restoration of Democracy until today, it is evident that circulation trends matched major political developments.¹³⁷ Circulations were boosted during elections, or each time the political struggle dominated everyday discussions. The circulation figures of the top ten daily newspaper titles for the period 1975-2002 (presented in the Appendix) reveals the dominance of certain titles that managed to keep in the first six positions throughout the whole 28-year period examined. For instance, over these years, only three newspapers managed to have the highest circulation. These were *Ta Nea* (1975-1982; 1994-2002), *Ethnos* (1983-1987) and *Eleftheros Typos* (1988-1993).¹³⁸

The stability of *Ta Nea* in this circulation ranking is exceptional. For most of the period, it held on to second position and it never dropped below fourth position. The paper, being always supportive to the Socialist camp, contributed greatly to the victory of PaSoK in 1981.¹³⁹

Ethnos on the other hand, after its glorious season (1983-1987), during which was the leading title in the country, went through a troubled period (falling to sixth position in 1994-1995) after which it managed to regain sales, stabilising in third position in the last five years. In its first four years of its publication, head of the paper was Alekos Philipopoulos. He argued: "The paper reflects the great mass of working people, employees, workers, small-size professionals, expressed through the political ideology the paper subscribes to".¹⁴⁰ The paper's editorials have always supported PaSoK's policy, exercising self-restraint in its criticism towards the Socialist government.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ The present account is supplementary to a similar presentation by A. Zaousis and K. Stratos (1993) in the book *Newspapers: 1974-1992*. Athens: Gnosi Publications - In Greek.

¹³⁸ For the presentation of Top-10 circulation figures for the period 1975-2002, see Appendix.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ In Psarakis, T., 1993, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Finally, *Eleftheros Typos*, which led the market for a five-year period up to 1993, has since declined in circulation gradually to the sixth position it currently holds. The paper's rise and subsequent decline is explained by the same reasons that governed the weaknesses of the centre-right press and are directly related to political developments as well as to the gradually degrading image of the title in the eyes of the reading public.¹⁴²

During our field research, news editors were not reluctant to reveal their newspaper's political preference. Editors in newspapers *Ta Nea*, *To Vima*, *Ethnos* and *Eleftherotypia* clearly stated that their editorial policy supports the general political area represented by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PaSoK), whereas editors in newspapers *Kathimerini*, *Apogevmatini* and *Eleftheros Typos* have described editorial policy in favour of the centre-right ideological wing.

As made clear by S-JNG 2002 data, the audience is a strong priority in the editors' mind as regards the formation of the editorial policy. In Table 4.14, newspaper editors have graded the "views and values of the newspaper's audience" as the most powerful factor that influences the editorial line (second came the "ideology of top news executives", followed by "proprietor's personal ideology"). Thus, it can be argued that the socio-cultural perspective, discussed in the literature chapter, which traces the influence on news production in the interaction between news journalists and the external social and cultural environment, should be also considered as another factor of influence, especially during periods of decreased press circulation. However, the formulation of arguments on the effect that the values and beliefs of Greek society have on newspapers' editorial policy requires extensive content analysis combined with detailed investigation of editorial decision making on various instances of major news events. This is beyond the scope of the present study.

An interesting quantitative examination of the news content published in the major Athens political dailies, during the Imia crisis in January 1996 (which brought

¹⁴² For the major political developments that affected the newspaper's circulation over the years, see

Greece and Turkey to the brink of war)¹⁴³ was carried out in the media department at the *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*. It divided news items into two categories: ethnocentric vs. multi-centric and pro-war vs. anti-war. The research concluded that ethnocentric news items dominated in newspapers supporting the centre-right political wing, such as *Kathimerini*, *Eleftheros Typos*, *Apogevmatini* and *Adesmeftos Typos*, whereas the editorial policy of newspapers supporting the centre-left ideology, such as *To Vima*, *Ethnos*, *Eleftherotypia*, produced news accounts of a multi-centric character (with the exception of *Ta Nea*, which followed a clear ethnocentric policy).¹⁴⁴ Thus it is clear that political newspapers took sides, reflecting in their editorials the official ideological determinants of each political party. Finally, although one may normally consider economics to be the less politicised area, as a later discussion will show, the financial press also has partially reflected this same division.

The above example offers a hint as regards differences that can be found in the editorial policy amongst the political dailies. Past writings have clearly described the partisan character of the Greek newspapers. McDonald (1983), Kominis (1993) and Psihogios (2003), all agree that newspapers in Greece are not neutral in any sense. McDonald has argued that neutral reporting is not appreciated by many Greek journalists and readers. Kominis has categorized newspapers according to their political affiliations, clearly reflected in their editorial policy, while Psihogios has stressed that all Athens-based political newspapers have chosen political sides. He argues:

Kyrtos, G. (2003) *The secret war of the powers*. Athens: Kastaniotis.

¹⁴³ Imia constitute a Greek complex of very small islands, whose national sovereignty was questioned by Turkey in 1996, an incident that led the two countries to mobilise their ground, air and navy forces. The whole incident was terminated after an intervention of the US government.

¹⁴⁴ Alexopoulos, D. (1999) 'Mass Media and the Imia Crisis', in St. Papathanasopoulos & M. Komninou (eds) *Issues of Journalism Ethics*. Athens: Kastaniotis. pp. 101-113. As regards the war dilemma, the news items published in all Greek dailies followed the anti-war policy, with the exception of *Adesmeftos Typos* (according to the research, almost 90% of news items published on the matter, favoured an armed conflict). It should be noted that a profound limitation of this research is the fact that, at the time of the crisis, the daily edition of *To Vima* was not in circulation and only one Sunday edition was examined.

...for most titles of the political press, choosing a particular political side does not mean only a generally defined preference towards a specific political ideology; it connotes a clear support towards political parties.¹⁴⁵

This situation becomes clearer when considered in combination with the way newspaper journalists see themselves in terms of their role in the profession. As Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1972) have argued, there are two dominant types of professionals, the neutrals and the participants. The first consider themselves merely as carriers of news to the public, while the second see their job as being more investigative and analytical.¹⁴⁶

In the case of Greek newspapers, journalists appear initially divided. S-JNG 2002 found that 49% of newspaper reporters argue that the journalist's primary role should be to produce reliable, but neutrally presented information, so that the public is able to decide itself about the truth, whilst 48% subscribe to the view that their duty is to offer to the public the best version of the truth according to their estimations.¹⁴⁷ Despite the initial division, the vast majority of newspaper editors (11 out of 15) appeared to defend the participatory role of their subordinates in telling the public what they consider to be the truth.¹⁴⁸ Naturally, the character of participatory journalism is defined by the editorial line, which is largely dictated by the particular political ideology of the news executives involved and by the readers' perceived values and beliefs. Taking also into account that most newspaper journalists acknowledge interventions in their work and that all newspaper editors have accepted the existence of self-censorship by journalists, it could be argued that the bulk of newspaper journalists conform to a strict editorial line, which is both heavily politicised and largely dictated by party politics.

¹⁴⁵ McDonald, R. (1983) *Pillar and Tinderbox: The Greek Press and the Dictatorship*. New York: Marion Boyars, p. 15. Kominis, L. (1993) *The Secrets of Journalism: 2. Applied Journalism*. Athens: Kastaniotis (2nd edition). D. Psychogios is an assistant professor at the Media Department, *Panteion University*. Unpublished text titled "*Newspapers in Greece*", located at <http://www.panteion.gr/~psycho/articles.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Johnstone, J.W.C., Slawski, E.J. and Bowman, W.W., 1972, as cited in Chapter I.

¹⁴⁷ See Table 3.40 in Chapter III.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix.

4.3 ECONOMIC & BUSINESS REPORTING: A CASE STUDY

The examination of the various characteristics of contemporary economic and business reporting requires reference to a series of elements, some of which are of a historical nature. In recent decades major developments in national economics and in entrepreneurship have deeply affected the emergence and maturing of the particular journalistic field. Therefore, in this section, journalism is examined in relation to the philosophy that characterised government economy policy during the 1980s and the 1990s, the role of the State and public corporations and the growing strength of private capital over the years.

Once again, the focal point is national politics and the subsequent politicisation of economic policy, which has influenced the journalistic product in Greek economic dailies. In what follows, the economic newspaper market and its journalistic human resources are examined in relation to recent economic developments, without neglecting however, previous general conclusions on the Greek newspaper industry.

4.3.1 *State paternalism and underdevelopment*

Since World War II, the Greek economy has struggled to overcome long lasting structural problems and inefficiencies. If the post-war period is examined as a whole, various distinct phases can be traced. As Drakatos (1997) has argued, in the period 1947-1952 the economy went through reconstruction, mostly through funds channelled into the country from abroad.¹⁴⁹ These years were followed by the economy's preparation to host foreign investments (the 1953-1956 period included, inter alia, the devaluation of the drachma and structural measures) that resulted to the growth period of 1957-1972.¹⁵⁰ In the years from 1972 to 1980, the two

¹⁴⁹ Through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Drakatos, K. (1997) *The Great Cycle of the Greek Economy (1945-1995)*. Athens: Papazisis Publications.

¹⁵⁰ In the 1957-1972 period, foreign capital inflow led to major investments in national infrastructure. Drakatos, K. (1997), op. cit.

international oil crises hit the fragile Greek economy, resulting in a weak phase that lasted till the mid-1990s.¹⁵¹

The late and slow maturing process of the Greek economy has its roots in various factors, most of which are explained in political terms. Before the country's accession in the European Community, the Greek economy was characterised by introversion, lack of competition and protectionism. Until the beginning of the 1990s, these characteristics ruled economic and entrepreneurial developments, limiting economic reporting to basic macroeconomic developments. However, the first trickles of business information started to emerge much earlier.

Business reporting in the Athens press was introduced by *Express* in early 1960s, when the newspaper was circulating as a bi-weekly newsletter. In its pages, the first business-related articles appeared, introducing entrepreneurial plans and investments in the news agenda. As Kostas Spyropoulos, the economic desk head at the paper remembers:

We were waiting outside the Ministry of Commerce, watching businessmen visiting the Minister's office. On their way out, we were approaching them and we were trying to find out about their affairs with the Ministry. Then we referred to the Minister to get his views as well...¹⁵²

In that period state protectionism was one of the dominant characteristics of the Greek economy. Thus, the Ministry of Commerce played a primary role and was one of the key journalistic sources of information. "The journalist responsible for the Ministry of Commerce beat was considered within the newsroom as the most specialised professional on economic developments", says Kimon Steriotis, editor of *Naftemporiki*.¹⁵³

The centralisation of decision-making on private economy plans made the government the sole controller of developments. Major political beliefs during the

¹⁵¹ For a historic overview of Greek economic developments, see Bryant, R., Garganas, N. and Tavlas, G. (2001) 'Introduction' in Bryant, R., et al (eds.) *Greece's Economic Performance and Prospects*. Athens: Bank of Greece and The Brookings Institution.

¹⁵² Kostas Spyropoulos, economic desk head, *Express*, personal interview 3 December 2001.

¹⁵³ Kimon Steriotis, editor, *Naftemporiki*, personal interview 28 November 2001.

1960s and 1970s also guided to a great extent the way economic and business journalism started to evolve at that time. The “socialist mania” that governed Greek politics rendered corporate profits a socially unacceptable phenomenon. This continued to some extent during the 1980s (under PaSoK government) but faded away later, when it became clear that profit was a path towards economic growth and social prosperity.¹⁵⁴

Despite the substantial growth in public and private investments, which took place during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Greek heavy industry was created during that period, including oil refineries, the cement industry, aluminium, civil aviation, shipyards, etc.), news coverage of corporate affairs remained minimal. The government was considered as the starting point for all economic and entrepreneurial developments and the sole provider of information. Nikos Nikolaou, the deputy managing editor of newspaper *To Vima*, argues that the dominant character of the public sector determined to a great extent the way news gathering and reporting were performed at that period. He says:

In the old days, public sector was the primary area of reporting, since it acted as the dominant source of information. Thus, newspapers and journalists focused on government and public sector activity, neglecting other forces that had started to take shape. This one-dimensional view characterised the journalistic profession for many years.¹⁵⁵

After the restoration of Democracy in 1974, the oil crises the second half of the 1970s and the ‘populist decade’¹⁵⁶ that followed, a general increase on economic news was observed, especially in the macroeconomic field. High inflation, and an increasing national debt, which lead to economic stability programmes in 1986-87, boosted news reporting in the area of economics. However, during the whole 1981-89 PaSoK administration, economic reporting was limited to the coverage of government officials’ reactions towards private capital, which remained the “villain of national prosperity”.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Nikos Nikolaou, Deputy Managing Editor *To Vima*, personal interview, 16/6 and 17/7/2001.

¹⁵⁶ See Clogg, R. (ed.) (1993) *Greece 1981-89: The Populist Decade*. London: St. Martin's Press.

Overall, in the period 1973-1995, the growth of the Greek economy was quite disappointing; real GDP was increased only by 1.5% a year. The situation improved during the period 1995-2000, during which GDP growth reached an average 3.3% a year.¹⁵⁸ However, major opportunities for growth were lost, since billion of dollars in the form of foreign loans or European subsidies to Greece were not channelled towards the modernisation of national economy and markets.¹⁵⁹ As Kazakos (1992) has argued, the populist political strategies by the first two PaSoK administrations (1981-1989) deactivated the potential boost to the economy.¹⁶⁰

During the 1980s, capital inputs from abroad did not serve productive investments; they were utilised for strengthening political control over society, preferably amongst PaSoK political clientele, by financing “consumption rather than production and [by supporting] state-subsidised businessmen and entrepreneurs”.¹⁶¹ As Lyrintzis (1993) has put it,

PaSoK embarked on a systematic expansion of the public sector by appointing people loyal to the party *en masse* to specially-created posts and by multiplying state-controlled agencies.¹⁶²

Thus, economic policy lacked any structural interventions in the economy, which could lead to boosting independent entrepreneurship.¹⁶³ Instead, it strengthened the

¹⁵⁷ Nikos Nikolaou, Deputy Managing Editor *To Vima*, personal interview, 17/7 and 16/6/2001.

¹⁵⁸ Bosworth, B. and Kollintzas, T. (2001) ‘Economic growth in Greece: past performance and future prospects’ in Bryant, R., et. al. (eds) *Greece's Economic Performance and Prospects*. Athens: Bank of Greece and The Brookings Institution.

¹⁵⁹ According to Kapetanyannis (1993): “Despite the fact that net inflows from the EC between 1981 and 1991 amounted to \$13.8 billion, not counting a further 4.5 billion ECUs from the European Investment Bank and the loan of \$1.8 billion to support the economy in 1986, Greece has been unable to catch up with the pace of growth and structural change in other EC member countries”. In Clogg, R., 1993, op. cit (p. 80). Structural indices in Greece remain in many respects much lower than EU average even after 25 billion euros of inputs channelled to national economy in the period 1989-2000, through A’ and B’ Community Framework Funds (source: *Imerisia*, 30 August 2003, p. 3).

¹⁶⁰ Kazakos, P. (1992) ‘Socialist Attitudes Toward European Integration in the Eighties’ in Kariotis, T. (ed.) *The Greek Socialist Experiment: Papandreou's Greece 1981-1989*. New York: Pella. For extensive analysis on PaSoK's rhetoric, see Clogg, R. (1995) *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Also Clogg, R. (1987) *Parties and Elections in Greece*. London: C. Hurst & Company.

¹⁶¹ Lyrintzis, C. (1993) ‘PASOK in power: From ‘Change’ to Disenchantment’, in Clogg, R. (1993) (ed.) *Greece 1981-89: The Populist Decade*. London: St. Martin's Press, p. 28.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁶³ According to Kapetanyannis (1993): “State consumption was financed by heavy external borrowing which increased public indebtedness nearly fourfold during the decade 1980-90 (from \$5 billion to \$20 billion). The expansion of the state, the suffocation of the private sector and a static mentality and

direct dependence of entrepreneurial capital on central administration. State and private businesses and political figures comprised a system of closely related power. This had a significant effect on Greek journalism, since it had to deal with a steadily more powerful oligarchy, of which eventually it became a part.

The involvement of media and journalists themselves in the core of political developments, based on the traditional partisan character of the press, was strengthened even further by PaSoK's very particular policy. As Pasmazoglou (1993) has stressed, there have been four "parallel and complementary processes", which were activated by PaSoK's leading figures:

- (1) Public funds directly or indirectly misappropriated in order to make inroads in the press.
- (2) Support by segments of the state apparatus for the build-up of publishing enterprises.
- (3) Part-time functionaries and journalists holding the leading management posts.
- (4) Political coverage offered or promised at the highest ministerial level.¹⁶⁴

In this paternalistic environment, political clientelism infiltrated private capital in general and the newspaper business in particular. As Mouzelis (1995) has argued, government institutions were involved in clientelistic strategies, gathering political power in return for favours towards their clients. At the same time, the whole apparatus was protected from media exposure and thus from public scrutiny.¹⁶⁵

During the 1980s, the public's interest on economic developments started to increase, especially in the area of household economy that depended directly on the government's fiscal policy. In this period, journalism reporting on the activities of the private sector remained marginal. As Nikolaou (*To Vima*) has put it,

Fifteen years ago, business reporting was something unthinkable... Microeconomic developments were kept outside the news agenda. On the other hand, economic

practices, amid adverse international economic conditions, led to a severe economic crisis in 1985". In Clogg, R., 1993, op. cit (p. 80).

¹⁶⁴ Pasmazoglou, S. (1993) 'The 1980s in the Looking-Glass: PASOK and the Media', in Clogg, R. (1993) (ed.) *Greece 1981-89: The Populist Decade*. London: St. Martin's Press, p. 103.

¹⁶⁵ See Mouzelis, N. (1995) 'Greece in the Twenty-first Century: Institutions and Political System' in D. Constatas and Th. G. Stavrou (eds.) *Greece Prepares for the Twenty-first Century*, Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press.

reporting was limited to news related to government policy affecting household income.¹⁶⁶

However, all this was about to change as the country approached the European Common Market.¹⁶⁷

4.3.2 Economic / business reporting in a state of growth

With the 1985-1987 economic stability (austerity) programme and the opening of the Greek economy in preparation for the coming of the European Single Market in 1992, business reporting started to gain an increasing presence in the Greek press. At the same time, a new field of reporting has been established, covering matters originated mainly in Brussels, the administrative centre of the EEC. The business press assigned correspondents in the EEC capital, while Greek civil servants and executives, who participated in meetings held in Brussels, acted as sources of information on European economic policy matters for Greek journalists.

In the early 1980s, after Greece had become a full EEC member, business news became more organised and started to include corporate announcements on financial results. Dionysis Kefalacos, currently one of the editors of *Nastemporiki*, in early 1980s was head of business news in *Express*. He remembers:

In mid-1980s, it was the first time when articles on company profits started to be published in the paper. Before those years, nobody was discussing these issues. There were a lot of reactions from entrepreneurs who did not want to see their balance sheets analysed in public.¹⁶⁸

This practice faced reactions also from older journalists who were not accustomed to this practice. Entrepreneurs who had access to newsroom people expressed complaints about the publication of their companies' financial figures. This is explained also by the fact that at that period most corporate balance sheets were designed to hide large profits; not only because corporate profits provoked political hostility, but also for tax reasons. Progressively however, this situation started to change, especially after 1986-1987, when the importance of the stock market as a

¹⁶⁶ Nikos Nikolaou, Deputy Managing Editor *To Vima*, personal interview, 16/6 and 17/7/2001.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

source of funding increased. By that time, in *Express*, business news was concentrated in the last page of the newspaper, reflecting also the increasing interest about stock market developments that lasted till 1991.¹⁶⁹ In those years, journalists were the initiators of business news, approaching companies for information. Corporate press releases were rare; it was not until mid-1990s that corporate press bulletins started to arrive in newsrooms in any number.

In the late 1980s, business news started to be gradually established as a distinct field of reporting and even to influence news content in the political press. The first political daily to include a separate economic section was *Kathimerini* in 1989. Besides the increased interest of the public in economic and stock market developments, other reasons led political dailies to develop a more organized approach in the area of economic and business reporting. The new field was exploited as a means of attracting corporate advertisements, annual financial reports and other business-related classifieds. On the other hand, the proliferation of business pages in the Greek press caused an increasing need for the organisation of press offices in public and private corporations, mainly staffed by active journalists, who were selected in order to contribute to the maximum possible media exposure of corporate activities.¹⁷⁰ The placement of corporate advertisements in the financial press and in the newly formed economic sections in political dailies was progressively related to advertisers' demands for the publication of corporate material, such as press releases, specially arranged interviews with company CEOs, etc. As all editors admit privately, this "exchange" model has become the norm in today's press.

¹⁶⁸ Dionysis Kefalacos, editor *Naftemporiki*, personal interview, 3 August and 26 November 2001.

¹⁶⁹ The increase in the Athens Stock Exchange general index during 1987 was 163%, whereas during 1990, it reached 182%. See Kamaras, I. (2001) 'ASE: the artificial rise, the inevitable fall and the cost of maturation' *Yearbook Mechanism of Money 2001*. Athens: Allmedia Publications. Located at http://www.allmedia.gr/AllMedia/_gr/publication/article/article.asp?articleId=1480 (Accessed 2/2/2002). Also, for a historic presentation of the Athens Stock Market crises since the inauguration of the Greek State, see Kolmer, K. (2001) *The Great Robbery of the Stock Exchange*. Athens: Cactus Editions (pp. 22-29).

¹⁷⁰ Kostas Spyropoulos, head of economic desk, *Express*, personal interview 3 December 2001. As Spyropoulos has argued, in some newspapers, the commercial factor attached to the creation of business pages was dominant, therefore transforming business reporting to a mere reception mechanism of corporate press releases.

In early 1990s, the presence of non-Government sources in economic and business news reporting started to gain ground. This can be attributed to the gradual strengthening of the country's orientation towards Europe, the writings that criticized the economic mismanagement of the previous decade as well as the "discovery" that any economic growth accomplished has been the result of private capital activity.¹⁷¹

In general, the 1990s were the most important period in terms of developments in the field of business press. The re-organisation of the traditional titles *Express* and *Naftemporiki* was followed by the buyout and restructuring of the historical, but weakened, financial title *Imerisia* by the Bobolas Group (1992). Also, other financial newspapers started to appear, such as the daily *Kerdos* [Profit] launched in 1992 and the first weekly economic newspaper *Ependytis* [Investor], launched in 1993. In the political press, economic supplements grew rapidly, with the launch of a separate section on economy and business in *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia* [Freedom of Press on Sunday] (1997) and *To Vima* (as part of its re-launch in April 1999). Finally, between the second half of the 1990s (when a new Athens Stock Exchange rally was anticipated) and 2000 (when the downturn began), nine new daily and weekly financial titles emerged, specialised in business news and the stock exchange.¹⁷²

The public's interest in economic and business news has not been the sole reason for the proliferation of economic/business and stock market titles. The business press has benefited greatly in terms of revenues from the special government

¹⁷¹ Nikos Nikolaou, Deputy Managing Editor *To Vima*, personal interview, 17/7 and 16/6/2001.

¹⁷² See Psihogios, D. *Greek Newspapers II*. Academic notes (undated) at Panteion University, Media Department. Located at <http://www.panteion.gr/~psycho/articles.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2003). Overall, 6 dailies (*Express*, *Naftemporiki*, *Kerdos*, *Financial BOX*, *Imerisia*) and 8 financial weeklies are currently (June 2003) in circulation in the local market: *Kosmos Ependyti*, *Axia* (Value), *Isotimia* (Parity), *Metohos* (Shareholder), *Epixeiro* (Enterprising), *Evro-oikonomia* (Euro-economy), *Oikonomia* (Economy) and *Simvoulos* (Consultant). A brief discussion on major developments in the business press market, is offered also in Leandros, N. (2000) *The Political Economy of the Media*. Athens: Kastaniotis, pp. 237-238.

legislation requiring Greek corporations with limited liability status to publish their financial results in at least three daily titles.¹⁷³

4.3.3 Athens Stock Exchange, Journalism and the business press

In the second half of the 1990s, economic developments accelerated, mainly due to the country's prospective to enter into the European Monetary Union. Progressively, public discussion on the country's role in the European Common Market increased, along with the need for economic news. Economic reporting started to gain ground in the pages of the political press, leading gradually to a growth of journalistic specialisation. Comparisons with economic developments in other EU member states and the course of national performance in terms of converging to Maastricht criteria have been increasingly a subject of journalistic reporting and commentary. In this environment of anticipation, the climate for the coming 1998-1999 Athens Stock Exchange rally was fed by the prospect of the country's accession in the EMU.¹⁷⁴

It should be noted that the relations between the Athens Stock Exchange and economic reporting should not be seen as lacking precedents. Nikos Nikolaou (*To Vima*) explains:

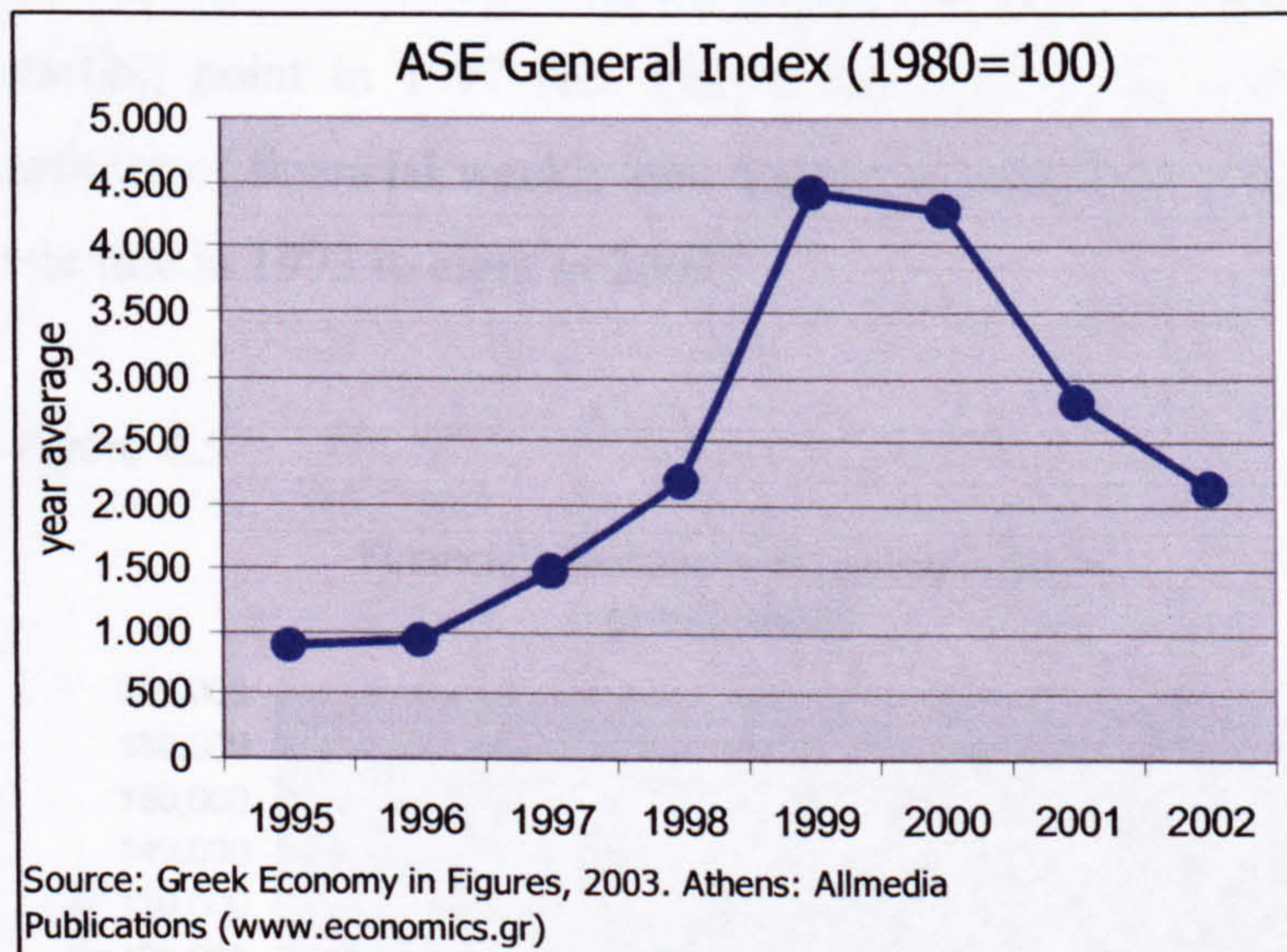
...when I entered the profession in 1955, I had a colleague who kept suggesting news articles I should write on particular listed companies. Journalists [in Greece] have always been involved in the stock market...¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ The compulsory publication in the press of corporate financial results, auctions and public works announcements has benefited also small circulation political dailies that channel a small number of copies in the province just to fulfill the "national circulation" clause. See Psihogios, D. *Greek Newspapers II*. Academic notes (undated) at Panteion University, Media Department. Located at <http://www.panteion.gr/~psycho/articles.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2003).

¹⁷⁴ This prospect was reinforced after the drachma exchange rate was fixed with the euro in March 1998. Accession to the EMU required convergence of national economic figures to the levels required by the Maastricht Treaty. See Kamaras, I. (2001) 'ASE: the artificial rise, the inevitable fall and the cost of maturation' *Yearbook Mechanism of Money 2001*. Athens: Allmedia Publications. Located at http://www.allmedia.gr/AllMedia/_gr/publication/article/article.asp?articleId=1480 (Accessed 2/2/02). The Stock Market frenzy was also seen by many as an opportunity for legalising income produced from the unmeasured economic activity (underground economy), which in 1999 had reached 30% of the country's GDP. At that time, this percentage represented the biggest slice of national output than any other OECD country (see *Economist*, 3 February 2001). It should be noted that capital invested in the Stock Market was not included in the legislative monitoring of '*pothen eshes*' (where did you get the money?). See Kolmer, K. (2001), op. cit.

Historically, the 169% increase of the ASE General Index observed in the 1998-1999 period (from 2,161 units in September 1998 reached 5,805 in September 1999) was not a unique phenomenon. Similar increases were observed in the past (1987: 163%, 1990: 182%, 1996-1998: 134%).¹⁷⁶ However, in all of these earlier periods, boom was followed by periods of market stability.¹⁷⁷ The period analysed here covers four crucial years, which saw an unprecedented change in the course of market. During the rapid rise (1998-99) and fall (2000-01) of the Athens Stock Market Exchange, around 1.4 million people were active in the market.¹⁷⁸

Figure 4.4



From 215 listed companies that comprised ASE general index in 1995, 134 more were added by 2001, the bulk of them (84) during 1999-2000.¹⁷⁹ In terms of their total value, transactions jumped from 41.3 billion euros in 1998 to 172.8 billion euros in 1999, dropped to 101.4 billion euros in 2000 and to 42.3 billion euros in

¹⁷⁵ Nikos Nikolaou, op. cit.

¹⁷⁶ For a historic presentation of the Athens Stock Market crises since the inauguration of the Greek State, see Kolmer, K. (2001), op. cit. (pp. 22-29).

¹⁷⁷ In 1998, the year average of ASE general index was 2,190 units; it was increased to 4,424 in 1999, to reach 2,153 in 2002. See Kamaras, I. (2001), op. cit. Also, *The Greek Economy in Figures 2003*. Athens: Allmedia Publications.

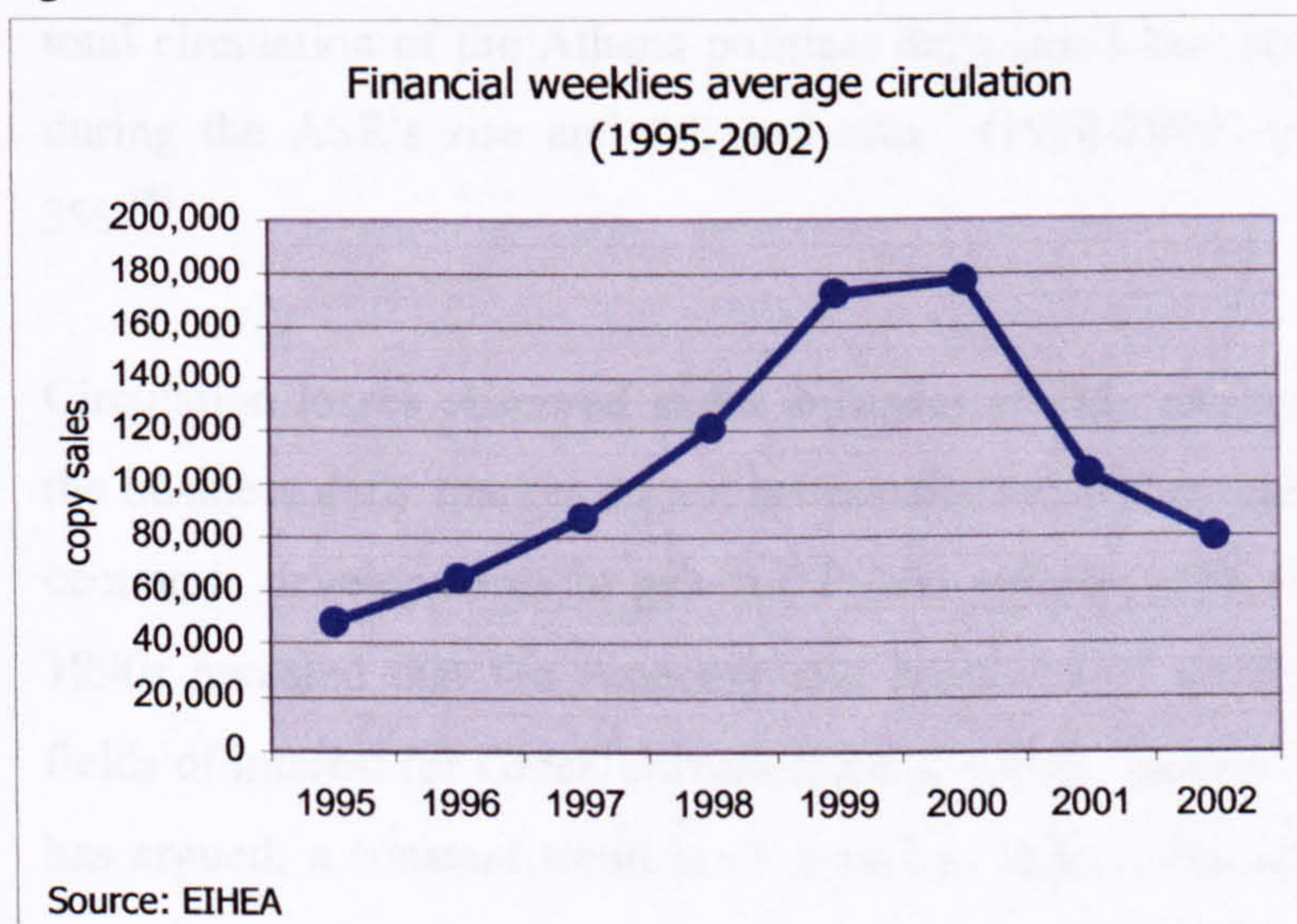
¹⁷⁸ See Kolmer, K. (2001), op. cit. Also, see 'Greece Eyes the Euro', *BBC Online*, 20th January 2000. Located at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/610459.stm> (Accessed 5 July 2002).

¹⁷⁹ Athens Stock Exchange's official statistics. Located at <http://www.ase.gr/content/gr/MarketData/Statistics/Archive/> (Accessed 4 June 2003).

2001 respectively (2002: 24.8 billion euros).¹⁸⁰ Finally, total market capitalisation rose from 11.8 billion euros at the end of 1995 to 197.5 billion euros at the end of 1999.¹⁸¹

As mentioned, the newspaper market responded to the ASE boom with a proliferation of business and stock market titles. The public appeal of these new business titles however was based almost exclusively on the people’s short-term interest on easy money. When the stock market started to fall rapidly, the interest of the reading public fell with it. Since the “good ASE years” of 1998-99, the financial weekly market has lost more than half of its circulation, in essence, returning to its starting point in 1997 (see Figure 4.5). However, it should be noted that the number of financial weekly newspapers increased over the period as a whole from one title in 1993 to eight in 2002.¹⁸²

Figure 4.5



¹⁸⁰ Ibid. The data includes shares and rights of the listed securities on the Athens Stock Exchange.

¹⁸¹ The figures present the total market capitalization of the shares listed on the Athens Stock Exchange, on the last trading day of the year – semester. At the end of 2002, total market capitalisation was 65.7 billion euros. Source: Ibid.

¹⁸² The circulation of financial dailies is not officially recorded by EIHEA, since all major titles rely heavily on subscriptions, whose figures cannot be officially audited.

Substantial increases in circulation were also observed in the case of the daily financial press.¹⁸³ Although official data series are incomplete due to high dependence of financial dailies on subscriptions, particular circulation changes can be attributed to stock market developments. For instance, the circulation of *Imerisia* (Bobolas group) in the period 1999-2002 reflected the course of the public's interest for the stock market. Copy sales jumped from a daily average of 18,908 in June 1999, to 34,126 in September of the same year and fell to 11,025 in December 2001.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, stock market developments have not negatively affected political dailies. Total circulation in the period 1998-2002 remained relatively stable at around 450,000 to 500,000 copies. It could be suggested that the stock market enthusiasm even benefited the political press by slowing down the rapid decline of total circulation observed since the early 1990s. In the period 1990-1998, total circulation of the Athens political daily press had declined by 44%, whereas during the ASE's rise and fall and after (1998-2002) total loss was limited to 3%.¹⁸⁵

Circulation losses observed in the business weekly market and, in some cases, in the business daily market do not necessarily mean that readers lost their interest in economic developments in general. Public opinion polls in the second half of the 1990s revealed that the economy and problems of unemployment remained key fields of interest for Greek citizens throughout this period.¹⁸⁶ As Mendrinou (1999) has argued, a constant trend is observed as regards the importance Greek society

¹⁸³ Due to the lack of official circulation figures, business dailies rely on readership surveys performed annually by *Bari Focus*. For instance, according to the 1997 survey, the readers of the 4 major titles (*Express*, *Imerisia*, *Kerdos* and *Nastemporiki*) reached around 84,000 in total (Leandros, 2000, op. cit.). In the latest readership survey, performed in 2002, *Nastemporiki* came first (67,000 readers), followed by *Imerisia* (43,000) and *Express* (25,000) (*Nastemporiki*, 5 August 2002, p. 21). However, it should be noted that the accumulative total of the three figures can not be exploited, since, as experience has shown, all four titles co-exist in white collar premises.

¹⁸⁴ *Imerisia* is the only case amongst business dailies, for which EIHEA provides official circulation data (www.eihea.gr).

¹⁸⁵ Based on EIHEA circulation figures (www.eihea.gr).

¹⁸⁶ Mendrinou, M. (1999), "Public opinion, political demands and 'thematic commons'", in *Public Opinion in Greece*, VPRC Institute. Athens: Livanis publications.

attaches to these areas.¹⁸⁷ This argument is supported by more recent evidence from Eurobarometer (Spring 2003) that placed unemployment, economic conditions and inflation in the first positions of the local society's concerns.¹⁸⁸

In the stock market's short-lived boom period, the most important and closely affiliated key players (besides the public) have been political figures, entrepreneurs and journalists. The ways in which they scratched one another's backs during that period is what interests us here. In the following section, power relations between these groups are discussed.

4.3.3.1 Politicians, entrepreneurs and journalists: the triangle of power

For several decades, the state apparatus controlled entrepreneurial developments in Greece. The state-entrepreneur was extensively used as a means of rewarding party members and sympathisers. This practice created a strong status quo, which proved to be particularly resistant to change and modernisation, partly due to Greek society's addiction to the safety provided by state subsidies.¹⁸⁹ Thus, behind the strong interrelation between politics and private economy lies the existence of "strong and well organised social groups that had no interest to [the establishment] of a free and competitive economy".¹⁹⁰ As Tsoukalis (1997) has argued, this "relatively closed system" was founded on "protectionism and special privileges" and strengthened by strong populism "which has been always closely attached to the clientelistic character of Greek politics".¹⁹¹

In this power system, economics as science and as a field of specialisation proved to be of lesser importance; party identity prevailed in every facet of political and social life. As Tsoukalis (1997) maintains:

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Eurobarometer 59, Spring 2003, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁹ Andrianopoulos, A. (1998) 'Corruption in the State and The Greek Political System', in Nikolopoulou, A. (ed.) *State and Corruption*. Athens: Sideris.

¹⁹⁰ Tsoukalis, L. (1997) 'Beyond the Greek Paradox', in Allison, G. and Nikolaidis, K. (eds.) *The Greek Paradox: Promise vs. Performance*. Cambridge: The MIT Press (Published in Greek by Papazisis Publications. Athens, 1997, p. 270).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 271.

The bulk majority of those who are involved in the commons (whether these are politicians or journalists) possess a low level of economic expertise. [In these groups], everything acquires a political meaning of particularly intense ideological undertones.¹⁹²

Since economic policy was dominated by party politics and since journalists have been traditionally involved with the political parties, it is not surprising that there was a strong “politicisation” clearly evident in the editorials of the business press. In our research, the editors in the three leading financial dailies examined frequently mentioned the names of the two major political parties as important factors that influence newspaper editorial policy.¹⁹³

During the stock market frenzy, most business dailies were engaged in a unprecedented levels of business news coverage. As Nikolaou (*To Vima*) has argued, journalists played the liaison role, promoting ambitious corporate plans to readers-investors.¹⁹⁴ In this period of stock market fever, news coverage transformed corporate moves of lesser importance into strategies of great significance. The close relationships of journalists with sources converted professional journalists into carriers of corporate communication strategy. Nikolaou says:

...Companies which planned to enter the Stock Market and needed to secure public funding for their goals had to choose between two options: the first was to place advertisements in the press, which was a very costly strategy, and the second was to attract certain journalists and transform them into personal propagandists.¹⁹⁵

The abandonment of the social responsibility role of journalism was not a difficult decision for journalists to make. First, there was the traditional affiliation of Greek journalists with public relations and institutional sources. Second, the average economic and business reporter has little background economic or business knowledge. Third, there was the proliferation of business titles, which expanded the employment available and intensified competition amongst newspapers. Fourth, journalists’ involvement in party politics was useful for government

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ The researcher has promised editors anonymity.

¹⁹⁴ Nikos Nikolaou, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

politicians who had embraced the booming stock market especially during the 2000 pre-election period. As Christou (*Express*) has put it:

Journalists and politicians are friends. If citizens were aware of journalists-politicians relationships, they wouldn't like it at all...¹⁹⁶

Thus, journalists progressively became part of the power game, something that deeply affected their professional judgement, even in the cases of those who were not directly involved in serving corporate ends. The evaluation of the daily news agenda was negatively influenced by the overload of corporate material concerning future plans, joint ventures and profits. Companies magnified their prospects, aiming at the creation of positive climate that would boost their stock prices. Thus, the stock market rally was based more on announcements of ambitious investment plans that boosted expectations on corporate performance in the future and less on the existence of hard evidence regarding corporate achievements. As Frantzis (*Naftemporiki*) has put it:

If a foreigner were following newspapers at that time, he would think that Greece is in a state of investing orgasm... Today, anybody can see that very few of those plans have materialised. The publication of those investing strategies aimed solely to boost stock prices. If journalists were more restrained in their writings, things would have been much better.¹⁹⁷

4.3.3.2 Structural characteristics and sources of influence

The active involvement of business journalists in political as well as entrepreneurial strategies, closely interwoven with the ASE's spectacular rise and fall, reflected many of the general structural characteristics of Greek journalistic profession.

However, in the sensitive field of economic and business reporting, certain elements acquire a powerful extra dimension. For instance, the educational background of business journalists is of significant importance when the demanding fields of the economy, business and the stock market are considered. In

¹⁹⁶ Dimitris Christou, editor, *Express*, personal interview, 4 & 6 July 2001.

¹⁹⁷ Nikos Frantzis, editor in chief in financial daily *Naftemporiki*. Personal interview, 5 June 2003.

this environment, a “nose for news” is not enough; specialised knowledge is necessary to understand the rapid growth of the capital market, the diversification of the investment tools and the introduction of new management and financial techniques.

The relation between news reporting areas and fields of academic education, presented in Table 4.2, reveals that news reporting on economic, business and stock market developments is performed by people with unrelated educational backgrounds. As S-JNG 2002 found, less than half of economic, finance/stock exchange and business newspaper reporters have studied in the areas of economics and business (45%, 44% and 38% respectively).¹⁹⁸ Therefore, despite the creation of a new generation of journalists (such as graduates and post-graduates who moved to journalism from various private industry positions) and the emergence of new specialised editions in the press markets, the majority of economic and business reporters lacked any in-depth knowledge. Those few who did, however, have contributed to the gradual maturing economic and business reporting. As all newspaper editors have agreed, the blending of the new blood with older journalists has raised the level of awareness within business press newsrooms. Nonetheless, rising levels of competence in newsrooms was significantly slower than the rapid developments in the financial arena.

In general, since the 1980s and the 1990s, the situation in economic and business journalism has substantially improved in many respects. Some characteristics however, appear to be quite resistant to change. An example is journalism “trust” practices, which remained operative until the 1980s, a result of a co-operation between journalists, who had adopted a “low effort” tactic as a protest against low wages.¹⁹⁹ This had led to a homogeneity of news appeared in the press, a

¹⁹⁸ See previously in this chapter.

¹⁹⁹ Trust practices especially in political reporting, started to fade during the 1980s, when political competition between Socialists and the Opposition was intensified. In the field of economic reporting, the emergence of alternative sources contributed to the ending of this phenomenon. The private sector felt the obligation to step forward and express criticism against extreme economic policies adopted by the PaSoK government (Nikos Nikolaou, personal interview, op. cit.).

phenomenon also observed in contemporary business reporting, however, for different reasons.

News reporting on business and finance includes following developments in various sectors of entrepreneurial activity. Thus, each journalist in the business press is assigned to particular business sectors. Missing a story concerning each journalist's area, results to complaints by newsroom executives. Thus it is quite common for journalists working in the same field to alert each other when a press conference is organised or a new story is out, thus cultivating a "mutual benefit" relationship, which proves useful in news dry spells. This collaboration between journalists is one of the reasons for the increasing penetration of "shareware news" (i.e. commonly distributed source material) in business newspaper pages. As Frantzis (*Naftemporiki*) has stressed, contemporary business reporting is dominated by the presentation of press releases constructed by corporate sources: "There is little differentiation in current business news content in most titles and thus in the news readers get from their newspapers."²⁰⁰ As Andronopoulos (*Investor's World*) has put it:

Nowadays, information is dramatically determined by the sources' intentions and interests. News releases are taylor-made to serve journalists, who have only to re-write the news lead and file the article.²⁰¹

This practice was particularly evident during the stock market boom period. Then, journalists acted as transporters of corporate information to the newsroom. As Spyropoulos (*Express*) has stressed, most news executives in the business press were unable to verify this information. He says:

During the ASE frenzy, corporate news that normally should appear as a single column piece was transformed into a four-column page lead. The public was in no position to evaluate the credibility of information published. At that time, everything we wrote boosted stock sales...²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Nikos Frantzis, personal interview, op. cit.

²⁰¹ Makis Andronopoulos, Managing Editor, *Kosmos tou Ependiti* (Investor's World). Personal interview, August 1, 2001.

²⁰² Kostas Spyropoulos, economic desk head, *Express*, personal interview 3 December 2001.

In general, “shareware” news material, channelled to newsrooms in the form of press releases, is a highly valued source of information amongst newspaper journalists. (Table 4.17 has shown that press releases are placed second as regards the use of news sources by the average Greek newspaper journalist.) The press offices’ role is central in this information system, since they prefer to address press releases to journalists in person. Further discussion on web-journalism in the following chapter will reveal that this is particularly evident in the case of on-line business reporting. As a former editor-in-chief of *Reporter.gr* (a news website specialising in business news) has argued:

Press offices prefer to cultivate personal relationships with journalists, in order to secure as much media exposure as possible. Press releases are emailed to reporters, not to open accessed newsroom email addresses. Then you can see journalists coming to you, “selling” you the press release. Particularly in the case of external contributors, you are obliged to accept it as news. Otherwise, you don’t have it...²⁰³

During our research in newspaper newsrooms, the scene described above was constantly observed. Journalists kept coming to the editor’s office, holding press releases they had received through email or fax and waiting for instructions. However, press releases sent to the newsroom are not the sole source of information for business journalism. General meetings of company stockholders held annually or each time important decisions need to be made. During these company meetings, journalists are packed in front of a panel of company executives and can ask their questions in public. The result of this “pack journalism” is of relatively little value, according to editors, since it consists of publicly expressed news information, which is commonly utilised by all participants. As Stoupas (*Imerisia*) has argued, discussing issues with sources in public deprives reporting of the originality that editors are asking from their staff. In contrast, journalists should be able to further explore corporate material, which is distributed to them and their colleagues, via the communication mechanism of each company.²⁰⁴ And this is something that is done in private.

²⁰³ Kostis Papadimitriou, Editor-in-Chief at *Reporter.gr* in the period 1999-2000. Personal interview, 19 June 2002.

²⁰⁴ Kostas Stoupas, editor-in-chief (business), *Imerisia*, personal interview 10 July 2001.

But, what would make journalists willing to put in this extra effort? The publication (or not) of the journalists' names is a practical method editors use in order to secure the extra work necessary. Stouraitis (*Express*), Frantzis (*Naftemporiki*) and others have taken this action: by-lines are published only if original reporting is included in the news piece. However, this is not easy to monitor, since journalists can either use written ready-to-use company executives statements, which are already included in press releases, or they can use "shareware" material, which contains views expressed during press conferences or company stockholder meetings. A content analysis of business articles would reveal that a lot of articles published in the Greek business press are anonymous. Some editors have argued that this is some kind of declaration by a newspaper that it is not endorsing the information being published. All editors do not agree on this however. Steriotis (*Naftemporiki*) thinks that publishing a piece anonymously could suggest that this is in conformity to the newspaper's official view. Thus, "...I encourage journalists to put their names on the articles they write, since in this way, I make them understand that a poor news piece will embarrass not only the paper, but them personally".²⁰⁵

Examining the pages of business papers, one can easily observe that the news agenda is made up almost exclusively of news originating from companies listed in the stock market. As commonly accepted by editors, the bull market period determined the interest of news reporting by companies listed in ASE, or by those corporations that had expressed plans for public flotation (i.e. altogether less than 400 companies). The rest of the private economy remains practically invisible. Spectacular investments or strategic moves are required in order non-listed companies to gain the attention of the business press.

Part of our research in the business press was performed in June, thus coinciding with one of the most busy periods of the year. Journalists were obliged to attend to a great number of company meetings on a daily basis. There were occasions in which the number of invitations was so large, that journalists were stepping in just

²⁰⁵ Kimon Steriotis, editor, *Naftemporiki*, personal interview 28 November 2001.

to get the press release, rushing then to the next and so on. As editors have admitted, news reporting during these periods lacks the necessary depth in order to deal with the matter properly. Newspaper journalists are transformed into mere carriers of news between sources and the newsroom. If modern means of communication (email), or even economic websites, which specialise into the publication of press releases (e.g. *presspoint.gr*) are also considered, then the role of the contemporary Greek business journalist is becoming obsolete.

However, there are cases in which journalists are not even effective as carriers of news material. As mentioned, one of them is when a large number of company meetings is scheduled for the same day. Another is when the communications strategy of corporations requires a downplay of poor company results, a phenomenon quite evident during the bear market years. When this is the case, a lot of companies prefer to hold their meetings either in the company's premises, which is usually out of reach for most newspaper reporters (whereas in the case of good news meetings are held in central hotels or downtown conference rooms), or on Saturdays, a day of rest for almost all Greek journalists of the daily press. Here the "trust" system is often put in operation. Journalists reporting in the same business sector make arrangements for one of them to attend the meeting and then spread the word to the others.

Companies' communications strategies have various means of serving their particular interests. This is accomplished by an increasing power that economic, financial and business sources have acquired over the formation of news content, not only through the classic, information provision role they hold in the information flow chain, but also via the affiliation with media professionals, either officially or unofficially in the communication strategy of private and public corporations. In this environment, criticism on company affairs remains marginal; news articles which companies would find annoying appear rarely in the local business press. It goes without saying that investigative reporting on the business sector is absent, something that was particularly the case during the bull market years. As Andronopoulos (*Kosmos Ependyti* [Investor's World]) has argued:

...very few journalists are engaged into a synthesis of information; even in these cases, journalistic uncovering is marginal, usually as regards minor issues.²⁰⁶

When the bull was marching up and down in *Sofokleous Str.*,²⁰⁷ sources prevailed. The proliferation of sources in economic and business reporting that occurred in later 1980s did not contribute to the production of any substantial alternative views during the critical period. On the other hand, as argued in various parts of the thesis, Greek journalists constitute a vital part of a system, which governs economic and entrepreneurial developments. "I couldn't name a Ministry in which journalists do not hold positions, working for government figures", argues Nikolaou (*To Vima*).²⁰⁸

Moving from journalism to public relations or government office is quite common for experienced journalists in most countries. For instance, many British high-profile business journalists have left their jobs in the press to offer their expertise in the PR business. But they have to choose between the two industries, since working at the same time in both is unacceptable.²⁰⁹ Due to the absence of disciplinary measures from ESHEA, as well as the obvious unwillingness to confront clear conflicts of interest, Greek business reporters hold positions in both sides of the fence. More money is an obvious incentive for this practice, as admitted also by their British counterparts.²¹⁰ However, some argue that there is more than that. Giorgos Stouraitis is the head of business news in *Express* and the chief of the press office at the Ministry of Economy, one of the most important beats of economic reporting. He says:

...it is a good thing for the Public Sector as well as private companies to employ active journalists in their press offices. [From this positions] journalists can better serve their employer, because they have a feeling for the market and they know the steps necessary for the implementation of the employer's promotional strategy... on the other hand, they are in a position to be useful to their colleagues when the latter

²⁰⁶ Makis Andronopoulos, personal interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁷ A nickname for ASE, taken from the street's name the Stock Market is located.

²⁰⁸ Nikos Nikolaou, op. cit.

²⁰⁹ See Davis, G. (2003) 'Selling their souls', *Press Gazette*, February 7th, p. 18.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

approach the press office for information. Thus, this practice proves beneficial for the media as well, since they have their own person within the institutional beat.²¹¹

What, however, happens when a negative piece of news is about to hit the press? What should the journalist-spokesperson do? The Minister's confidant argued that the whole situation should be governed by a "golden rule", in which personal integrity holds the most important role. For instance, the journalist serving as a press officer in an institution or company should not to be involved in the same field of reporting. He stressed: "Journalists should be in a position to differentiate their role. When serving in the press office, they are not accountable to readers; they are accountable to their corporate or institutional employer."²¹² This argument, expressed by one of the most important journalists/press officers, reveals a line of thinking that borrows its reasoning from the "indeterminate" character of the journalistic profession, discussed in Chapter III, which in Greece seems to govern most aspects of contemporary journalism. This is strengthened by the abandonment of the concept of conflicts of interest, met in the international literature of journalism ethics, and the reliance of defining professional integrity and responsibility on an ad hoc evaluation day by day.

Newspaper editors, however, do not agree with the dual role of journalists at least in theory. As Stoupas (*Imerisia*) says:

It is a very organised network. Journalists who are working as press officers in companies arrange the distribution of news between their papers, exchanging press releases, which gain the necessary exposure.²¹³

During our research in business newspaper newsrooms, all editors interviewed were against the practice. However, there were cases in which editors appeared incapable of dealing with the situation, especially when personal relationships existed between the heads of institutional sources and journalists, as is the case of Stouraitis and Nikos Christodoulakis, the Minister of Economy. It can be argued that in small markets, the powerful networking that journalists develop during their

²¹¹ Giorgos Stouraitis, financial desk head, *Express* & chief of Ministry of Economy press office, personal interview, 27 November 2001.

²¹² *Ibid.*

professional lives offers them a sense of personal power that seems to be more important to them than newsroom policy. In this case, the prestige of journalists is increased to a great extent, rendering them a vital part of the agenda setting mechanism and one of the most powerful figures in the news chain.

The above argument illustrates that, increasingly, news gathering is becoming more and more an institutionalised process in Greek journalism: "In the old days, information was scarce; it was channelled to certain people and specific newspapers... We used to pick up news from the garbage can that was next to photocopy machines..." remembers Andronopoulos (*Kosmos Ependytl*). Nowadays, although the proliferation of sources ought to help journalists, in general the collection of information gathering in business reporting is increasingly performed through accredited and established mechanisms. Special stock market legislation regarding information on changes in corporate strategies (ASE Decision 5204EK, Nov. 2000) has offered a useful tool for company sources who need to avoid, or encourage leaks to the press, depending on their interests. According to this legislation, all corporations listed in the Athens Stock Exchange are obligated to send their press releases to the ASE at the same time they are informing the media.²¹⁴ Therefore, all listed companies' press releases are available on the ASE's website and journalists are able to download material and use it for their news writing. This "copy and paste" process has increased the amount of accredited corporate material used to journalistic texts.

However, corporate developments continue to hit the news, mainly through business reporters' personal relationships with corporate sources. Thus, the role of the news breaking process implemented by the ASE functions as a confirmation (or denial) of news published in the business press. This procedure has a two-way effect. On the one hand, it is an official way to confirm corporate information turned into news; on the other, it could lead to misinformation of the public. As Stoupas (*Imerisia*) has argued, there are occasions in which companies are obliged

²¹³ Kostas Stoupas, editor-in-chief (business), *Imerisia*, personal interview 10 July 2001.

to deny accurate information published in newspapers, just because the official press release has not yet reached Stock Exchange authorities, or because companies do not wish to make this information to be publicly known.²¹⁵

Therefore, it is argued that news reporting on the business environment remains almost totally controlled by official sources, who draw their power also from government legislation. Journalists seem to act more as news “receivers” than as initiators of an investigative approach to economic and business developments. As Nikolaou (*To Vima*) has argued:

Although, in our days, journalists are in a position to address all kinds of alternative sources and use modern technology in news gathering, in practice, state paternalism and corporate influences have retained distortions in business reporting to a great extent.²¹⁶

As editors have acknowledged, during the bear market period the government tried to intervene directly, through the Ministry of the Press, in the determination of the news agenda. “When the Stock Market was collapsing, the Minister of the Press tried to direct editors to other news events and to dictate the next day’s editorial focus... and this influence was obvious in next day’s newspaper coverage”, Nikolaou says.²¹⁷ This kind of intervention is also exercised by large companies, when disturbing information on company developments is made known.

Large companies are also major advertising spenders, something that is particularly evident within newsrooms in the business press. Pressures of that kind originate also from public corporations, since the State’s entrepreneurial activity remains massive in many areas of the economy. All editors examined acknowledged pressures coming from both directions. Most business titles introduced separate pages on which press releases and other promotional material is published, usually channelled to the newsroom from the advertising department. Moreover, special

²¹⁴ Capital Committee’s Decision no. 5/204/14-11-2000 on rules of conduct of listed companies and their stakeholders. See Athens Stock Exchange relevant regulation, available in <http://www.ase.gr/content/gr/about/regulations/> (Accessed 20 May 2003).

²¹⁵ Kostas Stoupas, *op. cit.*

²¹⁶ Nikos Nikolaou, *op. cit.*

²¹⁷ Nikos Nikolaou, *op. cit.*

newspaper sections on specific business sectors, such as logistics, telecommunications, transports, etc. are sponsored by specific companies. Discussions with journalists have revealed that sponsors receive preferential treatment in news coverage and in the expression of views and analyses (i.e. publication of articles written by sponsors' executives).

In their minds, editors in the business press are quite clear as regards the importance of advertising revenues as well as the determination of the newspaper's advertising department to produce results. When content requests arrive in the newsroom, editors and the advertising department get involved into a negotiation that aims to serve both parties; safeguard the credibility of the newsroom and at the same time serve the advertisers' interests. As Stoupas (*Imerisia*) has argued, "There is a consensus between the newsroom and the advertising department. In the case of a disturbing news article, the size of the client matters. You have to evaluate the possible harm for the newspaper and act accordingly..."²¹⁸ However, in the case of a company's poor financial results, there is little editors can do, except to be kind in handling the headline to go with the story. Of course, good news is always written more generously and placed more prominently. Finally, State advertisements on government investments and initiatives as regards the allocation of EU funds, as well as the advertising budget of Olympics 2004, constitute a powerful tool for government elites, especially during pre-election periods.

4.3.3.3 The loss of credibility, or how the "watchdog" became a poodle

The subordination of the journalistic profession to the interests of political and business elites during the bull market period of the stock exchange has been a result of a series of factors, which can be found inside as well as outside the immediate journalistic environment. Throughout this chapter, pressures on news productions were examined with the emphasis put on the professional characteristics of journalists, their practices and routines, their relationships with sources (in some cases taking the form of a close affiliation), as well as their strength in defining and processing news based on their educational background and expertise. The way

²¹⁸ Kostas Stoupas, *op. cit.*

journalists have handled news during the critical 1998-2000 period of the Athens Stock Exchange demonstrates the weakness of contemporary journalism in the country in a very particular conjuncture. The protection of the public interest requires news handling to be performed wisely. But Greek journalism did not get even close to this concept. Major weaknesses emerging from structural distortions and serious unethical behaviour have turned the Greek business journalistic corps into promoters of corporate interests. Thus a market-driven journalism prevailed during the stock market frenzy, which functioned at the expense of public interest, a fact that soon after was proven in the most dramatic way. The stock market enthusiasm of most journalists and the business press encouraged 1.4 million Greeks to invest on a market that was a giant with feet of clay.

It is quite clear, that the watchdog role of the press is particularly sensitive when it comes to the economy and investments of individuals. In this case it is all about assessing corporate economics and strategies and evaluating government economic policy; then the public is informed about developments in the national economy front as well as for risks involved in particular investments. At the end of the 1990s, the stock market situation acted as an unavoidable credibility test for the profession, which Greek journalism failed in a spectacular way. In our research, most editors accepted responsibility for bad journalistic practices in relation to stock market developments. They argued that most journalists shared the optimistic plans of the government for a strong stock market and believed the ambitious plans of corporations for expansion, co-operations and major investments. On the other hand, even those who were sceptics have admitted that readers' pressures for exclusive information on investment opportunities had made them think twice about their conservative stance. As Kefalacos (*Naftemporiki*) has put it:

The editorial policy of the paper was very carefully drawn and went through a lot of difficulties. We couldn't by-pass the 'Stock Market Superhighway'; thus, we created special sections, we provided sectoral analyses, etc. But we didn't manage to attract neo-investors, since we never wrote of particular stocks. The result was to lose the first position in newsstand sales.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Dionysis Kefalacos, editor *Naftemporiki*, personal interview, 3 August and 26 November 2001.

During the bull market period, a new kind of column appeared in the business press (usually anonymous), promoting investment opportunities on particular stocks. In these, “exclusive information” on corporate developments was published, thus, urging readers to favour one stock over others. Through these columns, rumours were spread throughout the critical market period, seducing readers who kept asking newspapers for investment tips. As editors admit, readers’ pressure was a reason for newspaper’s participation in the stock market frenzy. Articles that expressed scepticism over economic policy in general and stock market developments in particular were not welcomed by the public. The question remains: who was responsible for ASE’s enthusiasm that ended to a catastrophe? “The responsibilities of journalism are immense”, argues Nikolaou (*To Vima*), but “these cannot be compared, by no means, with the responsibility of government authorities”.²²⁰ The PaSoK administration’s policy, which was heavily reflected in the pages of the pro-government business press, urged people to place their savings in *Sofokleous*. As Stouraitis (*Express*) has argued, “Newspapers felt obliged to follow market developments...”²²¹, thus creating a self-feeding information system, which boosted the stock market bubble even further.

After the climate of optimism was set by the pro-government press, other papers followed partly due to their original belief as regards ASE’s’ dynamism and partly due to the fear that criticism would alienate readers. As Stoupas (*Imerista*) has argued, during that period, “entrepreneurs were talking about expanding their businesses, financial analysts were suggesting that the rally would continue and banks were eager to underwrite new company flotations. There were very little we could write against this climate. Besides, just like any other business, the press cannot move against consumers”.²²²

In the 1998-2000 period, Greek society was ruled by a gambling appetite that was gradually transformed into a lust for more and more good news in the business field. And the newspapers did just that, swept along by institutional elites,

²²⁰ Nikos Nikolaou, op. cit.

²²¹ Giorgos Stouraitis, op. cit.

²²² Kostas Stoupas, op. cit.

journalistic inefficiency and the interests of newspaper owners who took advantage of the stock market rising and managed to secure a substantial amount of capital from public flotations.

Greek journalism's traditional weaknesses and structural distortions to a great degree offer a sufficient explanation of the eagerness the profession has demonstrated in adopting elites' agendas or the public's wishes. It is the public's behaviour however that deserves some particular explanation in this part.

Although this thesis has tried to avoid statements of a sociological character, at this point it is worth making an exception that derives from a research by de Jong and Semenov (2002) that is relevant to the present discussion. The authors examined the relation between "the factors determining cross-country differences in stock market activity to deeply rooted norms and values in the society...".²²³ In Jong and Semenov's view, culture, economic institutions, economic organisation and economic performance are interrelated". The authors used Hofstede's approach on intercultural differences to examine stock market performance in selected OECD countries. In this research Greece scored the highest figure amongst OECD members examined in terms of "uncertainty avoidance". And, as Hofstede (1994) found, "uncertainty avoiding cultures ...paradoxically, they are often to engage in risky behaviour in order to reduce ambiguities...".²²⁴ Jong and Semenov's research covered the period 1976-1995, during which two violent stock booms occurred (1987 and 1990).²²⁵ However, the average market capitalization in the examined period was one of the lowest within the OECD, since around fifteen years of hibernation had affected average performance downwards. This evidence, along with Greece's categorisation in Hofstede's tables, led the authors to place Greek society in the group of uncertainty avoiding cultures. Jong and Semenov went even further, combining social characteristics with the methods political elites utilise in their ruling strategies. More particularly, according to the authors,

²²³ Jong, de E. and Semenov, R. (2002) *Cross-country Differences in Stock Market Development: A Cultural View*. Located at www.ub.rug.nl/eldoc/som/e/02E40/02e40.pdf (Accessed 5 July 2003).

²²⁴ See Hofstede, G. (1994) *Cultures and Organisations: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 116.

²²⁵ Kamaras, I., 2001, op. cit.

in countries that score high in terms of the uncertainty avoidance criterion, “the best outcome [for politicians] may be believed to be produced by a system, which involves a significant degree of deliberate coordination”.²²⁶

In the light of this argument, it could be argued that the “deliberate” promotion, by political elites of the “charismatic” characteristics of the Athens Stock Exchange, which was accomplished by media reflections of government communications strategies and pre-election jargon, was clearly a method of “coordinating” the public’s moves towards the desired direction. Greek society proved easy to handle; accustomed to the States’ paternalistic practices and protected environment that populist policies had created throughout the years, it had developed a way of life that always avoided “uncertainty”. Although this approach could prove valuable for social and political communication analyses, here it serves as a hint for understanding the socio-cultural superstructure that characterised local stock market developments in the late 1990s.

4.4 EPILOGUE

In this chapter, discussion has focused on major aspects of news production process in the largest Athens-based political and business dailies. Research has thrown light on the most important factors, which influence the production of news. The examination of these factors has followed the categorisation provided by Shoemaker and Reese. The authors’ division of the factors that affect news making into internal and external has assisted the distinct analysis of the human factor, the presiding professional journalistic routines and practices, the newsroom structure and owner’s influence, professional ethics, as well as the role of sources, advertising and the general sociopolitical environment. Finally, the examination of the role of the profession during the Athens Stock Exchange boom and crisis years has offered a base for further analysis and manifestation of the arguments deployed throughout the thesis.

²²⁶ Jong, de E. and Semenov, R., 2002, op. cit.

Particular emphasis has been put on the qualities and beliefs of journalistic human resources as well as their effect on the daily news production processes. In many occurrences, journalistic routines in the fields of news gathering and processing were discussed as structural characteristics of the journalistic profession, which are thought of as having significant influence on the formation of the news product that reaches newspaper readers on a daily basis.

Evidence from the S-JNG 2002 survey, which has drawn the profile of the Greek newspaper journalist (discussed in Chapter III), was combined with the second part of the survey that was performed amongst newspaper editors, including the business press.

In the final part in particular, where an examination of economic and business reporting took place, the paradigm of the Athens Stock Exchange offered an analysis that has led to significant conclusions as regards the way journalism is practiced in the country.

It must be noted, however, that the increasing utilisation of computers and particularly of the Internet by the public is leading to the necessity of reappraising already known forms of journalism. As it is commonly argued, Internet news has altered journalism practices in many ways. The existence of continuous deadlines, the operation of interactive applications and on-line databases, the necessity of developing new journalism skills, the development of personalised and specialised news content are considered as significant changes for contemporary journalism.²²⁷

Moreover, the public's access to thousands of institutional, governmental and corporate websites calls for a re-evaluation of the role of sources and their utilisation by journalists. In some markets of severe structural weaknesses, like Greece, the traditional intermediary role of journalists may already seem obsolete. Through the Internet, the people's power in accessing sources of information is

²²⁷ Jong, de E. and Semenov, R., 2002, *op. cit.*

increasing, so is their ability to understand news. This could put traditional journalism to jeopardy, or to lead it to new and sophisticated forms.

The particular effects of the Internet on journalistic activity and Greek journalism, both of positive as well as of negative nature, constitute areas to be analysed further in the next chapter. Thus, after a brief presentation of major theoretical concerns arising in the digital era, the main part of the next chapter deals with the first forms of Internet and web journalism in the Greek market.

V

Internet news & Web-journalism

In the first half of the 1990s, communications researchers seem to have ignored the Internet as a distinct new medium of massive appeal. This can be attributed to several reasons. As Morris and Ogan (1996) have argued, the Internet did not fit the researchers' traditional ideas on mass media, whereas their disciplinary lines may have functioned as obstacles for them in seeing evidence of the converging communication process.¹ Moreover, old theoretical frameworks on media effects "...have kept them from being able to see the Internet as a new mass medium".² The need for new theories was more than evident.

However, as Brody (2001) has stressed, "...a multimedia structure need not necessarily become a new medium, but it has the potential to do so."³ He went on to argue that

...a new medium is new only until it is established as no longer new; but since any usage of a medium is based upon communicative conventions, a new medium is somewhat of a contradiction. By defining the medium as 'new', we acknowledge the transitory stage of the integration of our current analysis, limited though this may be by its temporal frame.⁴

Naturally, multimedia applications and new layouts do not qualify per se for the development of a new medium in theory and in practice. More evidence on practices and journalism philosophy need to be addressed in order to start

¹ Morris, M. & Ogan, C. (1996) 'The Internet as Mass Medium', *Journal of Communication* 46(1), Winter, pp. 39-50.

² Ibid.

³ Brody, F. (2001) 'The Medium is the Memory', in P. Lunenfeld's (ed.) *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, p. 138

⁴ Ibid., p. 139

sketching the form of the Internet as a new platform of journalistic expression and news source for the public.

Despite the increasing presence of mainstream media in the Internet, web-based journalistic production was not achieved from the outset. According to Volkmer (1998), in the early years the broad term of "cyber-journalism" involved "...both journalism on-line, which implies that the Web is an additional or secondary publishing site and simply transforms conventional journalism, and on-line journalism, which implies virtual e-zines and papers. Whereas journalism on-line is exercised by traditional media outlets (primarily newspapers), on-line journalism was established with a focus on global issues (such as women, electronics or human rights)".⁵

Certain aspects of Internet news and the journalism developed in the new digital field point to the direction of innovation via the application of new journalistic techniques and practices. An increasing number of people around the globe get their news online on a daily basis. In some markets the wide availability of Internet news seems to compete directly with television, especially amongst the young.⁶ Surveys and opinion polls have shown that Internet news, more than other commercially driven Internet activities, is progressively becoming a useful source for the inhabitants of what Dertouzos had called the "global village".⁷

People's interest over Internet news is rising. In 1996, when Internet penetration numbers were still modest, 42% of US online news users went on the Internet to follow up stories they saw in newspapers or on television.⁸ Also, incidental consumption of online news was strongly observed in as many as 53% of Internet

⁵ Volkmer, Ingrid (1998) "Universalism and Particularism: The Problem of Cultural sovereignty and Global Information Flow" in Kahin, B. & Nesson, C. (eds) *Borders in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, p. 68.

⁶ "Net, TV Are Often Roommates", *Internet Advertising Report*, Jupitermedia Corporation. September 17, 2002. Available: <http://www.internetnews.com/IAR/article.php/1464881> (Accessed 26/9/2002).

⁷ Dertouzos, M. (1998) *What will be: how the new world of information will change our lives*. San Francisco: Harper Edge.

⁸ "News Attracts Most Internet Users", Report by the *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*, Released December 16, 1996. Available: <http://people-press.org/reports>. (Accessed 17/7/2002).

users.⁹ In 2002, research by *comScore Media Metrix* found that 47% of adult Internet users in the US watch television and use the Internet simultaneously.¹⁰

Research evidence from various sources supports the view that the Internet is gradually being established as a new news medium. The increasing penetration of Internet news with online consumers is reflected by changes observed in news consumption in comparison to traditional media. The US market points the way in recent trends and moving. According to the first National Internet Study by *Scarborough Research*, there is a certain decline of traditional media consumption amongst online users. More specifically, the study found that almost a quarter of online users view television less often since they began using the Internet.¹¹ The same conclusion was reached by the *UCLA Internet Report 2001*, which has also traced evidence of declining usage as regards traditional media, due to Internet use. Specifically, US Internet users watched 4.5 hours per week less television than non-users. In general, a decrease in television viewing is observed as Internet experience increases. As the UCLA report puts it: "Almost one-quarter of adults said that the children in their households watch less television since they started using the Internet."¹² Less television viewing is also observed amongst European Internet users. According to *Forrester Research*, they are watching "between 10% and 15% less TV each week than offline users".¹³

However, it cannot be argued that, in general, Internet usage leads to "cannibalisation" of television viewing or newspaper reading in the existing strong

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Net, TV Are Often Roommates", *Internet Advertising Report*, op. cit..

¹¹ "National Internet Study" (2001), *Scarborough Research*, May 9. Available: http://www.scarborough.com/scarb2000/press/pr_internetstudy1.htm. (Accessed 23/5/2001).

¹² *UCLA Internet Report 2001*. Available: <http://ccp.ucla.edu/pages/internet-report.asp> (Accessed 31/11/2001). See also 'Newspaper Readership Declines with Web Use', *Content Intelligence*, Newsletter, July 20, 2001, vol. 1, issue 3 (www.contentintelligence.com). The company performed a web-based study of a total of more than 1,400 respondents that revealed only 36% of the audience said they read a newspaper daily while 83% reported that they use the Internet at least once or more daily (ibid.).

¹³ "Wired European Watch Less TV, But Read More Newspapers Than the Norm" (online), *Forrester Research*, July 9, 2001. Available: <http://www.forrester.com/ER/Press/Release/0,1769,591,00.html>. Accessed 18/7/2001.

segments of traditional media audience.¹⁴ What is evident though is the rapid penetration of the Internet among younger people; namely the future audience of newspapers and television. For instance, in a recent report by *Forrester Research*, it is argued that “the Net’s early adopters are simple less keen on TV than their offline counterparts”.¹⁵

Therefore, building a pro-Internet media culture at a young age may affect the future audiences of traditional media. Especially in the case of the press, young people hooked on the Internet seem to create a distance from traditional print readings and prefer newspaper sites for their news experience. So it is not surprising that *Forrester Research* has found that “people in the 20-29 age bracket are bypassing print newspapers for their online editions”.¹⁶

Newspapers around the globe seem to be aware of the potential danger of loosing ground amongst young people. Although nothing can ensure that digital youngsters when grown up will become regular readers of the print editions, newspaper websites are trying to tackle the issue and attract younger ages by responding to specific needs of these social groups. In 1999, the first *World Survey of Newspaper Young Reader Services on the Internet*, compiled by the World Association of Newspapers, studied newspaper involvement with the Internet and with the young. The study attracted responses from 29 countries worldwide. Amongst its most important findings were the following:

¹⁴ In a survey performed by *BIGresearch* in 2001, 50.8% of people in the US said that they get most of their world news from television, with Internet to be the second most important source (19.5%). Newspapers followed with a 17.3%. This does not mean that newspapers are bypassed by the audience, since in the same survey it is stated that more people (48.2%) cited television as the greatest political influence, with newspapers to follow with a 17.5% (internet was third with 12.3%). What seems important here is the fact that Internet appears to compete with the powerful press. ('The Internet Is an Important News Source', *eMarketer*, February 26, 2001. Available: http://www.emarketer.com/estatnews/estats/20010226_news_sources.html?ref=w. Accessed 27/2/2001).

¹⁵ 'Net Usage Doesn't Cannibalize TV Viewing', *Forrester Research*. Available: <http://www.forrester.com/ER/Press/Release/0,1769,717,FF.html> (25/10/2002).

¹⁶ Beard, M. (2002) '20-somethings fleeing papers for the web', *Media Life Magazine* [online]. Available: http://www.medialifemagazine.com/news2002/feb02/feb11/2_tues/news4tuesday.html (22/2/2002). According to *Forrester Research*, 45% of wired- twenty-somethings log on to the web sites of their favourite newspapers regularly (ibid.). See also Loawlor, D. (2001) 'Readers Seek News Online', *Business 2.0*, January 12. Available: <http://www.business2.com/content/channels/ebusiness/2001/01/12/24610>. Accessed 30/1/2001.

- Nearly half of respondents said most access to the site originated from computers in schools. About a quarter noted that they are home users.
- Slightly more than 60% of sites provide news for the young, evenly split between articles written by adults and by young people themselves.
- 40% of sites have "chat" services that offer the possibility for direct communication among users. Most do not target a specific age group. Slightly over half of respondents find them popular.
- While 90% of respondents say that interactivity is important, a full 50% acknowledge that their site is only slightly interactive.¹⁷

5.1 INTERNET AS A NEW JOURNALISM PLATFORM

In 1996, the Middleberg & Ross *Media in Cyberspace III* study found that the proportion of US print media that had their publication, or portions of it, online had doubled over a year (from 25% in 1995 to 49% in 1996).¹⁸ The same study found however, that in 33% of these media the web sites contained less than 5% of original content. Moreover, in 25% of the cases there was no original content at all. In terms of newspapers, only 7% responded that half or more of the website's content was exclusively produced for online purposes.¹⁹

Two years later in 1998, when Middleberg & Ross' *Media in Cyberspace V* study was published, the situation was quite different. Only 22% of newspaper respondents said that their sites had less than 5% original content. Moreover, the study found that newspapers that in the past kept print and new media newsrooms separately, had joined them by then in a single environment (in 56% of newspapers all newsroom operations were shared; some operations were shared in 13%; only an 11% of cases kept newsroom operations separate). According to the authors, "1998 marks a historic moment – news organisations have [...] clearly broken

¹⁷ World Association of Newspapers (1999) *First WAN World Survey of Newspaper Young Reader Services on the Internet* (www.wan-press.org).

¹⁸ Middleberg D. & Ross, S. (1996) *Media in Cyberspace III*. Available: <http://www.middleberg.com/toolsforsuccess/cyberstudy.cfm>. (Accessed 21/10/2002).

¹⁹ Ibid.

away from their tendency to use online technology [...] as a distribution device more than as a new medium.”²⁰

The consolidation between the web site and offline editorial operations remains the dominant trend. In the latest Middleberg & Ross (2002) study, in most cases “online reporters and editors share space with the print or broadcast staffs: 56% of newspapers, 77% of magazines and 51% of broadcasters report at least some shared newsroom operations between Web and non-Web”.²¹ A characteristic example of print and web newsroom consolidation in the mainstream press is that observed in the *Financial Times* when the paper moved in this direction in 1999. As Peter Martin, deputy editor of FT, stated, “the ‘web-page producers’ who will edit the site will now sit on the same news desks as the page editors who produce the comparable pages for the paper, sharing the same news judgements.”²²

“Being digital is the license to grow”, wrote Negroponte in 1995²³ and this is what the future was for the mainstream newspapers, as well as thousands of others around the globe. However, it seems that this motto has not always been the sole driving force of the mainstream press to enter the cyberspace.

5.1.1 Mainstream media websites and e-zines

The fear of losing classified advertising to small companies appears to be the most important reason that *The New York Times* top executives started to think of creating a newspaper website in 1995.²⁴ After a short period of deliberations, in January 1996, *nytimes.com* was up and running, at first with scheduled news updates that occurred twice a day. Soon however, the paper’s web team realised that publishing breaking news online was not only essential, but at some point

²⁰ Middleberg D. & Ross, S. (1998) *Media in Cyberspace IV*. Available: <http://www.middleberg.com/toolsforsuccess/cyberstudy.cfm>, p. 2 (in pdf.). (Accessed 21/10/2002).

²¹ Middleberg D. & Ross, S. (2002) *Change and Its Impact on Communications*. Available: http://www.middleberg.com/toolsforsuccess/fulloverview_2002.cfm. (Accessed 21/10/2002).

²² Martin, P. (1999) ‘Into the Fold’, *Press Gazette*, October 29, p. 18.

²³ Negroponte, N. (1995) *Being Digital*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, p. 41.

²⁴ As argued by Bernard Gwertzman, editor of the ‘NY Times on the Web’, in a discussion with Martin Nisenholtz, chief executive officer of ‘NY Times Digital’ and Bill Golstein, the Books Editor of *NYTimes.com*. Source: ‘The New York Times: Five Years on the Web’, *The New York Times*, January

unavoidable. As Bernard Gwertzman, editor of *NYTimes.com*, has argued, "...if some big story broke at three o' clock, you couldn't wait till six o' clock [for the scheduled update]."²⁵ From a handful of people that staffed the first web unit of the paper in 1996, *New York Times Digital*, the Internet division of the New York Times Co. was employing 400 people at the end of 2000.²⁶

During the short history of the New York Times' news Internet venture, the Internet economy marched from enthusiastic predictions to cruel reality. Negative developments in the online advertising front forced the paper to cut the digital subsidiary's staff by 17% in January 2001.²⁷ However, events of great magnitude such as the Princess Diana's death, the Starr Report, JFK Junior's death and, above all, the 9/11 events have marked a web operation that has already generated revenues for its sister print edition. Specifically, in 2001, 85,000 subscription requests for the print edition were channeled via *nytimes.com*, which in February 2002 attracted nearly 6.7 million users (registered users in early 2001 were 15 million).²⁸

In the case of *The Washington Post*, the US capital's leading daily, the Internet was seen as an opportunity for promotion the Post's news and editorial views on a nationwide level, something that the print edition had not tried in the past.²⁹ In mid-1996, *Washingtonpost.com* was launched (June 19), in the beginning with a staff of around 50 people, few of whom were journalists. Newspaper reporters were asked to file stories for an early edition posted online.³⁰ The site provides

20, 2001. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/20/technology/20ANNIVERSARY.html> (Accessed 22/1/2001).

²⁵ 'The New York Times: Five Years on the Web', *The New York Times*, January 20, 2001. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/20/technology/20ANNIVERSARY.html> (Accessed 22/1/2001).

²⁶ 'New York Times Company's Internet Unit Plans Layoffs', *The New York Times*, January 7, 2001. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/07/technology/07DIGI.html>. (Accessed 8/1/2001).

²⁷ 'New York Times Web Unit to Cut Staff by 17% Amid Slow Ad Market', *The Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2001. Available: <http://interactive.wsj.com/articles/SB978893947453917210.htm> (Accessed 8/1/2001).

²⁸ 'Web Delivers for Papers', *Daily News Online Edition*, March 25, 2002. Available: http://www.nydailynews.com/2002-03-25/News_and_Views/Media_and_B.../a-145456.as. Accessed 2/4/2002.

²⁹ Harding, J. (1999) 'From Watergate to the world wide web', *Financial Times*, December 17, p. 25.

³⁰ Ibit Also Sperry, P. (2000) 'Is Washington Post website imploding?', *WorldNetDaily.com*, March 14. Available: http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_sperry_news/20000314_xnspsy_is_washing.shtml. Accessed 15/3/2000.

supplementary news material such as government reports, speech transcripts, etc., whilst a co-operation with *MSNBC.com* has secured video footage from live news events.³¹

The Seattle based *MSNBC.com* is a joint venture between NBC television and Microsoft and one of the leading national content providers in the US. The site provides local content through NBC's affiliated TV stations and co-operatives established around the country.³² In the 9/11 attacks in the US, *MSNBC.com* was a leading destination for Internet users, reaching 22.2 million in September 2001. It was outpaced only by *CNN.com*, which had web traffic of 24.8 million hits in the same period.³³ Quite recently, plans by *MSNBC.com* to move into subscription services for premium content and to start charging for multimedia clips sometime in 2003 were announced as a result of costs entailed in video feeds.³⁴ Also, in early 2002, *CNN.com* started charging for web video footage, initiating a subscription service.³⁵

Another strong player in the mainstream newspaper web-based services is *WSJ.com*, the website of the *Wall Street Journal*, which has online editing desks also in London and Brussels. *WSJ.com*, which at the end of 2000 employed around 250 people, introduced subscription services in 1996, foreseeing the commercial path most premium Internet news services were about to follow a few years later. The site's 535,000 paid subscribers at the end of 2000 (increased by 42% from the previous year) did not prevent some downsizing occurred in the first months of

³¹ Sperry, P., 2000, op. cit.

³² Mostafa, K. (2000) 'MSNBC.com Finds Local Content at Pioneer Newspapers', *Editor & Publisher Online*, June 15. Available: <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/ephome/news/newshtml/stories/061500n4.htm> (Accessed 26/7/2000).

³³ Warner, B. (2001) 'MSNBC Launches Arabic News Site, CNN to Follow', *Excite News*, October 16. Available: <http://news.excite.com/news/r/011016/12/net-tech-internet-msnbc-dc>. Accessed 26/10/2001.

³⁴ Miles, S. (2002) 'MSNBC to Charge for Video, Following Lead of CNN, ABC', *The Wall Street Journal Online*, November 6. Available: http://online.wsj.com/article_email/0,,SB1036617332203160108,00.html (Accessed 11/11/2002).

³⁵ Barnako, F. (2002) 'CNN to kill free Web video', *CBS.MarketWatch.com*, March 6. Available: <http://cbs.marketwatch.com/news/story.asp?guid={53A70646-F454-4247-AD36-20EFFF133BD7}&siteid=mktw&dist=&archive=true>. Accessed 8/3/2002.

2001 when earnings fell below expectations.³⁶ *WSJ.com* was relaunched in early 2002, in order, according to Online Journal Publisher *Neil Budde*, to be “more of a departure from the print publication than in the past”.³⁷ In the case of *WSJ.com*, the problems of the new economy were seen as an opportunity to strengthen the online presence of the news organisation, building on the traditional credibility of the newspaper. As Budde has put it, “we think we can grow the business even more because people are looking at something more stable”.³⁸

On the other side of the Atlantic, *FT.com*, relies predominantly on the prestigious content of the print edition and the sophisticated re-packaging of the usual “800-word news analyses, composed at the end of a long day of reporting”.³⁹ In February 2000, a re-launch of the website included layout improvements and interactive community forums, as well as daily news updates that were linked to current commentaries and analyses, relevant financial data and discussion groups.⁴⁰ Finally, after an unsuccessful attempt to introduce audio and video footage in 2001 (the multimedia project failed to appear in public) and the introduction of a subscription charge for online users, *FT.com* constitutes a prestigious online presence. In January 2002, unique users of *FT.com* reached 2.7 million from 0.2 million in January 1999.⁴¹

³⁶ Strupp, J. (2001) ‘Layoffs expected at Wall St. Journal, *WSJ.com*’, *Editor & Publisher Online*, March 29. Available: <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/epson/news/newshtml/stories/032901n7.htm>. Accessed 4/4/2001. The number of subscribers in *WSJ.com* continued to increase, reaching 646,000 in the second-quarter 2002 (source: ‘Wall Street Journal site sees subscriber increase’, *Revolution UK Online*, July 12, 2002. Available: <http://www.revolutionmagazine.com/news/view.cfm?r=&id=91027> Accessed 16/7/2002).

³⁷ Kramer, S. (2002) ‘WSJ’s \$28 Million Renovation’, *Online Journalism Review*, January 30. Available: <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/business/1017788129.php> (Accessed 7/2/2002).

³⁸ *Ibit.*

³⁹ Martin, P. (1999) ‘Into the Fold’, *Press Gazette*, October 29, p. 18.

⁴⁰ ‘FT.com relaunches as new rival TheStreet goes live’, *Press Gazette*, February 18, 2000, p. 4.

⁴¹ Pearson Annual Report 2001, p. 24. Also Gibson, O. (2002) ‘FT.com eyes break-even by year end’, *The Guardian*, October 17. Available: <http://media.guardian.co.uk/Print.0,3858,4526317,00.html>. (Accessed 18/10/2002). Another major development as regards charging Internet users with access fees is the introduction of such a service by *Times Online*, the *The Times* website (timesonline.co.uk), in some cases through the users’ monthly mobile phone bills. See Vickers, A. (2001) ‘Times Website to Introduce Charges’, *Guardian Unlimited*, July 17. Available: <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newsmedia/story/0,7496,523064,00.html> (Accessed 19/7/2001). Also Gibson, O. (2002) ‘Times Online to charge by phone bill’, *Guardian Unlimited*, March 19. Available: <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newsmedia/story/0,7496,669732,00.html> (Accessed 29/3/2002).

The success of *BBC News Online* was based on its free-of-charge status since *BBC.co.uk* is considered as part of the BBC's public service remit.⁴² The site was redesigned during 1999 and the contribution from specialist correspondents was increased. Page impressions increased from 7.9 million in April 1998 to more than 40 million in March 1999.⁴³ *BBC News Online* has managed to produce an average of around 300 online news stories per day. During 2001, discussions included the possibility of charging for Internet services offered to overseas visitors, who account for almost half of BBC website's users. The idea was dropped later on.⁴⁴ The year 2001 marked the creation of *BBCi*, which brought together previously separate services; the launch of interactive digital television; and substantial growth in traffic to the *BBCi* website, with monthly page impressions (PIs) rising from 322 million in March 2001 to 549 million in March 2002.⁴⁵ The whole *BBCi* service was extensively re-modeled in November 2001, a project, according to the 2001/2002 BBC New Media Report, aimed at the provision of a consistent look, common navigation principles and search facilities across all pages and sections of the site.

It is evident that news produced exclusively for the web is gaining ground in most mainstream news sites around the globe. As the Middleberg & Ross studies have indicated, the proportion of original online material increased significantly in the second half of the 1990s. Moreover, news websites affiliated to or being subsidiaries of television networks are more capable of producing multimedia news material than newspapers. Progress in the digital field is constant and expensive for most companies. Some, like *CNN.com*, have started charging for video and audio news formats, whereas others, like *BBC.co.uk*, are struggling to preserve the quality and free access of their online content.

⁴² Wells, M. (2001) 'BBC Considers charges for internet output', *Guardian Unlimited*, July 4. Available: <http://www.mediaguardian.co.uk/newmedia/story/0,7496,516576,00.html>. Accessed 5/7/01.

⁴³ *BBC Annual Report 1998/1999*. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/report99/review2f.shtml>. Accessed 21/10/2002.

⁴⁴ Wells, M. (2001) 'BBC Considers charges for internet output', *Guardian Unlimited*, July 4. Available: <http://www.mediaguardian.co.uk/newmedia/story/0,7496,516576,00.html>. Accessed 5/7/01.

⁴⁵ 'The BBC's Governors' report to license payers and Parliament'. *Annual Report 2001/2002*. Available: http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/report2002/review/new_media.shtml. Accessed 21/10/2002.

In the case of newspapers, web-based archive news material has proved to be of great potential value. In 2001, 95% of US daily newspapers were selling archive material online on an individual retrieval basis. As a survey by the *Advanced Interactive Media Group* has indicated, more than 1 out of 3 US dailies are exploring ways to charge for additional content online offerings, such as photographs, or more in-depth stories.⁴⁶ Revenues, however, from these activities remain minimal and the bulk of newspapers selling archive material online in 2001 generated less than \$500 per month.⁴⁷

In a study examining the extent that US daily newspapers are using available technologies, including multimedia and interactivity, for development of web sites, Dibeau (1999) has found that most online newspapers have adopted innovations, such as links to related information, and consumer services, such as searchable classifieds. However, "...when it comes to other features, such as the use of Java, chat rooms, and other plug-in based technologies, most sites have not used them."⁴⁸

Newspapers, via their websites, have managed to reach audiences that normally would not have seen their print edition. For instance, in the case of *WSJ.com*, from 625,000 subscribers in early 2002, only a third got both print and online editions.⁴⁹ The example of the *WashingtonPost.com* is even more significant: out of 3 million registered users of *nytimes.com*, almost 50% have never purchased the newspaper.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ 'Online Content Sales by US Newspapers', *Advanced Interactive Media Group*, April 2001 (www.aimgroup.com). Accessed 25/5/2001.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dibeau, W. (1999) 'How Us Daily Newspapers Are Using Their Internet Counterparts', A paper presented to the University of Luton *Creativity and Consumption Conference*, Luton, U.K., March 29-31. <http://gehon.ir.miami.edu/> (Accessed 21/10/2002).

⁴⁹ Kramer, S. (2002) 'WSJ's \$28 Million Renovation', *Online Journalism Review*, January 30. Available: <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/business/1017788129.php> (Accessed 7/2/2002).

⁵⁰ Sperry, P., 2000, op. cit.

In general, US newspaper sites' performance seems to be improving. According to Nielsen/NetRatings figures presented by *Editor & Publisher*, in September 2002 newspapers run half of the top 20 news sites.⁵¹

During the 1990s, mainstream and independent websites, although facing financial problems, have achieved records of journalism efficiency. An indicative list includes various e-zines such as *Breakingviews.com*, the H. Dixon analysis and commentary website, *TheStreet.com* and its UK subsidiary, *Inside.com*, the prize-winning *Salon.com*, (which celebrated its seventh birthday in November 2002), the Indian *Rediff.com*, the legendary *Wired.com*, the specialist *Cnet.com (news.com)*, the *Slate.com* published by Microsoft, the *TheStandard.com*, *Business2.com*, *CBS.Marketwatch.com*, *Feed.com*, *Suck.com* and many others.⁵²

5.1.2 Major news events boost Internet news

In 1998, Ingrid Volkmer argued that web-journalism "relates to contexts that arise not only from hyperlink connections but also from the specific relationship between the original medium and its on-line counterpart. Whereas currently almost no such relations can be identified in the original media, in the near future the Web site will also influence off-line journalism".⁵³ By that time, early signs of this influence were already present.

On July 29, 1997, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* web site reported first – mistakenly – the name of the new chairman of Apple Computers, a news item that affected directly the company's stock performance.⁵⁴ Based on anonymous sources, the *Chronicle's* editors preferred to run the story on the Net, rather than to wait for the print edition. Although the story was wrong, it was a clear example of the increasing role web journalism has started to play in news writing.⁵⁵ Another

⁵¹ Available: http://www.editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/headlines/article_display.jsp?nvccontent_id=1742373. Accessed 22/10/2002. See also *The American Press Institute – The Media Center* (www.CyberJournalist.net).

⁵² A list of internet ventures facing problems can be found in Poynter.org, "Crunch Times", available: <http://www.poynter.org/crunchtimes.cuts.htm>. Accessed 13/6/2001.

⁵³ Volkmer, I., 1998, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵⁴ Saila, C. (1997) "Online Newspapers grow up", *The Bytewriter* (August 15), www.saila.com.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

example was that of *Dallas Morning News*, when earlier the same year the newspaper's website scooped the parent paper with a story about Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh's privately confessing his guilt to his lawyer. These examples illustrate the importance of the new medium as an effective platform of breaking the news.⁵⁶

Since 1997, the phenomenon of websites scooping their sister print editions has become quite common. Looking across the Middleberg & Ross surveys for the period 1996-2001, the proportion of newspaper and magazine sites publishing news first increased significantly. Specifically, the Middleberg & Ross survey of respondents who said that "scooping" never or almost never happened fell from 62% in 1996 to 31% in 2001, while those who answered that scooping occurred rarely and routinely rose from 18% to 23% and 45% respectively.⁵⁷ However, the concept is still not widely accepted in large news organisations, since newspaper people have not adjusted to the idea. For instance, in the *New York Times*, offering scoops to *NYTimes.com* is not an instinctive reaction by its journalists. As Bernard Gwertzman, editor of the newspaper website has put it, "...the newspaper is a very old-fashioned institution basically, and even though they've brought in modern technology, the old mind set still exists, and it's both good and bad. I mean, people are very dedicated to their product. It's hard for them to think sometimes of us..."⁵⁸

In general, news events of great magnitude such as, the Clinton-Lewinski affair, the 2000 US Presidential Elections, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or the recent Iraq war have played a vital role in the establishment of the Internet as the fastest growing news medium. In the November 2000 US Presidential Elections graphics and tables presenting election results changed constantly, incorporating all the latest data. The public's response was enthusiastic. As John Nicol, general manager of

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Middleberg D. & Ross, S., 2002, op. cit.

⁵⁸ 'The New York Times: Five Years on the Web', *The New York Times*, op. cit.

MSNBC.com, has argued: "...people were sitting there and just pressing the refresh button on their browser, trying to get any small bit of new information".⁵⁹

In the 2000 US Presidential elections, news web sites tried to compete directly with the traditional media in breaking news and information on presidential and congressional candidates to the American public. Several web sites presented results from all over the country, while additional informative features and graphics decorated the election websites, as well as news websites, such the *CNN.com*, *nytimes.com*, *washingtonpost.com*, *ABCnews.com*, etc. Traffic was increased to unprecedented levels. According to *Nielsen/Netratings*, traffic at news and information sites increased by between 130 and 500% during the elections, depending on the site.⁶⁰ All mainstream news websites gained large audiences, especially due to the constantly breaking developments and the uncertainty about results that followed the election day. According to *Media Metrix*, the day after the election *CNN's* website attracted 4 million unique visitors, a third more than *MSNBC.com*, which had remained dominant in the last week before the election.⁶¹ On the election day, *ABCnews.com* received 27.1 million page views, more than double the 10 million page views the site had received in 1998 when it published the Starr Report.⁶²

⁵⁹ John Nicol, general manager of *MSNBC.com*, who saw the site's traffic double from the usual 3 million visitors in a single day. See Manjoo, F. (2000) 'Net Traffic at All-Time High', *Wired News* (Nov. 8) – www.wired.com.

⁶⁰ Estimations provided by Allen Weiner, Web traffic analyst with *Nielsen/Netratings*. See Manjoo, F. (2000) 'Net Traffic at All-Time High', *Wired News* (Nov. 8) – www.wired.com.

⁶¹ Rival websites *ABCNews* and *CBS.com* observed big increases in their online audiences, although they lagged behind in overall numbers. See Waters, R. (2000) 'The election's 'CNN effect'', *Financial Times* (Nov. 13), www.ft.com.

⁶² See Manjoo, F., 2000, op. cit. Also Manjoo, F. (2000) 'News Websites Win in Elections', *Wired News* (Nov. 8) – www.wired.com. In the US pre-election period, news websites managed to offer constantly up-to-date information and news on the candidates, playing an important role in the general information inflow towards the US citizens. At that time, the advantages of the Internet as a news medium were largely proven, since news websites and the information services of big portals were in a position, according to an industry analysis by *CNETNews.com*, to provide "far more information than television, newspapers or radio, taking advantage of the unlimited time and space available to them." (Jacobus, P. (2000) 'Web sites follow down-to-the-wire election', *CNET News.com* (Nov. 7), <http://news.cnet.com>). However, whilst websites are capable of providing a more extensive coverage of developments, and sometimes more in-depth information, they were thought of as relatively slow in delivering breaking news, since television and radio seemed to maintain the advantage of speed in this respect. As Steven M. Scheider, editor of *Netelection.org* has argued, "It's faster to say 'Bush won Michigan' than it is to type in the HTML". See Jacobus, P. (2000) 'Web sites follow down-to-the-wire election', *CNET News.com* (Nov. 7), <http://news.cnet.com>. Undoubtedly, the elections days belong to television, which is in a position to break every piece of latest information fast. The US 2000 elections

But the landmark of Internet news expansion occurred a few years earlier. In 1998, the high profile eight-month Starr investigation into President Clinton's sex scandal gave an opportunity for the new medium becoming mainstream. According to Lasica (2000), it was the first sign of Internet's convergence with the old media in news coverage.⁶³ In a case study analysis of the role of the Internet in the Starr Investigation, published in *journalism.org*, it was argued that "...the first generation of Web journalism was bland, irrelevant and generally clueless. Nobody paid much attention to it. Then came the Clinton scandal and the Starr report, and everything changed".⁶⁴

Then, on September 11, 2001 the global media had to deal with the most important news event of the last decades. The impact of the event itself shocked the established news media routines and caused discussions on news values, especially on international news.⁶⁵

World Trade Center damaged; unconfirmed reports say a plane has crashed into tower. Details to come.

proved that old viewing and reading habits are still powerful. Despite the creation of new websites and the appearance of a number of cable television channels, audience preferred familiar news sources. See Waters, R. (2000) 'The election's 'CNN effect', *Financial Times* (Nov. 13), www.ft.com. According to the same source, CNN's prime-time viewers on election night reached 5.8 million – its biggest audience since April 1999 (Columbine High School shootings). Moreover, CNN's audience was more than double that in 1996 election. However, in this case also, the Internet was not ignored, although it predominantly held a complementary role. As results started coming in from various states, all the major television networks, such as CNN, MSNBC, CSPAN and ABCNews fed the news to their websites, offering an information package of audio clips and up-to-the-minute results. ABC tried to encourage viewers to surf the Internet while they watch the news on television. See Jacobus, P. (2000) 'Web sites follow down-to-the-wire election', *CNET News.com* (Nov. 7), <http://news.cnet.com>. Also, according to John Nicol, general manager of MSNBC.com, it was observed that people used the Web and watched TV in parallel. He argued: "Anytime there was a major news announcement on TV, our numbers skyrocketed". See Manjoo, F. (2000) 'Net Traffic at All-Time High', *Wired News* (Nov. 8) – www.wired.com.

⁶³ Lasica, J. D. (2000) *Internet Journalism and the Starr Investigation*. Case Study Analysis (www.journalism.org). Posted also on <http://www.well.com/user/jd/starr.html> (Accessed 21/11/2000).

⁶⁴ Ibid., quoting Jon Katz, an online columnist and new media scholar at the Freedom Forum.

⁶⁵ Research performed at Harvard University showed that the air time dedicated in television news for the coverage of international events was decreased from a 45% share in the 1970s to 13,5% in mid-1990s. See Rutenbers, J. "Networks move to revive foreign news", *The News York Times*, Sept. 24, 2001.

This was the brief message included in the first bulletin of *Breakingnews@cnn.com* to its subscribers, a few minutes after the first attack. According to *Jupiter Media Metrix*, during 9/11, 4.6 million users – three times more than the usual figure - logged onto *cnn.com* to read the devastating news.⁶⁶ In the first two hours after the attacks, technical problems appeared in major news sites, which could not handle the increased traffic. News sites had to abandon their usual heavy layout and limit their editions to text-based HTMLs, making the access easier to users who wanted information fast.⁶⁷ However, despite the resourceful Internet news executives, at the end of the day it was traditional broadcasting media to which most people turned. According to *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*, on the day of the attacks, more than 80% of Americans remained in front of their television or radio sets, seeking updates.⁶⁸

Without question, in the news game that involves immediacy the Internet has a long way to go to establish itself in the minds of the audience as a news-breaking medium. On the other hand, it is clear that news Internet sites are developing into one of the fastest communication platforms for text-based news presentation, at least in digitally maturing media markets.

Moving away from the US scene, it is worth looking at the former Communist countries situated in Central and Eastern Europe and on the Baltic. In these countries, digital change was felt deeply. As might be expected, journalists were the first to rush into the new technology. As Iordanova (2001) argues:

While just a few years ago many journalists only knew of e-mail and had no access to the whole range of other Internet features, toward the end of the 1990s, many East European journalists who work for major print and broadcast media have had the

⁶⁶ Hunt, B. "Doubling of visitors shows reach of online news", *Financial Times*, Sept, 20, 2001.

⁶⁷ For instance, from the early moments of the event in *nytimes.com*, advertising banners, graphics disappeared from the homepage, subscription services were cancelled and additional servers were installed in order to deal with the vast increase of visits (see Robins, W., "News Web Sites Could Not Compete with TV", *editorandpublisher.com*, Sept. 11, 2001. Also Palser, B. (2001) 'Not So Bad', *American Journalism Review*, November issue. Available: http://www.ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=2375. Accessed 17/7/2002). On the day of the events, 18.2 million visits were recorded at the newspaper news site, 2-4 times the usual rate (see *BusinessWeek online*, "Add online ads to the damage report", September 25, 2001).

⁶⁸ Pew Internet & American Life (2001) *How Americans Used the Internet After the Terror Attack*. September 15. Available: <http://www.pewinternet.org> (Accessed 15/2/2002).

chance to attend demonstrations and to undergo Internet training, and have started using a range of websites in their own work.⁶⁹

In the beleaguered Balkans peninsula, the Internet has acted as a platform of news liberalisation, as well as a means of promoting the interests of specific ethnic groups. Internet activity during the Western Alliance bombing raids in Serbia was enormous, carrying messages to ex-patriates and supporters all over the world. In more peaceful times, various Internet projects were developed in the Balkans on a co-operative basis, whereas others during the conflict aimed at raising awareness about ethnic and nationalist tensions in the region.⁷⁰ One of these was the "Balkan Neighbors", which was developed by a member of the *Greek Helsinki Monitor* to "provide information about the Balkans both within the region and 'outside' to the world".⁷¹ Other examples include the organisation of women during the Kosovo crisis, reports from Zagreb and Belgrade, etc.⁷²

Attempts at collaboration and connectivity are evident in other neighbouring countries that have escaped direct involvement in the recent Balkan war crises. In these cases, also, women's organisations in Hungary, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic feature as regional protagonists aiming at the exchange of ideas and views that eventually will lead them out of their isolation. According to Lengel (1998), launches of websites serve as potentially powerful channels of discussion, offering a sense of the "...impact of [people's] voice in the international arena and the possibilities of enacting change".⁷³

⁶⁹ Jordanova, D. (2001) 'Medated Concerns: The New Europe in Hypertext', in L. Lengel's (ed.) *Culture @nd Technology in the New Europe: Civic Discourse in Transformation in Post-Communist Nations*. Stamford: Ablex Publishing Corporation, p.115.

⁷⁰ Lengel, L. (2001) 'Gender and Technology in the New Europe', in L. Lengel's (ed.) *Culture @nd Technology in the New Europe: Civic Discourse in Transformation in Post-Communist Nations*. Stamford: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

⁷¹ One of the Balkan Neighbors reports, "Balkan Neighbors: Positive and Negative Stereotypes in the Media of Seven Balkan Countries" has been distributed through a listserv since late 1996. See Lengel, L. (2001) 'Gender and Technology in the New Europe', in L. Lengel's (ed.) *Culture @nd Technology in the New Europe: Civic Discourse in Transformation in Post-Communist Nations*. Stamford: Ablex Publishing Corporation, p. 171.

⁷² Lengel, L. (2001), op. cit.

⁷³ Lengel, L. (1998) 'Access to the Internet in East Central and South-Eastern Europe: New Technologies and New Women's Voices', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 38-55.

Hungary is another example of a country where the new media are seen as a means of strengthening democracy and enhancing civil society. According to Gulyas (1998), on-line magazines are becoming increasingly popular, a fact that is evident from their growing readership. Moreover, traditional media, such as newspapers, magazines and broadcast stations, have created web sites, not only for publishing news but also for providing other services as well.⁷⁴

Connecting remote geographical areas with the core European activity seems to be one of the key advantages of digital networking. As Kluitenberg (1998) has argued, "...networking technologies would seem ideally suited to connect" Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with the rest of Europe. The social and cultural impact of networking is the central focal point of a critical discourse started to emerge in these countries in the late 1990s.⁷⁵

5.2 NEW MEDIUM, NEW CONSIDERATIONS

According to a study by the *European Journalism Centre* (1999), the Internet is a perfect medium for the distribution of news and information services.⁷⁶ Given the rapid pace of digital revolution, the extent to which this argument will hold over time remains to be seen. However, certain particularities of the technical nature inherent in the new medium lead to an initial understanding of the Internet's unique capabilities to carry news in most effective ways. In general, the Internet is theoretically limitless. The specificities of the new medium allow it to escape the traditional restrictions of space (newspapers) and time (broadcasting).

The Internet offers to the public an infinite volume of original information, like documents, legislation, opinion articles and commentaries, as well as statistical databases and business and academic surveys. As regards news presentation, news pieces may be spread across numerous web pages, cut in sections and

⁷⁴ Gulyas, A. (1998) 'In the Slow Lane on the Information Superhighway: Hungary and the Information Revolution', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 76-92.

⁷⁵ Kluitenberg, E. (1998) 'Connectivity, New Freedom, New Marginality: A Report from the Baltic Cyber-Corridor', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 20-26.

supplemented by hyperlinks and audiovisual applications that provide not only a fuller picture of the news item itself but also background information to illuminate the broader news picture. A news item can also be presented as a short message, through a hyperlinked headline and a summary lead. The user is free to decide whether to click on any of these links provided to read further. Thus, the perception of news as well as the journalistic work hidden behind these digital forms is affected in many ways. Non-linear text formats and multimedia applications in online news presentation create a new electronic informative environment, both for journalists and users.

In essence, Internet news offers readers more choice and control over the ways they choose to navigate through content. Whereas, in the past, newspaper layout techniques attracted the attention of readers through the use of high quality photographs, catchy headlines and informative summary leads, the new internet “news packages”, consisting of textual as well as audiovisual elements, offer different points of entry for the reader. Moreover, the inclusion of past and background articles supplement the day’s news offers a fuller understanding. Finally, as is commonly accepted, Internet news comprises the fastest text-based news form that can be available to the wider public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Thus, technology has allowed the emergence of new forms of journalistic production and presentation. These developments constitute a new challenge for journalism in many respects. In general, as Pavlik (1996) has put it:

Implications of new media technology ... present a profound challenge to the future of journalism and communication professions as we know them. In addition to the ability of information consumers to use new information technologies to go directly to information sources, circumventing traditional journalistic sources, journalism itself is being rewritten by new computer software.⁷⁷

Is journalism really “being rewritten”, or just adapted to the needs of the new digital environment? In other words, is journalism facing a drastic change that

⁷⁶ Bierhoff, J, van Dusseldorp, M. & Scullion, R. (1999) *The future of the printed press: challenges in a digital world*. Maastricht: European Journalism Centre.

involves a structural reconsideration of its basic features? When television became a popular medium, journalism was rewritten to meet the needs of the new televised environment. But, as most broadcast journalism textbooks admit, television and radio journalism defers to a great extent to the printed world. The combination of script-styled journalistic texts and video footage offer to the audience an audiovisual paradigm that depends on the co-existence of both elements; text and image. Nowadays, the cases in which television news anchors face the audience using only textual means are extremely rare, since video footage is an essential part of the televisual news experience. Radio, on the other hand, relies more on text and audio supplements to construct its news bulletins.

So what is new regarding the Internet? Is it just the combined use of newspaper text, audio and video applications? Could we characterise the Internet as merely a platform that somehow takes advantage of its ability to provide all these news forms simultaneously? Internet news is much more than just that. As argued previously, Internet offers its users more choice and control over the ways they choose to obtain their news. For the purpose of the present discussion, let us temporarily disregard strong elements of Internet news, such as audio and video facilities, interactivity and multiple forms of news presentation. As will be shown later in the case of the Greek market, old journalistic techniques, even in their converging form, remain in place to a great extent.

Then what is left? Linkages alone suffice to act as the core revolutionary element of the new medium. When users read an online text, the links provided can lead them to various websites on which original sources, documents, research papers and surveys, legislation, current debates can be found, while background can be offered through direct links to other in-house web pages that contain past relevant articles.

Historically, linking is what Internet is all about. In the case of Internet news sites, linkage provision to readers/users is clearly a result of journalistic work. However,

⁷⁷ Pavlik, J. (1996) *New Media Technology and the Information Superhighway*. Boston: Allyn and

constant use of the Internet may lead experienced users to find themselves in a position to by-pass journalistic products and satisfy their interests by navigating themselves to digital places where original information can be found. The online publication of the Starr Report is a classic example.⁷⁸ On that day, for the first time in history, journalists and the public logged on the web at the same time to retrieve information: the first to satisfy their job needs, the latter to satisfy their curiosity.

5.2.1 The question of (dis-) Intermediation

The direct access to information offered to the public challenges the traditional role of the journalist as the gatekeeper of the news agenda. Research has shown that journalists are, in some way, losing a role, as they are no longer the persons “with sole power to decide what information will reach the public.”⁷⁹

In the digital age, the power of “Mr. Gates”, which originated from his role in either selecting or rejecting news items, is severely questioned. Of course, even in the present digital world, news continues to go through certain channels. However, most of these channels are now made accessible by the public, while independent web sites can reinforce the audience’s perception of reality by releasing information and alternative views that are down played by the mainstream media.

If the theory of gatekeeping is being challenged by the Internet, then what does this mean for journalism and its representatives? In other words, how seriously should the whole question of dis-intermediation be considered in the case of journalism professionals?⁸⁰ And finally, what is the effect on journalism itself?

In the stages of selection and news processing, journalistic decision-making is quite central, whether this is performed by editors or by journalists during their initial reporting. It could be argued that allowing the public to have access to raw material upon which journalistic judgement and news content evaluation take place

Bacon, p. 214-215.

⁷⁸ Lasica, J. D. (2000) *Internet Journalism and the Starr Investigation. Case Study Analysis* (www.journalism.org). Posted also on <http://www.well.com/user/jd/starr.html> (Accessed 21/11/2000).

⁷⁹ Bierhoff, J, van Dusseldorp, M. & Scullion, R., 1999, op. cit., p.47.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

includes potentially only one danger: to make the public aware of the deficiencies and the distortions of the journalistic profession itself. In that sense, only inadequate and bad journalism would be jeopardised.

As Schudson stressed, even in the case in which journalism was momentarily abolished by the new technology, people would still need ways to sort through the endless information made available or delivered directly on home computer screens by various organisations and interests groups. Thus, journalists as independent observers, interpreters of events and analysts would still be needed, a fact that could lead to the reinvention of the profession.⁸¹

As made clear in the previous chapter, Greek journalists rely heavily for their daily production on commonly distributed information, such as corporate press releases and public relations material. In the Greek case, therefore, the danger of “dis-intermediation” should definitely be explored and analysed. For instance, in the case of newspapers, coverage of international developments relies heavily on the translation of foreign news agency material. Thus, it could be argued that tomorrow’s international news published in international news newspaper sections is old news for an experienced Internet user.

People having direct access to original sources of information is not the only danger for the journalistic profession. Journalism’s gatekeeping function is threatened by digital technology itself. Automated systems of news gathering, processing and presentation are tested, either by university research departments, or even by commercial Internet sites such as the *Google.com* search engine.

Newsblaster, built by academics at Columbia University, is an “...automatic system for event tracking and summarization”.⁸² According to Kathleen R. McKeown, head of the research team, it is an effort to develop a practical system for information access based on advances in language technology, including clustering, text categorization, and summarization. The Columbia software system

⁸¹ Schudson, M. (1995) *The Power of News*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p.2.

for online news summarization "...crawls the web for news articles, clusters them on specific topics and produces multidocument summaries for each cluster".⁸³

Newsblaster uses an artificial intelligence news gathering programme that searches through 18 major online news sources around the globe⁸⁴ and edits, summarises and rewrites major news stories, using predetermined selection criteria. "It is an automated system and at this point we don't have the quality of a human editor and inevitably it will make mistakes... however 88% of those that have used the system have found it better than going to different websites for their news" Vasileios Hatzivassiloglou, one of the professors working on the project said to the BBC.⁸⁵

While Newsblaster's Columbia team enjoy the results of a project that could revolutionise the public's news reading habits (future editions may incorporate user choices as well),⁸⁶ in the late months of 2002 *Google.com* introduced an entirely automated news service that searches news from 4,000 sources on the Web and provides links to the best news stories. Specifically, according to *Google News*, "topics are updated continuously throughout the day [...]. Google has developed an automated grouping process [...] that pulls together related headlines and photos from thousands of sources worldwide [...] – enabling you to see how different news organizations are reporting the same story."⁸⁷

⁸² See <http://www.cs.columbia.edu/nlp/newsblaster/> Accessed 2/11/2002.

⁸³ See the 'Human Languages and Technology NewsBlaster' paper by Kathleen R. McKeown, K. et. al. (2002) *Tracking and Summarizing News on a Daily Basis with Columbia's Newsblaster*, Columbia University. Available: <http://www.cs.columbia.edu/nlp/newsblaster/papers/hlt-blaster.pdf> (Accessed 20/10/2002).

⁸⁴ In October 2002 the following sources were used: Yahoo, ABCNews, CNN, Reuters, LA Times, CBS News, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Virtual New York, Washington Post, Wired, FOX News, NY Post, USA Today, Science Magazine, BBC News, Nature Magazine, MSNBC and Lycos.

⁸⁵ Wakefield, J. (2002) 'Computer scribe hits the web', *BBC News Online*, April 9. Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1913348.stm> Accessed 20/6/2002. See also Reed, S. (2002) 'A News Cocktail Mixed by a Software Genie', *New York Times on the Web*, March 28. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/28/technology/circuits/28NEWS.html> (Accessed 20/8/2002).

⁸⁶ 'Automatic Writing', February 14, 2002, *EPN World Reporter*. Available: http://www.epnworld-reporter.com/news/archivestory.php/aid/137/Automatic_Writing.html (Accessed 30/9/2002).

⁸⁷ 'Google News: A Novel Approach to News', *Google News*. Available: http://news.google.com/help/about_news_search.html. Accessed 2/11/2002.

What enables *Google* proudly to declare itself a news service “compiled solely by computer algorithms without human intervention”⁸⁸ is, in essence, the result of a bunch of robots picking up real stories written and presented on the web by human beings, that is by journalists. Moreover, as Howard Kurtz has argued in his *WashingtonPost.com* media column, when readers look at a newspaper’s website “they get not only a battle-tested group of foreign correspondents, metro reporters, sportswriters, movie critics and so on – they also get the editors’ judgment on what should be the lead story, what’s of minor importance and what isn’t worth including”.⁸⁹

No matter how unsophisticated in terms of journalism’s evaluation criteria the new automated robotic news services may be, they constitute an example of a digital future by which the profession could be heavily affected. As Pavlik (1996) has argued,

Intelligent applications that automate the journalistic function and begin to link news sources more directly to news consumers may represent the declining role of journalism as filter, or gatekeeper, in interpreting information in society and the rising role of commercial forces in the newsroom.⁹⁰

Whereas the widespread use of software applications that can produce stories automatically is still in the future, amateur journalism is another internet-generated phenomenon that has grown, especially during periods of crisis. For instance, on September 11, 2001, Sreenath Sreenivasan, a faculty member of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, converted a site (saja.org) into a continuously updated directory of 9/11 media coverage.⁹¹ Others, like J. D. Lasica, engaged in chronological presentations of news alerts and breaking news email

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Kurtz, H. (2002) ‘Robotic Journalism: Google Introduces Human-Less News’, *WashingtonPost.com*, September 30. Available: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A21711-2002Sep30?language=printer>. Accessed 1/10/2002.

⁹⁰ Pavlik, J. (1996) *New Media Technology and the Information Superhighway*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p. 216.

⁹¹ saja.org is the official site of South Asian Journalists Association, of which Sreenath Sreenivasan is co founding member. See Palser, B. (2001) ‘Not So Bad’, *American Journalism Review*, November issue. Available: http://www.ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=2375. Accessed 17/7/2002.

bulletins sent out by mainstream online media.⁹² In those tragic moments contributions by the public, either in the form of eyewitness accounts,⁹³ or amateur videos or emotional and unexpected photograph shots were posted on various websites.⁹⁴

Internet users do not only post amateur scoops on the Web. They tend to act as mainstream news circulators. In *Yahoo News* there is a section called “Most-Emailed Content”, which lists the 20 most-frequently forwarded news stories by users.⁹⁵ Increasingly traditional media are fed with information by individual users who post messages or even scanned documents to mailing lists.

In essence, the rapidly growing digital environment serves everybody who needs to post their opinion online, either through the various one-person “me-zines” or journalistic “web-logs” being developed even in mainstream news websites. The extent to which in the future established journalism will have to fight for its existence, and against whom, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, whether it is amateur journalism during a crisis, or eyewitness reports that are posted on the Web, “...news does not grow on trees, and raw data is not the same as journalism”.⁹⁶

5.2.2 Internet news: new elements & new formats

It is argued that the Internet is changing the journalistic profession in at least three ways. As Deuze wrote in 1999:

[the internet] has the potential to make the journalist's role as the essential intermediary force in democracy more or less superfluous; it offers the media

⁹² See *J.D. Lasica's Blog 'A Chronology of breaking-news alerts'*. Published in the afternoon of September 9, 2001 on <http://jd.manilasites.com/2001/09/11>. Accessed 13/9/2001.

⁹³ Pew Internet & American Life Project (2001) *The Commons of the Tragedy*, October 10. Available: www.pewinternet.org (Accessed 17/10/2001).

⁹⁴ Kahney, L. (2001) 'Amateur Newsies Top the Pros', *Wired News.com*, September 15, <http://www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,46862,00.html>. (Accessed 17/9/2001).

⁹⁵ See <http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/mt/uk/dailynews?u>. Also O'Connell Licalzi, P. (2001) 'News Economy: The Spread of News by E-Mail Is Becoming News Itself', *New York Times on the Web*, January 29. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/29/technology/29NECO.html> (Accessed 30/1/2001).

⁹⁶ Downie, L. Jr. & Kaiser, R. (2002) *The News About the News: American Journalism In Peril*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 256.

professional a vast array of resources and sheer endless technological possibilities to work with; and it has created its own type of journalism on the Net: so called digital or online journalism.⁹⁷

In this section of the thesis, the particular aspects of Internet news are explored, via the discussion of a series of new elements and formats introduced on the online news environment. Interactivity, hyperlinks, multimedia applications and personalised news services make traditional journalism rethink the tools of the profession for news storytelling. Although it might seem logical, considering the qualities of each element separately does not assist towards the broader exploration of their effectiveness on news making, since the influence of the daily journalistic online production on the public's perception of timeliness seems inextricably bound to news content production and presentation strategies adopted by each online news medium.

Analysing McLuhan's logic (the medium is the message)⁹⁸ in the digital era, Brody (2001) has argued:

What we are truly dealing with is not message so much as memory: the technology, the message, and the memory ultimately conflate. True multimediality is therefore not defined by the concoction of different media types but by the integration of spatial, temporal, and interactional media. New places for our images allow for new explanations as well as new forms of contextualization.⁹⁹

Moreover, according to the same author,

... [a] linear text, with specified start and end points, is a stable text. The matrix in which electronic text floats is quite different – a flexible environment that allows multiple layers and n-dimensional reading variants. It is this polyvalent ability to enter, amend, and exit the text in a non-linear fashion that defined hypertextuality.¹⁰⁰

Also, as Landow (2001) has stressed,

⁹⁷ Deuze, M. (1999) 'Journalism and the Web', *Gazette*, vol. 61 (5), pp. 373-390 (p. 373).

⁹⁸ McLuhan, M. (1994) *Understanding Media - the extensions of man*, London: Routledge, (first edition: 1964).

⁹⁹ Brody, F. (2001) 'The Medium is the Memory', in P. Lunenfeld's (ed.) *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, pp. 139-140.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146. See also Landow, G. (1992) *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, as well as Bolter, J. D. (1991) *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

To make ... electronic writing easy and convenient for both author and reader, a hypertext system requires certain features, among them the ability to label individual links or link paths and a means of automatically providing the reader with a list of links from a particular anchor.¹⁰¹

In essence, what is commonly accepted about *web-*, or *cyber-* or *online* journalism is its potential to create a new news environment that could transform the one dimensional habit of reading or watching to a multi-dimensional participatory news experience; not only for news audiences, but for professionals as well.

Pointing to the primary difference of online journalism from the conventional paradigm, Volkmer (1998) has argued that the evolution of cyber journalism has offered the opportunity of developing new specific modes of communication or interaction. Specifically,

... whereas conventional journalism is targeted to a news consumer who does not have access to either raw or edited news material, the on-line user can browse or hyperlink web sites or context material, including archives, databases and news agencies. This different attitude toward news and information consumption not only encompasses editorial requests (within a general option menu) and e-mail comments and ideas, but also involves an interactive user with a variety of possible responses. ... [T]his affects the role of the journalist, who now serves as a moderator as well as a presenter of information. The on-line moderator provides additional material and responds to comments and arguments.¹⁰²

Obviously, web-journalism is far more than a combination of text, still images and audiovisual applications; it is about the journalist's chance to communicate instantly and directly with the audience through hyper-linked bylines and commentary forms. Thus, interactivity is one of the key-elements in sketching the future of web-journalism's public penetration and appeal. In this task, content management as well as corporate strategies plays a vital role. For instance, as Volkmer (1998) has pointed out,

Ideally [...] hyperlinks should not only be presented by keywords but also be introduced and defined by a brief description of the hyperlink option's content. Transparency about the organisational background and information presentation and

¹⁰¹ Landow, G. (2001) 'Hypertext as Collage-Writing' in P. Lunenfeld's (ed.) *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, pp. 155.

¹⁰² Volkmer, I., 1998, op. cit, p. 67.

gathering goals of the on-line cybercasting outlet helps the user to interpret the issues presented. In addition, optional news sources and hyperlinks need to be defined, and the selection process for Headlines and other highlighted material must be identified.¹⁰³

Analyzing content management strategies on the web means exploring all possible resources that digital technology has provided to contemporary online journalism. A simple way to start is to look for all those basic elements that constitute the contemporary online news experience for the public. A relevant list provided by Rich (1999) for the criteria for news site development in accordance to the developer's mission confirms the following elements: strong content, useful links, ease of navigation, interactivity, currency, usefulness, rapid downloading, highly graphic or simple design, a text-only alternative and fun elements.¹⁰⁴

Other considerations, emerging from journalistic principles, could include the sort of information provided as well as the target audience (global or local), the importance of timeliness (need for constant updates or not), the provision of helpful consumer and civic content, the inclusion of entertainment elements, hosting community applications (thematic discussion groups, chat rooms), the provision of original content (or shovel-ware), the use of multimedia and finally, brand identity management.¹⁰⁵

In general, the Web allows for the construction of multiple news environments that could serve all potential wishes of online news providers. As shown later in this chapter, the Greek major news websites originated from various paths of thinking that were meant to serve corporate-specific goals. Each strategy adopted, either in terms of online layout or news handling, was dictated by the ultimate goals of the providers (mainstream or not), or in some cases by the trends of the given period.

Journalism practices are deeply affected by all aspects of web-journalism. In essence, as Ward (2002) has argued, the journalistic process "...can crudely be

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Rich, C. (1999) *Creating Online Media: a guide to research, writing and design on the Internet*. Boston: McGraw-Hill College, p. 199.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

aggregated into two sections. The first is researching and reporting – that is what you ‘gather in’ as a journalist. The second is story-construction and publishing – that is what you ‘send out’.”¹⁰⁶ The exploitation of these two stages, when analyzed in terms of Rich’s list, is what makes web-journalism quite distinctive from the conventional forms.

Theoretically, as regards the role of journalism as a watchdog, web-journalism could enhance it even further. As Fleming (2000) has argued, various examples of news stories have shown “...that stories deemed too politically sensitive for large organisations to publish, ... can be effectively published by an individual.”¹⁰⁷ As will be shown, however, in the case of Greece, this opportunity remains unexploited. This is the case not only because investigative reporting remains largely outside the Internet sphere; it is also because in Greece there has been so far very little original web-directed journalism on the web sites.

5.3 GREEK NEWS MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

Entering the web was never considered to be an easy task for Greek news media. In the second half of the 1990s, when the first plans of mainstream media expansion on the web were under way, Internet penetration in the country was low. At that time, consumers were still trying to absorb the advent of mobile telephony, which filled a traditional gap in Greek telecommunications: that of the individual’s limited access to traditional voice telephony.¹⁰⁸ In the beginning of 1997, diffusion of Internet hosts per 1,000 population in Greece was 1.52, one of the lowest amongst OECD countries and the lowest within the EU. In 1997, the leading

¹⁰⁶ Ward, M. (2002) *Journalism Online*. Oxford: Focal Press, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ See also Fleming, C. (2000) ‘Journalism and New Technology’, in Hugo de Burgh (ed.) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge, p. 178-179. Fleming writes that “the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke in January 1998, and although journalists working for traditional publications had information about tapes she had made admitting a sexual relationship with President Clinton, they hesitated to publish it until after it appeared on the Drudge Report website (www.drudgereport.com).”

¹⁰⁸ For many years in Greece, accessing the public telephony network was quite difficult especially for new subscribers, mainly due to the slow digitisation of national telecommunications infrastructure. One of the major reasons for the success of mobile telephony market in the country was the ease of securing a personal line. See Kamaras, D. (2000) ‘Mass Media and The Internet’, in Gantzias, G. & Kamaras,

European Internet performers were Finland (55.51), Iceland (43.70) and Norway (39.38), with United States following closely behind (38.44).¹⁰⁹

On an international level, the situation changed rapidly in the years that followed. In July 2001, the US was far ahead of all OECD countries with more than 273 hosts per 1,000 inhabitants, followed by the other countries, such as Finland, Canada, Iceland, Sweden and Norway (though these were all under the 200 level).¹¹⁰ Greece remained at the end of the list of developed countries (somewhere between 20-25 hosts per 1,000 population), but still the highest amongst Balkan countries.¹¹¹ Also, according to OECD (2002), "Austria and Greece are the only countries for which the share of the ICT sector (in terms of value added) did not increase during the period 1995-99. In both cases, the ICT manufacturing sector saw its relative share remain stable, while the share of the ICT services sector decreased slightly".¹¹²

As was the case in foreign markets, in Greece various survey polls predicted a rapid expansion of Internet penetration. The basis for these predictions was the significantly low reach of the new medium to the public. In November 2001, the first credible nationwide survey on computer and Internet penetration was published by the Greek Research and Technology Network (GRNET). According to the survey, at that time the use of computers had reached 20% of the population (around 1.8 million users) and Internet users were estimated around 900,000 (10.1% of the total Greek population). Amongst these, around half held a personal Internet subscription (5.4% of the total), while more than half had created a personal email account (6.2% of the total).¹¹³

D. *Digital Communication, New Media and Information Society in Greece: Convergence, Electronic Commerce and Portals*, London: Zeno Publishers (in Greek).

¹⁰⁹ OECD (1997) *Towards a Global Information Society*. Paris: OECD, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ OECD (2002) *OECD Information Technology Outlook: ICTs and the Information Economy*. Paris: OECD, p. 189.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹³ GRNET (2001) *Nationwide Survey for the use of Personal Computers, Internet and Mobile Telephony*. November, Athens: Greek Research and Technology Network. GRNET is the Greek Research and Technology Network, providing Internet services to the Greek Academic and Research community. GRNET belongs to the General Secretariat for Research and Technology at the Ministry of Development (see www.edet.gr).

Moreover, in the same survey, users were asked to state the most important reasons for using the Internet. Searching for news was given as a reason by only 16% of users.¹¹⁴ This result was somewhat disappointing for the Internet news ventures that had invested heavily in the expectation of higher public use of their services. More recent data have suggested a rapid increase in the use of the new medium. A 2002 GRNET research indicated a substantial increase in the use of the Internet by Greek people (19.3%). However, as stated in Chapter II, these figures are questioned by the *National Statistical Service of Greece* and *Eurostat*.¹¹⁵ In general, statistics on Internet use in Greece remain inconclusive, mainly due a lack of continuity in research and monitoring of the use of the new medium.

5.3.1 The emergence of Internet news

If the traditional operation of news agencies that by default channel their news electronically is excluded from this discussion, the origins of online news in Greece can be traced in the operation of *KapaTel*, which has offered electronic news services to subscribers since 1989.¹¹⁶ In the past, *KapaTel*, a subsidiary of the *Express Newspaper Group*, employing a handful of journalists, functioned strictly as a subscription service offering stock market news reports and Government tender announcements on public projects to corporate and media clients.¹¹⁷ Other traditional news agencies operating in Greece are *Reuters*, *Telerate*, *Bloomberg* and the *Athens News Agency (ANA)*.

In particular, the Athens News Agency was the only Greek news organisation that in the mid-1990s started offering news updated during the day, accessed freely via

¹¹⁴ Ibid. On the other hand, certain indications coming from surveys conducted by independent research companies seem to draw a more optimistic picture for the use of Internet news. For instance, a survey by Greek research company ICAP published in November 2002 raises the general use of the new medium to 14.8% of the population, whilst the "quest for news" has jumped to a spectacular 91.2%, posing as the main reason Greek users surf the cyberspace (ICAP survey results on the use of mobile telephony and the Internet, published in newspaper *Express*, November 27, 2002 (p. 7).

¹¹⁵ See Chapter II.

¹¹⁶ See <http://www.kapatel.gr/kapatel/> (Accessed 20/10/2002).

¹¹⁷ Currently *KapaTel* operates through the use of exclusive company software via videotext applications (the National Telecommunications Organisation's (OTE) HellasTel network), the X.25 network (Hellaspac – developed also by OTE), leased lines and standard dial-up PSTN lines.

the Internet.¹¹⁸ Its services were limited to the presentation of the major headlines of the day accompanied by short summary articles. At that time, for a Greek living abroad, the Greek cyberspace was extremely poor in updated news content.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, newspaper websites already in operation during that period, such as *Enet.gr* (the daily newspaper *Eleftherotipia* official website), *naftemporiki.gr* (the website of daily newspaper *Naftemporiki*) or *Tovima.dolnet.gr* (*To Vima tis Kyriakis* website), included yesterday's news, a practice that was typical for an industry that treated Internet with scepticism.

Athens News Agency's pioneering attitude towards the Net was not only a result of a public service philosophy. It was based also on the functional news production capability entailed on its continuous operation as a news agency, as well as on the willingness of its General Director to explore the new technology.¹²⁰ Although spartan in terms of news content and layout, ANA's free-to-access website provided a daily updated news service that until the late 1990s functioned as the sole bilingual web-based news service on Greek current affairs.

Further discussion includes the particular aspects of web-journalism, such as new techniques and writing styles, as well as the whole transformation of news into a multimedia news package. Professional characteristics, such as multi-skilling and

¹¹⁸ The *Athens News Agency* (ANA) is the national news agency of Greece. Founded in 1895 as a private company, the Stefanopoli Telegraphic Agency, the Greek State assumed its subsidisation in 1906, at which time it acquired its present name. In 1994 the ANA became a *Societe Anonyme* with a 7-member Board of Directors, three of whom are appointed by the government and one each by the journalist unions of Athens and Thessaloniki, the publishers' union and the ANA employees. See 'About' in the Athens News Agency's official website (www.ana.gr).

¹¹⁹ For instance, on Sunday 23 June 1996, when the news of the death of Andreas Papandreu, the former Greek Prime Minister appeared in the news bulletins of London radio stations, any attempts to reach more information on Greek private websites hit a vacuum. The only relevant material was available on ANA's website, which by relying on its 24/7 business-to-business service, was in a position to carry updated information and make a portion of it also available to the wider public. As shown later, in the Greek market, the adoption of the traditional news agency function has influenced to a great extent the first strategic steps taken by most news websites that were about to develop later on in the country. This strategic choice was one of the reasons that web-based news delivery mechanisms in Greece have put weight on certain factors (such as speed, the adoption of old writing styles etc.) at the expense of others, such as web-journalism writing formats, journalistic research on linkages, the creation of user communication tools and interactive web-pages, as well as multimedia applications.

¹²⁰ Andreas Christodoulides, General Director of Athens News Agency is a lot more than just an experienced journalist. He is an author and a journalism teacher at the Media Department of the University of Athens.

the adaptability of journalists to the digital environment, will be also addressed. Our main concern is to investigate changes, if any, in journalism caused by the advent of the web and its development as a news platform. The differences in growth between news sites owned by established media and news sites companies, as well as the news executives' strategy on offering news material for free or paid-content will be included in the analysis.

Questions such as "In what way does the existence of a 24-hour journalistic input process (and subsequent continuous deadlines) affect journalism?" will be discussed along with the main repercussions on journalism (organisational practices, ethics, interaction with sources, news presentation, etc.) from the expansion and progressive establishment of the Internet as a news medium.

For the purposes of the analysis here, the most successful Internet news websites are explored and evaluated in terms of journalism practices, as well as regarding the final news outcome that reaches the users. The employment of professionals, the journalism practices used, news presentation, the use of multimedia and interactive applications are scrutinized in order to track the level of growth of web journalism in the market. The websites selected reflect the best practice of web-journalism in the Greek market, as well as most sectors of the traditional media environment from which they have originated.

The major news websites that were examined all produce news material exclusively for the web, either as a primary or a supplementary service. These are:

- the portal *In.gr*, owned by the Lambrakis Press Group (research focused on the news department),
- *Flash.gr*, a news website created by Flash Radio, owned by the Kokkalis Group of Companies,
- *Reporter.gr*, specialised on financial reporting, owned by Premium S.A.,
- *Naftemporiki.gr*, owned by Naftemporiki newspaper, the first newspaper website to offer 'live' online news, and,
- *Ert.gr*, the official website of National Broadcasting Corporation (ERT).

These websites were selected not only because they are dealing with original news content, but also because of their popularity. The first three websites (*In*, *Flash* and *Nastemporiki*) were included in August 2002 in the 10 most popular Greek websites.¹²¹ *Reporter.gr* was selected as being one of the most successful independent Internet news ventures in the country, whilst *Ert.gr*, as well as being a state-owned website, acts also as the primary representative of the television sector. Other Internet news ventures will be analysed on an ad hoc basis, providing particular examples of news strategy as well as specific practices in the news writing field. Some are owned by television stations (e.g. *Alphaworld.gr*) or major newspapers that merely use shovel-ware¹²², or they combine both practices, such as *Imerissia.gr* (the financial daily Imerissia website).

Before embarking to discussion and analysis of particular web-journalism practices, it is useful to draw a short historical account of the appearance of news on the Greek web. In this framework, the issue of strategy that some of the Greek major news websites have adopted will be addressed, drawing the general context of the present research.

5.3.2 The news sites examined; some historical elements

The first high-profile web news operation in the Greek market was officially launched in the first months of 2000 when the *Lambrakis Press Group* (DOL) launched *In.gr*, the first Greek-language internet portal in the country. Preparations that began in late Summer 1999 led to a pilot operation of a horizontal portal in October of the same year, built to contain thematic divisions on health, sports, travel, etc.¹²³ *In.gr* was the first internet investment in the Greek market that

¹²¹ See 'The most popular Greek websites' on <http://apn/bestsites/> (Accessed 20/8/2002). The three websites (*in*, *flash* and *nastemporiki*) are the only websites in the Top-10 list that preserve a news function as a key-feature of their digital content.

¹²² Namely loading already published newspaper or magazine material on the web. " 'Shovel-ware' refers to electronic products that are nothing more than their paper products converted to electronic form, especially text-only products". See Pavlik, J. (1996) *New Media Technology and the Information Superhighway*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p. 200.

¹²³ The Lambrakis Group deployed a successful promotional strategy, aiming at the identification of the portal's domain address with the growth of local internet activity, using the innovative advertising

offered an organised web environment which included thematic directories, a search engine service, free email user accounts and personal web-pages, chat forums and breaking news. The real time Athens Stock Exchange service and the news function were particularly promoted.

The news function was considered central in *In.gr*, aiming, according to Christos Lambrakis, the group head and owner, at “the combination of traditional journalism with electronic communication”¹²⁴. The plan included the development of a digital newsroom and – as became evident later – the evolution of *In*’s newsroom into a powerful news agency. Although *In* was developed under the corporate umbrella of the leading Greek media group, contrary to what might be expected, few synergies occurred between the traditional Group’s newspaper newsrooms and the new medium. In practice there was no functional dependence or infusion of journalism know-how from the other newsrooms of the mainstream DOL newspapers, such as *To Vima* or *Ta Nea*.

During *In*’s preparation foreign practices were explored, mainly those employed by the BBC Online news service. In this framework, *In* executives made a number of educational trips to London to discuss practical organisational issues. The need to explore the BBC’s operation was a result of the absence of any continuous electronic news production function within the Lambrakis Press Group, which limited the view of the Group in terms of the identification of practical differences between an online news 24/7 operation and the traditional newspaper business.¹²⁵

According to Christos Tombras, News Director at *In.gr*:

The basic knowledge we obtained from BBC was the way that the whole project could be materialised in terms of technology.... what should be the proper technological basis that would allow journalists to implement something which previously did not know anything about.¹²⁶

message “internet greece”. According to the Group’s official policy, *in.gr* was a first step towards the development of a series of advanced internet services and electronic commerce applications.

¹²⁴ *Oikonomikos Tahidromos* [Economic Courier], “DOL: Capital raise of 63.25 billion drs.”, 23 September 1999, p. 64-65. *Oikonomikos Tahidromos* is a Lambrakis Group publication.

¹²⁵ Christos Tombras, News Director at *In.gr*. Personal interview, 4 June 2002.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

The construction of the news function within *In.gr*, included recruiting mostly young people, a tactic that was intrinsically attached to the decision to adopt a strategy of re-packaging news agency material rather than creating original articles for the web.

Early discussions that preceded the launch of *In.gr* included the examination of a number of alternative options. Among these was a clear news agency approach that would include a homepage featuring the most recent news at the top, as well as the option of operating a newspaper style front page that would contain the most important headlines, updating not by an automatic news feed, but in accordance with editorial decision-making. The latter solution was adopted as the most appropriate strategy and remained in effect until August 2002, when *In's* homepage was significantly altered.

While the pioneering *In* relied on the historically successful operation of the Lambrakis Press Group, the internet news website *Flash.gr*, which followed in September 2000, built on the prestige *Flash Radio* had acquired from its 11-year operation as a leading force in the broadcast news business.¹²⁷ As officially stated, the venture was targeted to act as “the pinpoint of the *Kokkalis Group* on the Internet, a function that strategically included a dual purpose: an interest towards e-Commerce and advertising, along with the creation of an information network, taking advantage of the opportunities entailed in mobile communications”.¹²⁸ In those days, the positive climate resulting from the achievements of digital revolution and new economy indices produced optimistic forecasts of profits to come. As regards the news function, the officially expressed strategy was less clearly defined. As Panos Koliopanos, General Manager of *Flash Multimedia* stated:

...we created an electronic newspaper... basically it is about news agency services, enriched with niche technology and applications.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Flash.gr* was launched in September 2000. It was owned by *Flash Multimedia*, a cooperative of *Flash Radio* and the companies *Intrasoft*, *Sportnews*, *Intrapar*, all affiliated to *Kokkalis Group*.

¹²⁸ From Socrates *Kokkalis's* speech during the official launch of *flash.gr* (4 September 2000).

Flash's content strategy included the development of news services based on newly employed human resources, as well as journalists coming from the sister radio operation. It was thematically structured to include separate websites on health, sports and auto news. The initial strategy included the acquisition of specialist websites, such as *Care.gr*, as well as the integration of other previous Flash Multimedia Internet ventures, like *Sportnews.gr* to the new unified platform.

The activation of the two traditional mainstream media players on the web, although signalling the beginning of heavy investments on Internet news, did not represent the very first venture on the field. The provision of web-based news had already been explored in the field of financial news by an independent Internet venture. *Reporter.gr*, a bilingual news service in Greek and English, which was launched in 1999 and aimed at the provision of "...an unbiased, integrated real time financial information service"¹³⁰. The news website's official goals are to provide instant access to the extensive news coverage secured by leading journalists in Greece, to transmit news with speed, accuracy and reliability and to provide connections to a complete and comprehensive financial information database.¹³¹

The initial strategy on which *Reporter's* operation was based was to function as a financial news agency rather than an electronic newspaper. Layout considerations, however, led eventually to a combination of both. More particularly, according to Grigoris Nikolopoulos, News Director in *Reporter.gr*, the news content consists of news agency material structured on a newspaper layout.¹³²

In mid-2000, *Nafemporiki.gr*, the site of financial newspaper *Nafemporiki*, previously using shovel-ware since 1996, launched a '*Live News Service*' offering up-to-date short news articles on current developments in finance, business and markets. The service was supplemented by Athens News Agency material that

¹²⁹ From Panos Koliopoulos' speech at the official launch of *Flash.gr* (4 September 2000).

¹³⁰ See www.reporter.gr/about. Accessed 20 February 2002.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Grigoris Nikolopoulos, News Director at *Reporter.gr*. Personal interview, 26 February 2002.

secured continuous coverage on areas other than those that the financial newspaper primarily focuses on, such as local and international political news, sports, etc.

The first presence of television on the web was achieved by the efforts of the National Broadcasting Corporation, ERT. The official website, *Ert.gr* was launched in April 2000 on the day of the National Elections, implementing a strategic decision made by the company in 1999, which included the creation of a website that would represent the corporation's face on the web. During the stage of preparation, ERT's corporate officers involved in the project attended courses at the European Broadcasting Union in order to get familiar with the specificities of the new medium.

From the beginning, news was considered as an essential part of the whole project. According to Christos Stathakopoulos, webmaster & News Director of *Ert.gr*,

the initial target was to bring on the Greek web the concept of 'interactive news writing', something that was quite innovative for the Greek case at that time.¹³³

The implementation of "interactive news writing" in early 2000 Greece was truly an innovative idea. However, as we shall see, the good will of enlightened news executives does not suffice to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles deeply rooted in the Greek public sector. Moreover, *Ert's* strategy on web news did not include any primary newsgathering function and, therefore, the production of original journalism content was limited to certain features and specialised research articles. The breaking news function relied on processes aimed at re-using news produced by the corporation's radio and television channels.

The organisation of a separate newsgathering mechanism was seen as an irrational strategy by the executives of *Ert.gr*, who focused on news production synergies found within the parent organisation. This strategy was also adopted by the heads of *Flash.gr*; they shared the belief that news produced by experienced radio journalists should be used in both platforms. *Reporter.gr*, on the other hand, relied

¹³³ Christos Stathakopoulos, News Director at *Ert.gr*. Personal interview, 18 June 2002.

on a small in-house staff whose job was to handle news coming from external reporters, while original news material published in *Nastemporiki.gr* came from the newspaper's journalists, who were invited to offer short versions of the news of the day for the online edition before filing their pieces for publication in the paper.

All news websites researched here relied on some form of co-operation with previously established forces, except one. *In.gr* built a newsroom from scratch, since initial planning did not include any synergies with the newsrooms of the Group's mainstream titles, *Ta Nea* and *To Vima*. Officially, the reason for this was the fact that the two newspapers should be seen as separate products. Therefore, re-using content, or inviting newspaper journalists to contribute to the website, would end up having professionals giving up their stories to the new medium, thus weakening the content of the newspaper for which they primarily worked.¹³⁴ However, as commonly acknowledged by journalists employed in the Lambrakis Press Group, any planning that would involve the co-operation of different news mechanism within the group would have ended in a failure. The two newspaper newsrooms are well known in the journalistic community for being traditionally antagonistic, mainly due to reasons of internal allocation of resources and power within the corporate group.

Evidently, in the case of news websites in Greece, strategic planning was limited to the organisation of traditionally formed news services, aiming more at creating a sense of journalistic activity on the web, rather than at a holistic approach on web news production following the foreign paradigms. In general, Greek news media have adopted a timid and occasionally poorly informed strategic decision-making as regards the online production of news.

5.3.3 Practices and routines: local web-journalism and professionals

In the monthly economic magazine¹³⁵, where the writer holds the position of editor-in-chief, the emergence of the Internet as a news medium has caused notable

¹³⁴ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op. cit.

¹³⁵ 'EPILOGI (*Selection*) Monthly Economic Review' is a leading economic and business magazine in Greece. It is highly respected amongst businesses, economists and academics. The monthly edition is

changes in the journalists' daily workload. In the pre-Internet years, the monthly production circle of the magazine required the aggregation of news items, their categorization and their final processing a few days just before the magazine hit the presses. This meant a time-consuming interaction between journalists and various sources, including the magazine's photographer, as well as with supervisors in order that the content that could hit the presses during the final week of the month to be finalized.

Since the creation of the magazine's website, in which a business news section was created, the need for daily news updates has become evident. Thus, instead of collecting, categorizing and processing news for publication later in the month, in-house journalists had to produce news on a daily basis to feed the Internet news service. This had a series of repercussions:

- The appointment of a person as online content supervisor and the subsequent broadening of the upper-tier group of news executives have created an additional pressure on in-house journalists who had to refer, for the same news content, to two different editors with different writing demands.
- The daily update of the Internet news service has created a need for more systematic production of news, based on timeliness, a concept normally absent from the newsroom of the monthly magazine.
- News updates, constantly required by the website, have altered the established writing style, which, in the past, was based on writing rules reflecting the publication of current news on a later date. Journalists who were accustomed to feature writing had to reinvent the inverted pyramid style in order to satisfy the requirements of hard news online publication.
- The additional work required, or more accurately, the systematic news production has put pressures on journalists who were accustomed to a more relaxed way of doing their job.

in its 40th year of continuous circulation, whilst throughout the years, a series of prestigious annual editions were published, dealing with the Greek economy, regional economics, the banking system, as well as economic and demographical chronological series of Greece that date back to the 1950s. In recent years, a central site was developed, www.economics.gr, which included all published material and databases that are now offered online on a subscription or on an ad hoc charge basis.

- Serving two media at the same time, caused some confusion in the normal news criteria applied, meaning that news items that normally would not fit in the editorial philosophy of the magazine had to be processed to fulfill the need for constant online updates. The frustration of journalists was evident, since in many cases they considered certain news items required for the daily information flow did not comply with the magazines traditional news criteria.

It should be kept in mind that the above situation refers to an exclusively text-based website, which included some photographic material that accompanied the news pieces. No multimedia applications or links to original or additional sources were present, only news text presented online in two levels.¹³⁶

While problems of this kind can be tackled more easily in the above case of a small specialised magazine with an in-house staff of three journalists, in the case of mainstream newspapers and broadcast stations, or even web-centric operations working with external contributors, solutions do not come so easily. In what follows, a series of factors directly related to web-news production is examined. To begin with, the mobilization of human resources in the new digital market, either as in-house staff or as external contributors in the news websites in question is examined to identify the degree of personal and organisational involvement of journalists in the new medium. For instance, accounts by news executives offer useful insights of various problems as regards the co-operation between field reporters and in-house staff.

The examination of newsroom organisations and structure along with the news gathering and reporting practices illuminate the degree of development of Internet news ventures in the Greek market. News presentation techniques, such as writing style formats used online, as well as the existence of multimedia applications will be compared with the practices used in foreign markets, particularly those of the US and UK.

The existence of interactive applications, in addition to the offering of direct communication services to users, reveal the forms of access Internet users have at their disposal in order to make their views, observations and questions available to editors and reporters. Finally, the new area of online ethics is discussed as regards the issues emerging from the specificities of the new medium itself.

5.3.3.1 Journalists and newsrooms

According to the V-PRC 2002 survey, mentioned in earlier chapters, news websites are the primary job for 2.3% of Greek journalists.¹³⁷ However, as previously shown in Chapter III, in the case of Greece multi-employment is a major characteristic of the profession. Therefore, journalists working on the web constitute a greater mass than appears from the survey. In the case of newspaper journalists, S-JNG 2002 found that 8.1% of newspaper workers who practice multi-employment, work for a news website (either a newspaper's or an independent Internet venture). In Greek journalism as a whole, journalists who, besides their primary job, are working on the web represent 3% of the total, according to V-PRC.

Since S-JNG 2002 focused on newspapers, news journalists for whom radio and television are their primary occupation were not included in the sample. However, *Flash.gr*, since its launch, has used personnel employed in its sister radio operation. This is also the case for Internet news ventures such as *In* or *Ert.gr*, which relied heavily on in-house staff for their news operation to a great extent on a basis of exclusive employment arrangements. Exclusive employment on the web is an issue that needs to be explored by a separate nationwide survey, which should address the degree to which original news is produced, or whether the web-

¹³⁶ By clicking on the headline included in the homepage, a full news text appeared in a separate window.

¹³⁷ Nationwide survey titled *Greek journalists evaluating their profession and the quality of news provided* by V-PRC & the European Network of Greek Women Journalists (EDED), February 2002. The V-PRC survey as well as present S-JNG 2002 survey have found almost a great proportion of professionals holding jobs simultaneously in various media. More specifically, the V-PRC figures, based on a general observation of journalism population have shown that employment in other media, besides primary job reached 47% in 2002. S-JNG 2002 found multi-employment amongst newspaper reporters to be around 69%. For more details see Chapter 4.

presence of the given medium is based on shovel-ware, or merely the reproduction of news material offered by others (i.e. local news agencies).¹³⁸

In major operations, Internet newsrooms planned initially to operate around the clock. Since then, recession in the sector has weakened newsroom structure in terms of human resources as well as professional standards. The cases of *In* and *Flash.gr* are most illuminating as the early enthusiasm about the local Internet news sector was transformed into scepticism for the future.¹³⁹ Research in these large scale Internet news ventures has revealed advantages and disadvantages of website operations launched under the corporate umbrella of news organisations; on the other hand, the examination of smaller scale ventures like *Reporter*, *Nafteporiki* and *Ert.gr* contributes examples of a different and more holistic approach to the contemporary Internet news business in the country.

In this framework, the question of the professional status of people employed in Internet news is significant. Are these web-employees journalists within the classic definition of the term, or do they fall under another category, such as “content-workers” or “content-handlers”? It can be argued that the degree to which an Internet news venture has committed itself to journalism functions determines the work of the average media worker and, therefore, his or her status in the new digital environment. Fieldwork in the major news websites used for the present research has revealed a contrast of views between journalists and news executives, with the former arguing for their journalistic identity and the latter leaning towards a job-description that includes a range of general tasks that are closer to a digital content handler with some journalism experience and instinct. As C. Tombras, News Director of *In.gr* puts it:

¹³⁸ The general percentage V-PRC offers as exclusive employment in the profession surpasses 52% of total. There is not way however to separate web-professionals from other journalists and the survey does not provide such information.

¹³⁹ Both websites originated from corporate groups in the general convergence area, governed by high-profile moguls; Lambrakis, a traditional press baron and Kokkalis, owner of a multi-billion telecommunications corporate group that has occasionally invested in the media industry.

We saw that not having reporters was not really a loss... What we needed was to have people who could write well in Greek, speak foreign languages and have a sense of understanding when it comes to news selection.¹⁴⁰

This view was in conformity with the initial strategy *In* adopted for its news operation. Excluding to a great extent the use of experienced reporters or external contributors, it relied heavily on domestic and foreign news agencies, aiming at using agency material from a business-to-business service to news content, found in freely accessed sites. This course of action had profound effects on the website's journalism function as well as on the status of journalists employed. It led to the creation of a "news agency for the masses"¹⁴¹ whose news production process was characterised by marginal originality, relying on the translation of foreign agency material, or re-packaging loading of domestic news offered by ANA and Macedonian News Agency, the two dominant news agency services in the country. Consequently, *In's* employees were considered more as a group of "content handlers" and less as journalists. However, according to *In's* employees' accounts, this strategy, expressed on a corporate level, was in conflict with the daily instructions of editors-in-chief, who urged their subordinates to hit the streets, talk with sources and report in an original manner.

As mentioned, the news department of *In* was built from scratch. Also, as shown previously, internal synergies with journalist forces within the Lambrakis Group (DOL) was not included as an option in the initial planning. Therefore, the group's subsidiary *DOL Digital* approached the labour market through an open employment call advertised in the press. Hundreds of people sent in their CVs and, after an initial screening, about 150 were interviewed, of whom around half proceeded to the next stage that included practical tests on writing. As Tombras describes it, the testing process was designed to assess the ability of the candidate in synthesising news agency material and constructing news pieces. Previous journalism experience was also taken into consideration, although people with years of journalistic employment, such as experienced editors-in-chief, or shift editors employed in other media, were rejected as over-qualified.

¹⁴⁰ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op.cit.

In's decision to form a news mechanism that would predominantly rely on synthetic accounts of news agency material guided all further steps towards the organisation of the digital newsroom. Such co-operation with external contributors on stock market issues and special features that existed in the early days of operation soon ceased.

From around 40 to 50 people who staffed *In's* news mechanism in April 2000, 25 were journalists, mostly of young age, who operated exclusively on news production.¹⁴² In the first year *In's* newsroom operation was divided into four 6-hour shifts, starting from early in the morning (06:00-12:00), moving towards the afternoon (12:00-18:00), then late in the evening (18:00-24:00) as well as during the night (00:00-06:00).¹⁴³ Personnel comprised writers, proof readers and shift-editors, who acted as supervisors in every shift. The number of personnel varied depending on the news executives' perception on user traffic or the workload that emerges from widely known peak hours of news inflow. For instance, in the morning shift there were around 5-6 people, whereas in the evening there were on average 3 journalists and a proof-reader. The afternoon shift was the most populated with an average of 10-11 people. These were the hours during which journalists were returning from assignments to staff the website and starting to write their stories, while others were calling in to dictate the piece over the phone. The whole news operation was monitored by an editor-in-chief, who was available half of the working day, and the news director, who was responsible for the newsroom as a whole. Even in the absence of these decision-makers, editorial policy was preserved by shift-editors as well as by journalists themselves.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Recruitment took place in three stages in the first 4 months of 2000. In early 2000 around 10-15 people were working in the newsroom to reach around 35 in April 2000.

¹⁴³ In mid-2002 a more complex system of shifts was adopted. There was a shift starting at 07:00, another at 09:00 and a third at 12:00. Sometimes a fourth and a fifth started at 13:00 and 15:00, etc. Nowadays, shift starting hours declare the arrival of 1 or 2 people who are replacing other who have staffed the previous shift. After layoffs that included 75% of personnel in mid-2001 the shortage in personnel is evident. Therefore shift schedule reflects the need to have a certain number of staffers during specific peak day periods.

Specialization on news coverage was not a central issue of *In's* news operation, since the management's target was to create general task writers. As *In's* news director argued, he prefers people to have a "familiarization" with a specific thematic area, and at the same time be able to input work, processing almost every kind of news report for the website. However he admitted that not everyone has the ability to write sports and that not all writers can report effectively on difficult fields, such as economics or technology. As Tombras has put it:

With the exception of economic and financial news and news on technology, we have accomplished to employ staff writers that fit to what we call 'person-orchestra'; that is people that can write about everything...¹⁴⁴

However, some degree of specialization was evident amongst *In's* employees, a characteristic that also defined each employee's degree of power on decision-making. Furthermore, specialization in international news, economics, or politics could be found amongst shift-editors, something that, although set as an employment prerequisite by management, in operational terms proved to have some disadvantages. Having specialised people staffing shift-editor positions in practice meant that the supervisory power of editorship was limited to those news items that matched the given field of specialization. For instance, specialised writers on national economics or business had essentially more power on decision-making on news coverage and presentation on the specific subject matter than a shift-editor, who might be a specialist in international news. It was not rare for editorial evaluation of a serious development in the area of economics to be channeled outside the newsroom to an off-duty editor who was a field specialist, or if he was not to be found, to one of the experienced economic reporters that happened to be in reach.

Although having a dozen shift-editors covering all major fields of reporting on a 24-hour basis would seem irrational in the case of a news section that had been developed in the framework of a general Internet portal, the employment of more sophisticated, and hence more expensive, editors could have strengthened *In's* news mechanism. However, the potential increase in budget, as well as lack of

availability of such sophisticated online news managers, limited the choices of news executives.

The shift-editors' positions were staffed by people who were marked out from the rest by their increased ability to evaluate news and to orchestrate the website's news mechanism. They are those who preserve the most immediate knowledge of inflow of news material; they evaluate news articles and they are responsible for upgrading specific news items by posting them on the homepage. The News Director, not a journalist himself, functions more as a project manager than as a traditional news editor. His interventions are of a reactive nature to material he thinks should be treated differently, acting more as a dissatisfied user who has the power of alterations according to his taste of news appropriateness, language or style, rather than a supervisor who acts in a proactive and interventionary way. Accessing the online material from within the system offers him increased power to implement his decisions that are mainly driven by his subjective criteria of common sense.

The coverage of specific beats and the participation of journalists in press conferences were not encouraged. Therefore, beat reporting faced difficulties that mostly originated from the website's policy itself. As an *In* employee describes it: "I had to finish my shift before getting out to cover my Ministry beat. On many occasions, press conferences at the Ministry were taking place during the time I was on newsroom duty; in this case we were getting the news from the agency...".¹⁴⁵ These elements of inflexibility reflect a bureaucratically structured system. From a managerial point of view, the contribution of a "content handler" to their hourly defined shift was valued more than an original news piece that a journalist would bring in from the field.

In the early period of operation, staff meetings were quite regular, especially between shift-editors during the change in shifts where the replacement shift-editor and personnel were briefed for the current situation. However, the decline in the

¹⁴⁴ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op. cit.

number of staff, the abolishment of shift-editors positions, as well as the reorganisation of shifts have led to a relaxation as regards formal communications procedures. Moreover, general meetings in which all staffers participated were held on the first of each month. These meetings aimed to remind writers of editorial policy as well as to discuss accomplishments, operational problems and future projects. Separate news sections (e.g. economics, arts, etc.) held separate meetings when needed. In the general staff meetings, writers continued to pose questions on core issues of the journalistic function, such as the use of news selection techniques. These remained a discussion issue even after a year of full operation of the website.

Whereas, in the case of *In*, corporate news planning meant refraining from the production of original content (except in the case of a small number of features and “specials” that included some form of journalistic research), the financial news website *Reporter.gr* relied heavily on external contributors who were experienced journalists hitting the streets on a daily basis. As G. Nikolopoulos, News Director of *Reporter* has argued:

When you are creating a new medium, you cannot hire young journalists and teach them how to do the job... You need experienced reporters who are on the job, who have access to sources...¹⁴⁶

For someone who functions at the edge of daily financial reporting and supervises a continuous news influx, Nikolopoulos acknowledges that people who are working in non-internet media do not fit well in a web news operation. Moreover, co-operating with journalists relying on multi-employment does not comply with *Reporter's* ultimate strategic goal of utilising human resources; that is employing a dynamic group of well-paid journalists willing to work exclusively for the web. The traditional disease of passing around similar material by journalists employed in various media observed in the case of newspapers is present here as well. As Nikolopoulos stressed, “Older journalists who are accustomed to having 3-4 jobs, each of which has a low wage, are used to passing similar news texts to their

¹⁴⁵ Employee at *In.gr* who pledged for anonymity.

¹⁴⁶ Grigoris Nikolopoulos, *Reporter.gr*, op.cit.

employees, a fact that leads to a downgrading of originality and general quality of news research and analysis, something that is below our journalism standards".¹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, due to a series of reasons that keep national Internet activity underdeveloped, such as limited funding, poor advertising performance, inadequate telecommunications infrastructure and weak national Internet culture, this transitional planning has taken the form of established practice. *Reporter* continues to rely heavily for its news on journalists who are also employed in other media (radio or newspapers). As further discussion in this chapter will show, these people consider the Internet as just another job that offers them some money for doing a job that they already do for their primary employers. Therefore, in essence, Internet reporting, even when it appears to be original, lacks both quality and freshness.

According to Nikolopoulos, by-lines appear when a synthetic, news reporting piece is published online that needs to be defined as such. Browsing through the *Reporter's* pages however reveals that by-lined news pieces scarcely appear at all. Specifically, from around 50 smaller and larger news items, features and interviews that constitute *Reporter's* homepage, by-lines or initials of journalists appear only in three cases; that is less than 6% of the published news material.¹⁴⁸

In comparison with *In* and *Flash*, *Reporter.gr* is a much smaller scale operation. The website's newsroom started with three in-house employees whose job was to administrate what 20 external reporters were transmitting to the website. In-house employees staff three shifts that range from very early in the morning (one journalist covers the 05:00-09:00 shift and prepares news reviews and some selection of news from the day's newspapers), the day shift (09:00-16:00) and goes up to the evening shift (16:00-00:00), both staffed by four journalists and a shift-editor, assisted by two translators (who work on the English edition), one for each shift and four people technical staff. Two 2-hour weekend shifts also operate early

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ www.reporter.gr, accessed 7/12/2002. In one case initials were published, in another the full name of the journalist, whilst in the third a piece by the News Director was fully by-lined.

in the afternoon. There is an operational gap between midnight and 05:00 that, according to Nikolopoulos, *Reporter's* News Director does not affect news content.

Nikolopoulos has a clear picture as regards the separation between in-house staff and external reporters. Basic recruitment criteria for staffing *Reporter's* newsroom were journalism experience, a first degree, knowledge of a foreign language and a writing ability that would contribute to the need for re-writes of the material produced by the external staff. He argues:

In-house staffers are not good reporters, they do not chase the news, they hate being in the street. On the other hand, external reporters who are good in news hunting, are not good writers.¹⁴⁹

As a former *Reporter's* editor-in-chief has argued, co-operating with external contributors proved to be one of the major problems especially in the first period of operation. Delivering news on time was one of them. K. Papadimitriou, head of the morning newsroom shift at *Reporter* during the first year of its operation, argued that radio journalists who acted as external contributors for the site were more keen to understand the need for immediacy than their newspaper counterparts. The latter were not committed to the philosophy of the new medium, particularly in terms of the necessity to break the news as soon as possible. He said: "Regardless that a press conference was held for instance at 10:00 a.m., there were cases in which newspaper journalists wouldn't report it to us till 7 p.m.; that is about the time they have finished writing the piece for their newspaper".¹⁵⁰ This is evidence of a stage of semi-development as regards the local Internet news business, along with the perception journalists have for the medium itself – that is a medium that holds a secondary role in the news business, relying mainly on 'shareware'¹⁵¹ news material. Therefore, it is not surprising that prestigious journalists' by-lines are generally absent from most Greek news websites, with the effect that, along with

¹⁴⁹ Grigoris Nikolopoulos, *Reporter.gr*, op.cit.

¹⁵⁰ Kostis Papadimitriou, Editor-in-Chief at *Reporter.gr* in the period 1999-2000. Personal interview, 19 June 2002.

¹⁵¹ 'Shareware' is used here to connote news material commonly distributed to reporters from official source, a practice that is quite dominant in the newspaper market. For more details see Chapter IV on newspaper reporting.

advanced breaking news reports, original web-produced news commentary suffers as well.

Radio journalists are not only more experienced in breaking the news on time for the web than their newspaper colleagues, but they are also accustomed to reporting only the essential elements of an event that are necessary for a brief and up to the point news presentation. News executives of *Flash.gr*, being radio people, consider newspaper journalists to be long-winded. As Vasilis Lyrintzis, one of the News Editors of *Flash*, has argued:

These two writing styles should be integrated into a new one for the web, since users should be in a position to read short, but properly documented news pieces.¹⁵²

Integrating different backgrounds into a unique writing style for the web proved a difficult but feasible task soon after the first months of *Flash's* launch. The initial problems radio reporters and other contributors had in adapting to the new medium were overcome through continuous interaction with news executives. Also, it is worth mentioning that the employment status of those working for *Flash.gr* was considered to be something completely different from the radio. In essence, radio journalists were offered a second job, whose salary secured their enthusiasm in serving the new medium not only by passing on news they have prepared for the radio news bulletins, but through exclusive news reporting that radio's news management may have no interest in.

As previously mentioned, the strategy behind the launch of *Flash.gr* was the creation of an "electronic newspaper" with news agency qualities. As Lyrintzis, News Editor at *Flash* puts it:

The concept of the 'electronic newspaper' has led us to a combination of various layouts that included the promotion of what we considered as major news. News was not placed in accordance to its publication date but on the basis of editorial criteria in terms of importance.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Vasilis Lyrintzis, News Editor at *Flash.gr*. Personal interview, 8 April 2002.

¹⁵³ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit. Mr. Lyrintzis left *Flash* on November 2002.

Flash was launched in September 2000 with a total staff of 180 people, of whom 120 were journalists.¹⁵⁴ In the beginning, the newsroom was organised in a 24-7 operation, divided into six 4-hour shifts; at the time of our research, there were four 5-hour shifts with rotating personnel staffing the website in different time frames. Each shift comprised five journalists covering domestic news, one on international news, plus separate teams that staffed the thematic portals. There were four News Editors who monitored news content posted on the homepage, one Shift-Editor and a number of portal Heads who were responsible for content in the thematic web-pages on a 24-hour basis. The team of News Editors remained in constant co-operation, even during weekends. There was also a team of 20 external contributors who reported on current affairs, covering Ministry and various Government beats, most of whom were people working at the affiliate station. Amongst them, a small number of journalists were hired as in-house staff and progressively trained to become reporters.

In the stage of preparation, the website's news executives came up against a labour market shortage of professionals with experience in both journalism and the Internet. The launch of *In.gr* and other Internet projects earlier in the year had dried the market for people who had accumulated some experience on online news from previous Internet ventures or news agency companies. Therefore, the major recruiting criteria for *Flash's* news operation were computer skills, knowledge of the new medium and some experience on journalism. According to Lyrintzis, there was the belief that on-the-job training and accumulation of practical experience could make up for lack of journalistic background.

Training of staffers included familiarization with specific operational systems and software packages as well as guidelines on writing styles. As Lyrintzis acknowledges, newsroom staff was in a better position to adapt to the new web-related demands than external reporters who are predominantly radio people, used in smaller texts and different reporting techniques. These reporters, although

¹⁵⁴ In April 2002, total staff was already decreased to 115, of whom around 80 were journalists. Redundancies occurred in early 2002 due to budget cuts. Operational costs surpassed 4 billion drs. in the first 18 months of operation. Layoffs affected more secondary thematic portals on automobile, female, cultural and technology news.

experienced in their job, still face problems of conforming to the style needed for web news.¹⁵⁵ Finally, some instruction manuals were distributed internally which included guidelines on wording, utilisation of internet links and archive material, the use of web writing software, etc.

In April 2002, *Flash.gr* was already in a state of decline.¹⁵⁶ Editorial meetings held in the past, normally around noon, between News Editors and staff started to thin out and soon were completely abandoned. By that time, *Flash.gr* seemed to be going through a transitional phase, with news updated regularly, employing a significantly smaller staff than it did in the peak period of 2000-2001.

The decline inevitably has affected news content, especially as regards the contribution of original material based on journalistic reporting. For instance, in the past, the use of by-lines was frequent in *Flash's* website, especially in the case of regular radio journalists employed in its sister operation as well as external contributors working in newspapers who were recruited to provide news reports on a regular basis. Currently, news content is served by the remaining *Flash's* staff, including some contributors in specialised sections, such as arts and entertainment, women's news and motoring news. In December 2002, from around 70 news items appeared in *Flash's* homepage, categorised in various news sections, such as domestic news, international news, sports, arts and entertainment, economy, technology, health, female and automobile, by-lines appeared in only eight cases. The vast majority of these news items comprise feature stories found in specialised parts of the website, such as in the cars (1), entertainment (5) and women's (2) sections; that is less than 12% of total homepage news content. Whereas in the past news was produced mainly by external reporters, especially in the fields of politics, economics and technology, the current situation reflects a survival strategy in the framework within which news content is left at the hands of "content handlers".

¹⁵⁵ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ During 2002, a financial crisis in the Internet company has led to a shrinking of resources and massive redundancies. External contributors were the first to let go, whilst layoffs included a significant number of in-house staff.

In the case of *Ert.gr*, planning excluded the use of external contributors. In-house staff consists of 10 writers, who work exclusively for the website and were recruited both from within the corporation and from the general pool of ERT's affiliated radio and television producers and journalists. Newspaper professionals were not considered a possibility for recruitment, since as Stathakopoulos (*Ert.gr*) has argued:

...when you have worked for 20 years for a newspaper, it is difficult to dismiss your habits... and writing for the web is something totally different from all other styles used in other media.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, the digital newsroom was staffed by young journalists previously working in other areas within ERT (or as affiliated producers), who were accordingly evaluated in order to fit the demands of the new medium. This was not an easy task since *Ert.gr* did not have the opportunity of placing advertisements in the press, as was the case with *In.gr*. Recruiting of new employees is forbidden for the time being, due to overstaffing in the traditional state-owned radio and television stations, a practice that historically has been heavily attached to clientelistic practices by the government of the day.¹⁵⁸ Selection of journalists took into consideration the age of candidates, their computer knowledge, as well as their appetite for experimenting in the new media field.

On the other hand, *Naftemporiki.gr* is a classic newspaper website that also carries a live news service. It employs a small number of people who are closer to "content handling" than journalism reporting. Content is provided by newspaper reporters who channel briefly structured news items from their daily produce to the website. This operation is not characterised by a separate employment status and enthusiasm on breaking news on the web is not considered as important amongst the newspaper's reporters. The lack of by-lines and of extra pay act as counter-

¹⁵⁷ Christos Stathakopoulos, *Ert.gr*, op.cit.

¹⁵⁸ See Mouzelis, N. (1978) "Class and Clientelistic Politics: The Case of Greece". *Sociological Review*, vol. 26 (3), pp. 471-497. Also Dimitras, P. (1992) "Greece". In Bernt Stubbe Ostergaard's (ed.) *The Media in Western Europe - The Euromedia Handbook*. London: Sage, Papathanassopoulos, S. (1989) "Greece: Nothing is More Permanent than the Provisional", *Intermedia*, vol. 17 (2) June-July (pp. 29-35), Papathanassopoulos, S. (1993) *Liberating Television* (Athens: Kastaniotis), Chapter on

incentives for a task considered as secondary to their daily workload from the paper itself.

In all the above cases, website staffers have received some form of training. In most Internet news ventures, hiring processes include some adjustment period during which employees are trained in the use of web publishing software packages, particular web applications, etc. However, not all websites have trained journalists on the specificities of web journalism, such as writing styles or computer assisted journalism practices. In those websites that have done so, journalists have not yet had the opportunity to put it in practice, since as further analysis will show, traditional journalism practices still apply on the web to a great extent. It could be argued that, in some cases, particular problems and deficiencies associated with the general underdevelopment of the Greek digital market, or traditional distortions and pressures on news production in general (e.g. ownership, advertisers, etc.) may have led Greek journalism on the web to move backwards.

Both *In* and *Flash.gr* were launched during 2000 and they constituted the most expensive Internet news ventures in the country. At the peak, personnel in both enterprises reached a total of around 300 journalists, the great majority of whom were people who were in a position to present a degree of knowledge of the new medium, along with journalism skills. Both websites originated from mainstream, successful media groups, but currently both are in a state of decline. Large budgets vanished and ambitious plans ended in the wastebasket.

In traditional terms, the place where human resources and journalism tools are brought together is the newsroom. However, since modern telecommunications can secure tele-working possibilities for employees, the human presence in the newsroom is progressively abandoned as a prerequisite, especially for reporters and analysts. Moreover, when considering the future development of digital news content, it is quite difficult to draw the picture of a typical newspaper-style newsroom. Nevertheless, in the early period of web news, the use of traditional

newsroom structures coincided with the adoption of strategic moves that considered web journalism to be similar to a radio or news agency function. Subsequently, under the local prism, the experimental first news-on-the-web era took the form of a transitional phase that included the use of old techniques on a new communications platform. The consequent newsroom culture and organisation played a vital role in the exploration, or not, of innovative news reporting practices that are usually considered to be the essential characteristics of web journalism.

5.3.3.2 News production practices and techniques

As Bosch et al. (2000) have argued, in the information age “what is required is a simplified organisation with more complex jobs”.¹⁵⁹ This was not the case in our previously listed case studies. The two major news websites in the Greek market (*In* and *Flash*) relied on traditional structures, while the utilisation of human resources remained minimal in digital terms. It could be argued that the technical ability to construct a news site prevailed at the expense of practising an advanced form of journalism that would really make a difference. Subsequently, either due to short-sighted strategy, or due to lack of specialised knowledge, modern web journalism techniques developed abroad were only marginally exploited in Greece.

In the next section, the issue of news reporting on the web is tackled through the examination of news-gathering mechanisms and the use of sources, the various stages of news processing (editorial policy, writing and editing processes and the power to publish) as well as the way news is presented: writing styles and enriching techniques, such as the use of related links, archive material, etc.

5.3.3.2.1 News gathering

In accordance to its initial philosophy, *In.gr* relied predominantly on official sources, which included corporate press releases, news agency material and free news material found in foreign news sites. As Tombras argues:

Socialist Greece”, *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 12 (pp. 387-397).

¹⁵⁹ Bosch, G., Webster, J. & Weißbach, H.- J. (2000) ‘New Organizational Forms in the Information Society’, in K. Ducatel, J. Webster & W. Herrmann’s *The Information Society in Europe: Work and Life in an Age of Globalisation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 101.

We concluded that the news offered by foreign news agencies, in combination with news material published on major Internet news websites like BBC or CNN, plus domestic news transmitted by the local news agencies as well as broadcast stations could secure a 24-hour news inflow for our organisation.¹⁶⁰

Therefore, *In*'s news production mechanism relied on material primarily produced elsewhere. In the beginning, the utilisation of this material included reference to sources, although at the end of 2002 in an increasing number of news pieces source attribution was not clearly defined. Government press releases, ANA and the Macedonian News Agency were the primary sources for domestic current news, while Reuters and Associated Press dominated the provision of international news. There were cases, however, in which newsroom staff members managed to keep track of their beats and report news on their own. In general, the typical secondary news production function created tensions inside the newsroom. Writers kept asking for some freedom to move independently and to produce their own material. The question "how does the use of news agencies as sources fit with *In*'s strategic decision to become a news agency itself" was always present in the newsroom. This was accompanied by a disagreement between management and staffers on whether the latter should be considered journalists or "content handlers". The existing journalism practices however were indicative of the management's choice on the matter. As an *In* employee has put it: "Many times there was fighting over the issue whether a writer, who had gathered news from a press conference and corporate events, had the right, or not, to see his or her name published next to the news report". News management argued that news material commonly distributed to all reporters for publication (shareware news) could not be considered as something unique, which should be indicated it carrying the journalist's by-line. Writers maintained that, by contacting beats or sources, they were in a position to conduct further research and "fish" for information that would justify the special treatment of the news piece.

A brief anecdote from the early years of *In.gr* illuminates the website's reliance on official sources and news agency material. It was late at night when A.F., one of the

¹⁶⁰ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op. cit.

website's financial and economic writers, was speedily hitting the keyboard of his laptop, sitting at a desk in the Greek Parliament press-room feeding the central newsroom's email inbox with reports. He was assigned to report on the Annual Budget being discussed in the main Parliament session. He had managed to finish a number of pieces, which were forwarded via email to *In.gr*'s newsroom. His only mistake was that he did not call in to verify reception, thinking that these items, being the news of the hour would be the first to be noticed by the Shift Editor. The next morning he discovered a set of different budget stories in the Current Affairs section of the news site. These were Athens News Agency stories transmitted to ANA's subscribers the night before. His pieces remained unopened in the email folders of the intranet system. What he finally found out was that nobody knew that he was at the Parliament the previous night and, surprisingly, nobody had checked the email for incoming messages. The News Editor on duty was not informed by his colleague responsible for the previous shift for the assignment and, by choosing the "safe harbour" of Athens News Agency, fed the site with shareware material. This is a typical example of inefficiency that characterised the most powerful and expensive digital newsroom in the country at that time.

Flash.gr also utilised news agency material to a great extent; Reuters and the two national agencies were the primary sources for international news. However, major events abroad that attracted the attention of the media, due to the involvement of the Prime Minister or a high government official, were covered by special correspondents who were already assigned by the radio station to cover the specific beat. Domestic news was sufficiently covered by the pool of external (mostly radio) reporters, who transmitted news to the website on a continual basis. As Lyrintzis has argued, "We were very strong in major local stories, due to our network of experienced external reporters".¹⁶¹

The in-house news staff monitored developments on a 24-hour basis through Internet or television and were occupied, along with writing synthetic pieces, with re-writes of the external reporters' material. 'Shareware news' was also utilised to a

¹⁶¹ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit.

great extent; corporate press releases and government statements secured an increased inflow of commonly distributed news.

In general on the web, the qualities of reporting reflected the situation prevailing in journalism as a whole. The strong pool of reporters provided *Flash.gr* with a significant share of exclusive political news, channelled also to the radio news bulletins, which according to Lyrintzis, accounted for more than 30% of the total number of news items. This was a result of a news mechanism that ceased to exist after massive layoffs that affected both the newsroom and external reporters. Lyrintzis admits a weakness in news coverage from the periphery, a field where *Ert.gr* holds a competitive advantage through its network of radio stations in the provinces. In the minds of public relation officers and government communication officers, *Flash* was considered, from the beginning, an exclusively news-oriented website, reflecting the credibility of its sister radio operation.

However, establishing a sufficient information network is not an easy task, especially for news organisations that have appeared exclusively on the web and do not enjoy the backup of an established medium. When *Reporter.gr* was launched in late 1999, its editor-in-chief had to put in a lot of effort to establish a channel of communication with the market. In his communiqués to private companies and organisations he not only had to announce the appearance of a new medium, but also to explain that this new medium was a web-centric news mechanism, operating in the non-print media environment. As Papadimitriou argues, "...I had to address sources again and again... In the beginning, even corporate press officers could not understand the importance of the Internet as a news medium."¹⁶²

The inability of people to grasp the new news platform was evident also in the daily communication of *Reporter's* staff with sources. Approaching market figures demanded increased effort. For instance, when a request for an interview with a corporate executive was made, *Reporter's* News Editor, who is a well-known and highly respected newspaper reporter, had to step in and make things easier. Himself

¹⁶² Kostis Papadimitriou, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

an experienced *Vima* reporter, he acknowledges these difficulties that emerge from the operation of a news website that does not belong to a traditional news organisation with an already established print or broadcast brand name. When asked whether there are any differences in the reaction of the source when he or she was approached for a *Reporter* news piece, as against a *Vima* article, he said: "Great difference ...there is no comparison. When *Vima* was mentioned, the door was open and sources were begging for publicity. In the case of *Reporter*, it was the other way around: we had to beg in front of closed doors."¹⁶³

However, being in the profession for many years, Nikolopoulos has developed a broad network of sources. This has somewhat improved the effectiveness of *Reporter's* news-work as a whole and has justified the News Director's decision to employ as external contributors established reporters who were familiar with the market and well known amongst corporate and government sources. On the other hand, as Nikolopoulos argues, sources are very keen to discuss things when they wish to communicate a certain view to the public. The Internet's immediacy is attractive for those who need to deny the truthfulness of a media report or who wish to answer negative stories appearing in the news. "They know that a news website will make their view public a lot sooner than a newspaper; so they send their press release to us and presume that an immediate publication will occur."¹⁶⁴

Obviously, immediacy is a quality of the role of the Internet as a news medium that sources are discovering step by step. Also, the fact that *Reporter* has been for some years the only financial news agency in the country rendered its news content particularly powerful amongst certain people in corporate circles.

At the news gathering stage, the broad range of information coming from external contributors was oftenly shadowed by the inability of the latter to understand the specificities of the new medium. Transmitting news on time was one the basic problems *Reporter's* management faced in its co-operation with associate personnel. A lot of examples illustrate this deficiency, especially in the case of

¹⁶³ Grigoris Nikolopoulos, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

articles that appeared daily at a pre-scheduled time. For example the required timing for the stock market preview intended for publication each day just before the opening of the stock market was not always understood by the journalist responsible for handling this particular piece. Therefore delays occurred or, in some cases, the article did not appear at all.

Lack of precision was not the only problem that news executives had to face in their co-operation with external reporters. Again Nikolopoulos explains both sides of the coin. "In the old days, when I was working in *Kathimerini*, I was employed also by the Athens News Agency. Every day, editors in ANA were putting pressure on all reporters to 'give' them the news. We didn't, because the newspaper was our first priority".¹⁶⁵ The same behaviour is observed in the case of reporters working also for a news website. First of all they keep the news until they have written the piece for the newspaper or have voiced it on radio. Then transmission to the website follows. This is quite typical for professionals employed by different media and who at the same time feel that they have to safeguard their primary job. Moreover, in the case of radio journalists, voicing selected texts from shareware news material is accompanied by the identification of the reporter. In the case of *Reporter.gr*, texts are anonymous, especially those that are a mere reproduction of press releases and official statements. So external reporters were not bothered by their by-lines not being published. According to Papadimitriou "...it was reporters who did not want their by-lines to be published... many of them did not want to let others know that they were working for the site... others preferred not to sign their articles, since by-lines create increased responsibility...".¹⁶⁶

The traditional characteristic of multi-employment has affected most web news operations that relied on external contributors from a dual perspective: a positive one, that is securing the participation of experienced reporters in a financial Internet news start-up, in return of a relatively small pay; and a consequent negative one,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Kostis Papadimitriou, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

namely the placement of the website's needs in a lower position in the minds of professionals than other more 'serious' journalism jobs to be executed.

In the early days, as Papadimitriou puts it, "In a way we were paying external reporters for something that ought to arrive through fax and on time".¹⁶⁷ However, after a few months of operation, when the information network was set and press releases started to arrive in the newsroom on a regular basis, the inadequacy of external reporters in adapting to the website's need for breaking news was more than evident. There were cases in which the news piece from the external reporter, based on shareware material, was arriving after the press release, or the press release followed shortly after the reporter had filed. As shown in the analysis on newspaper journalism included in the previous chapter, this phenomenon is not only a result of poor coordination on the part of external reporters who persist to refrain from adapting to news website needs for timeliness. It is also a practice that results also from two different factors: first, the communication purposes of press offices that, in order to secure publication, prefer to address pre-structured, ready-to-use information to specific reporters (and not to newsrooms in general) and, second, the utilisation of this information by reporters themselves, who by posing as news carriers are in a position to "sell" the press release to the newsroom, thus demonstrating their importance to the daily news production.

Naturally, external reporters rarely post any exclusives on *Reporter's* website, since their priority is first to "sell" the news to the newsroom they primarily work for. Exclusive articles that appeared occasionally were based on information gathering by *Reporter's* News Director himself. In some cases severe pressure by news management on reporters ended in them feeling occasionally obliged to offer some of their own information to the website's newsroom.

As corporate news is the core activity of *Reporter.gr*, the website's management was always pushing for more information than corporate press officers wish to offer. For instance, there were cases in which corporations listed in the Athens

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Stock Exchange organised press conferences to announce a buy-out of an unlisted company. Since in this case the buyer is not legally forced to announce the price, reporters did not even pose the relevant question, appearing to respect the company's privacy or, according to the view of *Reporter's* news editor, to preserve their good relations with corporate press offices and contacts. If this general practice is evident in the case of newspapers and radio stations where most website associate reporters primarily work, it is more than natural for them to follow the same pattern in any other secondary tasks assigned by other media. Although the anonymity of *Reporter's* pieces could make it a platform for investigative journalism on business affairs, this possibility is in practice as remote for the Internet as it is for Greek journalism as a whole.

In the field of news gathering, *Ert.gr* utilises the central information system that includes all sources used by the central news mechanism of the parent organisation. Therefore, content being produced in radio and television newsrooms is monitored online especially as an indication of breaking news. Major foreign news websites are used in this case as well, along with Reuters and ANA.

The parent organisation's information system covers the website's need for domestic and international economic and political news and news on social affairs. Moreover, specialised foreign websites are used by *Ert.gr's* personnel for re-writes of international news on particular fields, such as technology, ecology, the automobile industry, etc. News research is carried out, not by officially assigned writers on specialised fields, as is the case in *Flash.gr*, but by each writer following his or her inclinations and interests. The website relies a lot on its staff's enthusiasm to search the Internet and other sources, to construct synthetic pieces and to explore new ways of presenting the news. As Stathakopoulos, *Ert.gr* news director argues, "In some cases we have even scooped the Athens News Agency that followed the next day..."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Christos Stathakopoulos, *Ert.gr*, op. cit.

As stressed, the use of 'shareware news', mainly corporate and government press releases, is the norm in most news websites in the country. Moreover, in the case of domestic news, the Athens News Agency material is utilised to a great extent. Especially after the shrinking of activity of mainstream news websites and the layoffs that followed, agency material is the dominant source of information, since it secures an uninterrupted flow of information for digital newsrooms.¹⁶⁹

5.3.3.2.2 News processing

The strategic approach that guided news function development and organisation on websites has played a significant role in determining the character of the news mechanism as well as the originality of its produce. In our research, all kinds of news treatment were recognised, from original reporting to agency material re-processing.

Various writings that deal with the web under a journalism prism have acknowledged the need for significantly different writing styles and techniques than those routinely used for decades in newspapers. For instance, the notion of the 'multi-dimensional' hyper-texted news story refers to the ability of the journalist to build news material on different structures, something that, according to Herbert (2000) allows readers "to pick their own path through the story".¹⁷⁰ This suggests the visual organisation of a digital "news package" that would include more than just the news piece itself, or an accompanied photograph or graphic figure. Audio and video applications, as well as interactive solutions that enrich the reader's participation constitute important elements of the Internet news experience. Discussion forums attached to specific news items, readers' comments posted under the journalistic text, or active by-lines that send the readers' remarks directly to the journalist's email are some of the most typical elements of journalism on the web.

¹⁶⁹ It should be mentioned that, as ANA officials have stated, news websites belonging to traditional media, which have been Agency's subscribers for many years, use ANA material not as separate clients, but through the existing subscription arrangement. The operation of the Internet as a separate medium is not adopted on this occasion.

¹⁷⁰ Herbert, J. (2000) *Journalism in the Digital Age: Theory and Practice for Broadcast, Print and On-line Media*. Oxford: Focal Press, p. 2.

In this section, we examine a previous and equally important stage: news processing. What happens from the time new pieces of information enter the newsroom until the moment someone presses a button to send the news online? Our specific case studies serve this analysis quite effectively, while other internet ventures are used in an attempt to illustrate the current situation, as well as to give room for generalisations.

In terms of the ultimate goal, the whole news process within website newsroom does not differ much from what traditional media are trying to accomplish: that is to inform the public accurately, fully and in time. Newspapers are trying to perform this task every morning through their print edition, whilst broadcast media offer many news bulletins every hour or half hour throughout the day. Some of the particular characteristics that make the Internet differ from all other media is the medium's technical ability to host all available media forms, its usage for direct and immediate media-audience interactions and the absence of a specific deadline for news publishing.

These qualities have direct effects on journalists and the ways they perform their daily tasks:

- Journalists on the web face a continuous workload that makes them work in shifts, feeding a 24-7 operation. Also, staffing shifts in a digital newsroom entails the potential ability of the journalist to handle news in different fields of specialisation.
- Handling news-processing software packages requires from journalists the development of some sort of editing skills that previously were not required.
- News-processing software and multimedia applications require a combination of computer skills and software knowledge that are above those of the average journalist.
- Finally, the technical easiness of publishing and the progression of multi-skilling occasionally puts journalists in a powerful position, that of pressing the key that turn the draft news article into public knowledge.

In the early days of *In.gr*'s operation, shift-editors were specialised in specific knowledge areas (e.g. politics, economics, international affairs, etc.), a fact that on the one hand offered a specialization advantage to the given shift, but on the other, caused a strong weakness in terms of the general editorial management function, each time a major news piece from a different field appeared. Moreover, if the editor-in-chief was not present, decision making on news placement and representation was more a task performed by the journalists specialised in the given field, rather than by editor who staffed the specific shift. As Tombras has argued, "by using news agency material, we have a 'safety valve', since we rely on the agency's credibility. Therefore everyone in the newsroom can re-write this material in order for news to be published".¹⁷¹ However, *In*'s News Director accepts that the specialised writer who is more familiar with the field would be more productive, combining sources or elements from previous related news articles.

Normally, when a story breaks, *In*'s web writers consult with the shift-editor on how the story should be treated. The shift-editor, who monitors the inflow of news can also assign a story to a specific writer. News writing is performed on a news database software that includes separate frames for headline, lead, the body of the news piece, photograph and caption, as well as any accompanying informative links. When finished, the writer presses the button and the article is transferred in a stage of pre-publication, remaining on the intranet. Then a proof reader scans the piece for grammar, the shift-editor's editing follows and the latter presses the key to put it on air. However, this was a procedure followed during the first period of *In*'s operation. Later on, experienced newsroom staffers acquired the right to publish directly on the site. This action is recorded centrally and all staffers are accountable for their actions. "This practice", says Tombras "puts staffers in a state of alertness. This is something we were taught by the BBC whose executives told us that we should trust our people".¹⁷²

The power to publish was not delegated to newcomers. However, in the current situation, most of the 11 writers that have remained in the *In*'s newsroom are

¹⁷¹ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op. cit.

trusted for such a process and, therefore, proof-readers and shift-editors monitor the news piece after it is loaded on the website. A special intranet directory contains articles that are published, which have not been read by proof-readers. The latter make corrections online and then the shift-editor follows for the final touch. Immediacy is the key target in *In.gr*. As Tombras has put it: "It is a live medium. Nobody will complain for some spelling errors... All understand that in breaking news the only thing that counts is immediacy... perfection follows".¹⁷³

Special reference should be made to a particular aspect of news processing that has caused many problems to journalists: the news lead. Previously an editor's responsibility, the construction of the lead that should accompany the headline is a crucial part of the journalist's job on the web. Journalists who in the past were accustomed to submit a pure text for approval and editorial treatment have found it hard to create summary leads that should contain the basic elements of the news article. Moreover, policy changes did not make things easy. For instance, during the first year and half of *In's* operation, the lead represented the first paragraph of the news text. It was copied and "pasted" inside the "lead" frame of the news processing software for layout reasons. Later on, policy was changed and writers were asked to produce a real informative lead. This caused some degree of disturbance amongst writers, who needed a certain period in order to readjust to the new style. Similar phenomena were observed in other news websites in which writers were asked by their editors to accustom themselves to a construction of a summary lead to accompany the news article. The "headline" frame of the news procession software has been also a testing ground for journalists, who were never asked to practice such an editorial task in the past.

Newsroom writers in *In.gr* have not received any training on html publishing techniques. News executives have given weight to the construction of a software package that was as simple enough as to require only a basic form of training. Currently, *In's* newsroom uses a third generation news processing software

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

developed in summer 2001 after a series of discussions between writers and management as regards operational difficulties observed in the first versions.

Editorial policy in *In.gr* was quite a sensitive field, something that staffers considered natural due to the parent organisation. As one member of the staff has argued: "We handled economic matters in a careful way, always according to the editor-in-chief's line; while other fields, such as domestic business affairs, we were not supposed to touch at all, except in the case of very large corporations... Although we could write about foreign companies, each time there was news on a local company, we had to ask first...". The editorial line included a ban of publications about the parent company, as well as its competitors, whilst specific rules governed the coverage of major international issues, like the Israel-Palestine conflict, the war in Yugoslavia, the Balkans and Turkey.

Depending on the writer, the average duration of the production process was around 20 minutes. Newsroom writers were loading an average of seven pieces per person per shift, while there were occasions when double the number of pieces were published. In full operation, the updating frequency of *In's* newsroom reached two to three articles per minute.

In most cases, a series of elements accompanied the news article construction, such as related links and archive articles. The writer had to locate sites in which readers could find more information or related documents. Related articles from the archive were gathered in the same way. Writers had to search in a news database that presented previous writings in a chronological order or in terms of thematic relevance. If a writer was specialised in the specific field, the job was quite easy. Otherwise a consultation with the shift-editor or editor-in-chief preceded the final posting. Then this material was copied and "pasted" in the relevant frame in the news processing software.

Photographic material was available in certain directories in the intranet and did not require any specialised knowledge on behalf of the writers. If photographs needed processing, writers consulted each other or called the technical department for

assistance. Communication with the IT department was normally enhanced in the case of special editions that were organised after general consultation among writers, editors and graphic specialists. Writers provided content and web-designers produced the web pages.

In *Flash.gr* the four news editors scan the daily schedule in the morning and make arrangements with journalists, who are asked to update news articles of the previous day or to brief the newsroom with latest developments. External reporters send the news and staffers write the article. The news agencies are monitored on a continuous basis for locating news pieces that have escaped *Flash's* newsroom attention or for complementing the final product.

A newsroom staffer is responsible for locating relevant links in websites that are mentioned in the news, or contain additional material that needs to be put under the readers' attention. This task is performed simultaneously with the writing process of the article. Archive material is also traced by the writer of any given news piece and is used to complement the visual presentation of the news. By the end of 2002, however, this practice was limited only to very important news postings.

The news processing procedure in *Flash* is orchestrated around a central news management software in which separate frames contain the headline, the summary lead, body text, photographic material and relevant links. Normally, after the proof-reader has checked grammar and spelling, the editor-in-chief reads the piece before final publication and decides the appropriate placement on the website.

Newsroom journalists and shifteditors are responsible for all stages of news production, since the four news editors play a reactive rather than a proactive role. As Lyrintzis argued, "We intervened to stress a change in pace or headline, or in the length of the summary lead after the news article is posted on the website. We did not have any serious problems with this procedure." In major political news, however, the four news editors draw editorial guidelines for staffers and shift-editors to follow.

In-house staff write and prepare the articles and save them to specific directories that remain until the editor-in-chief or the shift-editor decides about publication and placement. In contrast with the practice that dominates *In's* newsroom, only these people in *Flash.gr* have the right to publish. Moreover, only four news editors have the right to publish a news piece in the front page. In the latter case, certain alterations are made in order to make news pieces more attractive to users. "We need to present a clear picture of the news to readers who do not have the whole news package in front of them", says Lyrintzis, accepting that this particular treatment is a result of users' remarks and comments on the clarity of the news content posted on the homepage.

In a large news website installation, like *Flash.gr*, immediacy is considered of highly importance. In the "golden" period of operation, *Flash* was scooping its sister radio operation on a daily basis. The ability of the website to publish news on the minute was competing directly with the radio's pre-scheduled news bulletins. The newsroom at *Flash.gr* received news information around the clock from external contributors, who had the opportunity to break the news on the radio only during news bulletins. As *Flash's* news executives state, there was no competition between the two media; quite the opposite, co-operation and exchange of news were always in effect between the two newsrooms.

As Lyrintzis argues:

In the previous phase of operation, our main competitive advantage was the speed of delivering the news. News was published at the time it occurred... However in recent months, our mechanism is more relaxed. One of the reasons for the routinisation of our work is the lack of competition in the field.¹⁷⁴

Layoffs and budget cuts were the main reasons behind the relaxation of *Flash's* news mechanism, while the so-called lack of competition is explained by the fact that the same symptoms had already appeared in *In's* news function.

¹⁷⁴ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit.

Being a smaller scale operation, *Reporter.gr* has not suffered the loss of in-house staff, whilst the cost of external contributors is not unbearable for the organisation. News processing is quite standardised as a procedure that includes the handling of the material originating from external reporters and the administration of press releases that arrive at the website's newsroom.

External reporters call in or send articles by fax or email to the central desk. Usually they do not send written accounts of news. Instead they phone in and describe the event to an in-house writer. This is not a simple procedure, since internal staff have to adapt bits and pieces that are transmitted from around 20 external associates and thus create coherent news articles. Occasionally, articles were transmitted through email or dictated over the phone, which made things easier.

Shift-editors receive the news articles, evaluate the information, re-write when necessary, produce headlines and load them on the website. Shift-editors select also the exact placement on the homepage and make all appropriate thematic connections with business sectors, news categories, company profiles etc. Included in the responsibilities of the shift-editor is the selection of key-words that should be attached to the news article.

Reporter.gr places special weight on the amount of information that supplements each news article. Therefore each article is connected with the relevant company page that exists in the website's archive in which the most important information about the specific company is included.

According to Nikolopoulos, 90% of news posted on *Reporter.gr* comes initially over the phone. In general, the coverage of hard news is divided into two kinds: first, small news items of the day concerning companies' financial performance or policy announcements by the government that affect business activity. In this case, news is dictated over the phone for speed and articles are processed internally. Second, major news that is presented as briefs, on which the newsroom carries later updates. In this case, articles arrive via email and, less often, by fax.

Most of the website's contributors, being newspaper journalists, prefer to write in the leisure of their newspaper office and send their articles during afternoon hours. Technological advances that allow newspapers to push printing to a later hour in the evening than in the past have led to deadlines for newspaper journalists becoming later as well, which has added to *Reporter's* problems.

News layout is automatised through the use of a news processing software that, as in the case of other news websites, leads journalists to place a headline, a summary lead and the body. As Papadimitriou, once a shift-editor at *Reporter* with sole responsibility for posting news on the website, admitted, in-house staff faced difficulties in adapting the basic elements of news in a few sentence paragraph. "For a long period of time I had to monitor news articles for mistakes and distortions, re-write leads and make alterations. This affected my job as an editor-in-chief, limiting my duties to general coordinator of news content".¹⁷⁵

In the case of *Ert.gr*, the central news administration system of the parent organisation is crucial for the website's operation. News articles that are in a stage of preparation somewhere within the National Broadcasting Organisation, either in radio or television newsrooms, are monitored by *Ert.gr*. Since television does not rely so much on written texts, news texts written for radio stations are those that are particularly being used. When news is evaluated by radio or television editors and signed off as ready for transmission, journalists in the digital newsroom start writing their piece, using the already prepared material that is also enriched with further research. For this purpose, other newsroom sources such as news agencies, radio and television broadcasts, as well as news websites abroad are utilised for additional information. For the bulk of its normal news flow, however, *Ert.gr* relies on the daily agenda of pre-scheduled political and social events.

News is posted by newsroom journalists themselves, who are responsible for all production stages and have the right to publish. As Stathakopoulos argues: "We

¹⁷⁵ Kostis Papadimitriou, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

have rejected the whole process of proof-readers and news editors that intervene between journalists and the public. ... We believe that on the web, the editor's mentality should be shared by all journalists in the newsroom".¹⁷⁶ A general monitoring is performed by the News Director who acts as a reader, although he has the opportunity to read news in the making. Sometimes, however, as Stathakopoulos admits, he has to intervene to suggest alterations or additional angles that need to be examined. The job of the proof-reader is performed by writers themselves who ask their colleagues to read their piece before it is posted online. Photographic material is processed by *Ert's* newsroom writers who are trained in the use of basic software.

An interesting aspect of the news function at *Ert.gr* is the emphasis the website is putting on news from the Greek periphery. News inputs originate from 19 local radio stations nationwide, which are responsible for their own web pages in *Ert.gr*. The personnel that staff these stations throughout the country feed the website with local news on a daily basis. As *Ert's* News Director has argued, this decentralisation of news input is central to the website's whole philosophy. Focusing on the periphery coincides not only with *Ert.gr's* social role as a state organisation, but also with the fact that a great proportion of the website's users are Greeks living abroad. As Stathakopoulos argues: "In terms of strategy we focus on Greeks of the diaspora, who constitute a larger population than the people living within national borders. These people are more familiar with the Internet and they have an increased need for information on their country."¹⁷⁷

Although *In* and *Flash.gr* are in a position to produce news articles rapidly, based on an extensive news production mechanism, *Naftemporiki.gr's* operation, despite the lack of an adequate number of in-house staff, is perhaps the most updated newspaper website in the country. The so called "LiveNews" service includes short news items of a maximum length of 200 words that cover economic and financial developments, supported by Athens News Agency cooperation that provides the website with breaking news on politics.

¹⁷⁶ Christos Stathakopoulos, *Ert.gr*, op. cit.

Naftemporiki's shifts are staffed by a journalist, who is responsible for updating the service with material that originates from newspaper reporters. The shift journalist collects information by the phone, writes the articles and posts them on the web. In the case of major events, new updated articles follow the original posting.

The newspaper website does not carry exclusive information since, as G. Zafolias, head of the Internet Division argues, "... the primary business is the newspaper".¹⁷⁸ Other major news is covered by the newspaper's journalists, who write for the website and provide updates.

The production of news in the news websites examined does not differ to a great extent from that observed in the newspaper environment. As is made clear in the following section, news presentation follows traditional practices. Moreover, on those occasions in which the new medium itself holds an advantage as the fastest written news delivery platform, like for instance in the case of breaking news, most current web news mechanisms are not in a position to benefit.

In most news websites, in-house staff consists of young people who were employed in staff newsrooms that to a great extent act as platforms of re-packaging news texts. The limited experience of staffers is combined with a blurred strategy on the part of news executives. Problems of news material handling that in-house staffers have faced (e.g. the creation of an informative summary lead to accompany the article's headline) have put Internet news to a weak position. As Papadimitriou argues, "Instead of being innovative, these difficulties made us function one step behind newspapers, where journalistic practices are more accurately executed."¹⁷⁹

The technical characteristics of the Internet lead to some interesting evidence. For instance, in news agency-style website installations, the pressure of processing news by the minute has led to a relaxation of news evaluation. Editors posted

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Giorgos Zafolias, Head of Internet Division, *Naftemporiki.gr*. Personal interview, 28 February 2002.

articles that would not normally pass the news gate, just to increase the volume of published material. At the same time, pressures on reporters for increasing inputs has resulted in posting corporate announcements as articles.¹⁸⁰

As stressed earlier, reporters who contribute to news websites on an associate basis do not respect the medium's need for immediacy and originality. Naturally, multi-employment plays a role, whereas the practice of the reporter who uses a laptop on site, captures visuals of the event on digital cameras and e-mails everything back to the newsroom is something extremely rare in the Greek online market.

In all cases, web writers utilise a variety of sources, synthesising a news article posted on the web. The writing and editing processes and the allocation of the power to post news content on the web are influential factors in the way news is treated online. Moreover, the examination of news production process that takes place within website newsrooms has revealed particular characteristics of a medium that differs to many respects from its traditional counterparts. The Greek Internet news function, although embraced by the bulk of traditional media players and providing potential for new participants, can hardly be characterised as close to the paradigm of other mature markets in Europe and the US. Moreover, the easiness of publication observed on the web, as against a series of technical inflexibilities that guide the production of a print news product, sometimes acts as a distorting factor for the final outcome.

5.3.3.2.3 News presentation

It is extremely rare for an average newspaper reader to buy more than one title in order to compare news coverage on a specific issue. Therefore, the way news is presented to the audience is rarely subjected to comparisons against competition by

¹⁷⁹ Kostis Papadimitriou, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁰ For example, in a mainstream news site, the inauguration of a company's new factory was posted a number of times by a reporter who being pressed by newsroom to contribute with new material, offered the same piece repeatedly, each time altering the date that the event would take place. On the day the actual event took place, the reporter sent his piece after the corporate press release had arrived in the newsroom. While the failure per se in reporting on time could be a misdemeanour, past news pieces in the "Related Articles" section located next to the article, automatically created to accompany the news piece, humiliated the site's editors, since most of these articles were of the same content.

the public itself. Moreover, for most of the audience of the daily press, the news making process remains a mystery. Particularly in the case of Greece, the public lacks even the indirect impression of journalistic practices that academic research on the field is in a position to reveal. This is mainly due to the fact that organised fieldwork until this study has been non-existent.

On the web, things are different. News websites are easily accessed one after the other within seconds, a practice that is intensified when an important story breaks. The example that follows deals with the way mainstream news websites in Greece construct a breaking news story online. The examination of breaking news representation reveals a series of practices that underline a general state of underdevelopment and the limited use of web journalism practices. As shown in the following case study, basic rules of posting news material on the web are ignored and in certain cases what appears on users' screens is quite misleading.

On Friday December 13, 2002, a few minutes before 15:00, a gunman shot at the car of Dora Bakoyianni, a New Democracy MP and Mayor-elect of Athens. In the shooting, the MP's driver was wounded, she escaped with minor injuries, while the man responsible was arrested. The first information about the homicide attempt against Mrs Bakoyianni hit the news a few minutes after 3 o' clock in the afternoon. The MP, expected to take over duties as the Mayor of Athens for the period 2003-2006, is one of the most prominent figures of the Conservative Party and the most popular MP in the country. Radio and television stations interrupted their programmes and started covering the event live through their correspondents. Naturally, in the first minutes after the attack, major pieces of information were missing, such as the seriousness of the driver's condition, the name of the gunman, the reasons behind the attack, etc.¹⁸¹

The Internet reacted fast to cover the event. Analysis of mainstream news websites from 15:00 till 16:30 produced some interesting results on the way major breaking

¹⁸¹ The possibility the attack to be an act of terrorism was initially mentioned by the media, soon to be ruled out, since the gunman was proven to be a psychopath. The incident occurred a few months after the whole case about the terrorist group '17th November' arrests, a case that the MP was heavily involved for many years. Mrs Bakoyianni's first husband, a popular MP of the Left wing was assassinated by the same group, 13 years ago.

news is treated online. *In.gr* posted a news piece containing the basic elements of the incident at 15:05 followed by *E-go.gr* (15:08) and *Reporter.gr* (15:09). In *Flash.gr* a ticker appeared about the same time showing a 5-word headline that told of the attack and said that the MP was safe. A more detailed piece followed half an hour later. *Naftemporiki.gr* posted a short piece at 15:20 that was followed by continual updates.

With the exceptions of *Naftemporiki* and *Reporter.gr*, major news sites adopted the following practice: they presented the major elements of the event relatively quickly, that is a few minutes after its occurrence, marked the time of posting and continued updating the same piece with more information for hours, preserving the originally posted time unchanged. For instance, in its first posting, *In.gr* published six paragraphs with all available information at the time (15:05) and continued updating the same article adding new information or correcting already published material, until a fuller text appeared about an hour later, almost double the size of the original one. In the latter, time was changed to 15:06 to reflect immediacy.¹⁸² No previous postings were kept in the archive or presented as such. On the other hand, with *Flash.gr*, although its front page section was altered to include the event in question, the original three-paragraph piece that contained only the basic elements of the event remained the same in the domestic news section till 16:30.

In the case of *E-go.gr* (the Bobolas Group news portal) the first news piece was posted at 15:08. This time sign remained unaltered in all updates that followed. Five different versions of the news piece that followed till 16:30 and were recorded by our research, appeared enriched with more information. In the first two postings a “breaking news” graphic accompanied the article; a picture of the MP was added in the third, followed by two new versions with photographs from the scene of the attack. In this case, the use of photographs enhanced the look of the web-page that was made up of updated information and photographs from the scene. The whole “package” was marked 15:08. Both in terms of the information presented, as well

¹⁸² Continuous monitoring of the website showed that the time of posting included in the final updated piece did not reflect the actual posting of the article. The latter appeared much later than one minute after the first breaking news piece.

as the photographic material that accompanied it, the news piece was technically a fake. Whilst the first piece that hit the screens 8 minutes after 15:00 contained only a few paragraphs and a graphic image, the fifth update contained new photographs from the site and the latest information, all incorporated in the 15:08 posting. It was impossible only a few minutes after the attack to have all these photographs available and already loaded, whilst information on the condition of the wounded person, the visit of the Minister of Public Order in the hospital, the presence of a District Attorney for the interrogation of the gunman, etc. were not known at that time.

Reporter.gr loaded two pieces, one at 15:09 with basic elements of the event and a second one at 16:14, which was an update of the previous one and marked as such. On the other hand, *Naftemporiki.gr* did a job that could be characterised as closer to a news agency function than any other. The first news piece was posted on 15:20 (around fifteen minutes later from *In.gr*) followed by a series of updates. In the newsroom of *Naftemporiki*, they kept feeding the breaking news section with new articles containing new information on the aftermath of the shooting; updates appeared at 16:05, 16:33, 16:42, 16:58 and 20:23, all marked as such.¹⁸³ Finally, the news piece in *Ert.gr* that was posted much later at 21:14, included an analytic piece on the event, plus two photographs taken from the site.

In almost all occasions, online corrections for style and grammar were evident. Elements of photo-journalism appeared in the case of *Naftemporiki*, *Ert*, and *E-go.gr*. Almost two hours after the incident, *Flash*, *In* and *Reporter* were still carrying archive photographic material.

The examination of news content published online has revealed that the use of inverted pyramid is the dominant writing style in all digital newsrooms included in the present study. Moreover, except from some supplementary material, such as

¹⁸³ It is quite characteristic that whereas in the case of most news websites, all updated information were added in one and only html file with a unique internet address, *Naftemporiki.gr* created different html files that each time a new article appeared, which were posted underneath it as related links.

related links and archive material, innovative spatial organisations are absent from Greek news sites.

This case shows how the so called digital “news package” that includes textual, multimedia and interactive news forms is not regularly met in the local internet news market. Most news executives’ accounts subscribe to the view that multimedia applications are not necessary. As shown later in this chapter, whereas foreign news sites have incorporated the online use of video and audio news in news coverage, in Greece such a practice is a rare exception. Whereas in the case of newspapers analysed in Chapter IV, reference to news content was limited to general observations, in the case of news sites, the description of news presentation reveals certain practices and techniques that are crucial for this analysis. In what follows, a brief description of how news is presented in major news websites leads to general conclusions on the quality and dynamism of online news mechanisms developed in the local Internet market.

When one logs on to the news sites examined in the present study, the homepage news content appearing on the screen¹⁸⁴ differs from one site to another. For instance, in the case of *In.gr*, the core news section does not appear unless the window is scrolled down by the user. This is due to the fact that the site is basically a general task portal that promotes in the upper part of its homepage a thematically structured guide for the Greek Internet. This spatial organisation, which keeps news practically invisible to the hasty user, has been a long standing source of contention in the site’s newsroom, since writers have always considered the news section as a core service. They complain that its value is downplayed in terms of layout. In all other sites, news content fills the homepage, with recent and major news placed in the upper part of the homepage. In *Flash*, *Reporter* and *Naftemporiki* homepages are built in such a manner as to promote in the upper part of the homepage the most important news item or items of the day. Finally, even *Ert.gr*, which has developed a layout that promotes many non-news elements, places in the upper part of the homepage the news item *Ert’s* newsroom considers most important.

In terms of spatial organisation of news, *In*, *Flash* and *Reporter.gr* have adopted a quite similar style of journalistic treatment of news. Separate news sections in the sites' homepages perform different roles: for instance major news items that have been characterised as such by editorial evaluation are presented separately from the news-agency-style news lists that include news postings as they emerge from news processing. Specifically, in the homepage of *In* there is a box marked "Protoselido" (Front Page) that includes major headline news from a series of thematic groups such as domestic affairs, world, sports, science-technology and culture. Selection criteria found in newspapers are those typically applied by news supervisors in the case of the internet as well. The domestic news section of the "Front Page" articles is typically represented by a political report of major importance. Underneath, there is the list of "Most Recent News" articles structured with an order determined by the time of appearance, with most recent news to appear first. Clicking on one of the "Protoselido" headlines opens a new window that includes the full text accompanied by a menu that includes all thematic categories.

The organisation of *In*'s articles comprises simple elements that are situated on the right of the central, full-text article. Below the date and time of posting a headline with a kicker are followed by the central large photograph with its source and caption. Within the text, inner headlines are used to indicate a thematic structure. On the right of the news text, there is a box with three most recent news items, followed by a section that is indicated as "More", which contains articles that explore different angles of the same subject, or past archive material that is indicated as such by the accompanying date. The "More" section is supplemented by links to relevant websites, a discussion forum and an opinion poll that appears on every news window. All texts in the central and left news sections, as well as the menus on the left part are boxed.

Flash.gr's homepage is quite different, since news is the site's predominant product. It contains a central news piece, accompanied by a large photograph,

¹⁸⁴ A 17 inch computer screen was used, with the following display settings: 1,024 by 768 pixels with

followed by a three-column space that is used for major news, in which photographs, placed under the headline, play a primary role. As Lyrintzis has argued, news layout in *Flash.gr* combines also the “philosophy of a newspaper, meaning the promotion of major news that entails also the indication to readers of what news Flash’s news management considers important”.¹⁸⁵

Under the second news space there is the so called “Click” section, where other major or softer news articles are presented in a headline form, from various fields, such as technology, culture, automobile, etc. Each section contains around five news headlines whose hyperlink transfers the reader to a separate page. A thematic menu is placed on the top left of the web page, while the right part of the window is covered by other *Flash’s* user services and other general information links.

The major news story on the top, if clicked, transfers the reader to a separate page where the full news text can be found. A headline and photographic material are placed in the beginning of the article, under the date (there is no indication of posting time; no source indication or captions in the photographs). Inner headlines and some supplementary photographic material, later in the text, are also used to make things easier for the reader. Along with the left central menu that is preserved in all *Flash’s* web pages a second box appears titled “Today’s news” that offers links to other news of the day.

Finally, although Lyrintzis has argued that links are almost always included in the news article presentation, careful observation of news postings in *Flash* reveals that such practice is no longer the rule.

Both *In* and *Flash.gr* separate the core news section from their “page one” news. One of their major differences is that the first posts only the headlines of articles (with time and date), whilst the latter accompanies headlines with short leads and photographic material. The news agency parallelism is more evident in the way news is presented in *In’s* web pages, since *Flash* seems to adopt a more static

large fonts (120%).

approach, giving more emphasis to the article of the day that is preserved in this position for a longer period of time. In both cases, articles do not carry by-lines or other general source indications. However, when newspapers or broadcast media are used as sources, attribution is made within the news text.

Reporter.gr's homepage is richer in terms of information. Although the "front page" technique is used in this case as well, when the site's homepage appears on screen, users can read at least two major news items with headlines, leads and usually a photograph (no source), along with up to 10 other headlines that belong to the "Top News" section which is situated on the right of major stories. On the left, the standard thematic menu appears with particular news fields and stock market data, while above all news elements, stock market visuals are placed, informing on stock and general indices performance. Major news sections usually included three articles with a headline and a summary lead that is taken from the introduction of the given news article. *Reporter's* homepage includes also a section called "The Wire" that contains news by the minute. Also under "Top News" section that deals primarily with macroeconomic developments lies the "Top Business News" box in which corporate news is listed. Underneath "The Wire" is the "Interview" and "Special Analysis" boxes in which a headline, a summary lead and a photograph are the dominant elements. The whole picture is supplemented by separate frames that deal with domestic and foreign newspaper news roundups.

Reporter's articles are headlined and accompanied by a news-agency-style date and time indication. Inner secondary headlines are used to indicate the articles' thematic structure, but by-lines or reference to other supplementary sources are not included in news presentation. Finally, when corporate news is processed, keywords that are defined by the news editor secure an automatic inclusion of archive material, business sector related news, as well as a link to the company page of the specific corporation that the news article refers to. The company page includes all necessary background information about the company, such as members of the board, financial performance, major corporate developments, stock prices, contact number

¹⁸⁵ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit.

and address. This material is produced by *Reporter's* staff and structured as a database. Links to company sites are not offered, since the site's aim is to present to readers the picture *Reporter's* journalists have on the company and not the official side promoted by the corporate website.

In general, *Reporter's* news presentation is a mix of news agency practices (e.g. "The Wire") and news layout techniques observed in the previous two major news websites. As characteristically Nikolopoulos has put it, "...*Reporter* relies on news agency news texts that are formed by newspaper layout techniques."¹⁸⁶ A great difference of *Reporter's* visual news organisation, as against the typical newspaper layout, is the general lack of photographic material. This is explained by the News Director as a decision taken since photographs particularly in the financial and business field are considered as rather dull. "Publishing the portrait of a particular Minister every other day is meaningless...", Nikolopoulos maintains. In general, *Reporter's* layout is not the result of a professional web designer. It is a rather simple makeup of information that targets professionals and specialists, who need news rapidly without visual add-ons. As the News Director puts it, "We prefer to put the emphasis on volume and textual quality of news rather than on layout attractiveness."¹⁸⁷

The site's almost exclusive focus on economic and financial news offers a far richer informative environment for a specialised audience, devoting a large proportion of its homepage to financial tools for monitoring the performance of domestic and foreign financial markets. Moreover, news analysis and interviews with specialists that constitute key elements of *Reporter's* homepage informative package do not appear in the previous two general task news services.

Ert.gr has developed a homepage that seems to downplay the site's new function. Although a major news article (with headline and photograph) is placed in the upper part, the core news content ("News in Headlines"), structured as a list of thematically divided headlines (Domestic, International, Economy, Sports, Culture,

¹⁸⁶ Grigoris Nikolopoulos, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

Technology) remains hidden in the lower part of the web page, requiring a drastic downward navigation by users. Layout arrangements of the upper part of the homepage promote general informative material divided into three major sections. On the left, there are hyperlinks on weather, stock market performance, historic events (happened in the past on the specific day of the year), etc., while on the right, promotion material for *Ert.gr*'s sister broadcast media is posted. In the middle, a horizontally structured news menu appears above and below the major news piece leading the user to the previously mentioned news fields. Underneath, there is a section in which thematic news fields are once again promoted, each accompanied by a graphic and a headline.

News articles on *Ert.gr* appear in a new window that is totally different in terms of layout. It consists of a thematic menu on the left and the full article text on the rest of the page. Under the article's headline there is a time and date indication, with two or three photographs per piece and sub-headlines within the article. No related archive articles or general use of sources can be observed and, whilst photographs are not accompanied by source. Attribution to information sources is included inside the news text when needed.

Naftemporiki.gr relies both on live news and newspaper material. Therefore, the typical major news piece that appears on the top of the site's homepage usually originates from the print edition. It appears under a general sign that indicates the date and time the website's was updated last. Underneath the major piece lies the "Newsroom" box, where short news pieces and updates are posted in a news agency style (the time indication comes first followed by the article's headline). Under the "Newsroom" box comes a two-column section, in which various news fields are presented, each containing a list of articles in a headline form. The specific fields (Economy, Views, Politics, Business, Markets, Shipping, World, The Wall Street Journal (news translated in Greek), Sports, Culture and Media) represent newspaper material. Finally, the *Presspoint.gr* section concludes the homepage. This is a separate site on which corporate press releases are loaded by

¹⁸⁷ Ibit.

the minute; the last postings appear under the site's title. *Presspoint* is linked with the main news service in such a way that press releases are included as relevant material to news articles. Other links represent stock prices, sectoral developments, indices and figures, all unified to enrich the final journalistic output. Finally, visual news representation is limited to scarce photographs on major news. As in the case of *Reporter.gr*, business photographs are considered as less interesting. As Zafolias has put it "We do not have time to look for photographs; we prefer to publish business news as soon as it happens."¹⁸⁸

As became apparent from previous analysis, local internet news has a long way to go in order to reach the paradigm of foreign markets. For the time being, online news does not differentiate a significant extent from news published in print media. Innovative techniques in news processing and representation are not explored even by expensive, high-profile internet news ventures originating from established media.

The electronic environment in which journalism is attempting to establish a new identity is subject to constant change, not only in terms of technology but also as regards the truthfulness of the actual news content. Every day, thousands of news articles published online are transferred to an archive. A great proportion of these, especially in the case of Greece, do not carry with them a unique electronic address in order for users to be able to search archives and log onto past material. Moreover, the effectiveness of archive search mechanisms in local news sites is poor, while the absence of by-lines and interconnectivity between news material raise questions about the usefulness of digital news content as a future reference.

Overall, the key question is to what extent can Internet news be seen as a public record or, to put it practically, as a finalised publication. As the example of the Bakoyianni attack has shown, breaking news practices can give misleading news readings to the public.

¹⁸⁸ Giorgos Zafolias, *Naftemporiki.gr*, op. cit.

5.3.3.2.4 Major news events and local web practices

As in the case of the US, major news events of local as well as international magnitude seem to have acted as a spur to Greek journalists working on the web. News events of international importance, such as the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks in the US or the arrests of 18 people accused of being members of '17 November' terrorist group in July 2002 in Athens, or even local major news moments like the arrival of the Pope in Athens for the first time in 10 centuries (May 2001), provide case studies of how a 24-7 news medium has reacted in Greece.

In the case of 9/11 attacks, news came from television. All major Greek TV stations interrupted their programmes and played the video of the first United Airlines commercial flight crashing on the World Trade Center. In Greek newsrooms, the first news agency report came from Reuters, saying that a plane had crashed on one the WTC buildings according to Reuters' reporters who saw the event on television. In the newsroom of *In.gr*, a new shift had just taken over. As Tombras recalled, "We realised that something serious was happening and rushed to news agency reports to find out more. First we watched it on television and then reports followed".¹⁸⁹ In the early stage of news coverage, *In's* writers started writing of an event that first seemed to be a tragic accident. The incident in which Concorde crashed on a hotel in France came to mind. After the second crash into the WTC, things became more complicated and reports started to arrive about other planes headed to the White House and the Pentagon. At the beginning, contradictory information caused writers to stall, waiting for new reports on what exactly was going on. "Then we waited for every news agency that had something to tell us. BBC and CNN television were on, whilst one member of the staff tried to contact a friend in New York...".¹⁹⁰

The first news article appeared on *In's* homepage a few minutes after the terrorist hit, as soon as the newsroom managed to verify details of the event, such as the

¹⁸⁹ Christos Tombras, *In.gr*, op. cit.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

exact time of the crash, the precise name of the building, etc. At that time, *In's* traffic soared but the system held since, as Tombras explains, it is designed to hold the total number of users in Greece.

In's staffers stayed on duty since they were part of a unique experience, reporting on a news event of global magnitude and seeing their work published a few seconds later. News coverage of the event included a lot of photographic material that was published as soon as it arrived from the agencies. However, no multimedia packages were used to enrich the news product. For the rest of the day, a separate webpage was created exclusively for the event, updated by the minute.

The 9/11 coverage by *Flash.gr* included an element that *In's* executives have chosen to ignore; multimedia. *Flash* news people managed to record video footage from television (State channel NET and CNN), wrote the news piece and posted everything on the web. "We started immediately to write background stories on international terrorism, the character and activities of Islamic groups, and other supplementary material", Lyrintzis recalls.¹⁹¹ Posting video footage on the website was regarded as a success by *Flash's* news management, especially for people who were at their offices at the time of the incident unable to reach a television set.

Flash was not the only Greek website that posted video from the attacks. A couple of kilometers away from *Flash's* newsroom in Kifissias Avenue, in the *Ethnos* newspaper building, the staff of *E-go.gr*, the Bobolas newspaper group news portal, had abolished the usual portal homepage, re-directing traffic to a simple html page and kept posting news as it was coming from news agencies, along with video footage recorded from television channels. The *E-go* newsroom was working closely with the staff of a sister website, *Imerissia.gr*, the website of financial daily with the same name, a Bobolas title as well. The *E-go* news editor, who was about to leave, remained on duty and acted as a liaison between the morning and the afternoon shift. G. Bazaios, editor-in-chief in *Imerissia.gr* remembers: "It was a chaos... at first we were lost, we were trying to understand the situation... After a

¹⁹¹ Vasilis Lyrintzis, *Flash.gr*, op. cit.

while, we called the technical staff and asked for a separate lighter webpage on which news on the event could be posted by the minute.”¹⁹² The whole function of the site was focused on the event: news agency material, newspaper articles scheduled for next day’s edition, video clips from television, photo galleries and links, all were utilised in the two neighbouring newsrooms. This frenzy continued until 04:00 the next day when most journalists left the newsrooms, leaving only those on duty to monitor developments.

On *E-go*, the whole 9/11 coverage remained on a first webpage level, a single html page with a logo that contained everything. News was posted in a news-agency style as it arrived in the newsroom, leading to a long list of postings that needed extensive scrolling down. This format was used by most website newsrooms as an easy way to present breaking news to the public. Today the work done on September 11 and the following day in *E-go*, *Imerissia.gr* and other websites cannot be found by the average user. The need to transform this casual structure and the long news lists to proper news files for the archive was widely neglected. Research in the news archive produces stories from the Afghanistan coverage; by then newsrooms were more organised to deal with large scale breaking news. Moreover, the beginning of war operations was a development that was anticipated by the media.

During those hours, the concern about copyright did not even enter the minds of news executives. The most common practice for those who wish to post news video clips on the web is to copy material from the State channels. As repeatedly argued by web news executives, there is a tacit agreement with ERT on this matter. However, this argument is not shared by *Ert.gr*’s chief who maintains that this is not true. “There is not such a thing”, Stathakopoulos stressed with a sense of bitterness, since his site is no position to utilise in-house television footage. He, himself, had asked for technical upgrading and more telecommunication capacity many months before. Until ERT’s bureaucratic procedures manage to transform his

¹⁹² Giannis Bazaios, Editor-in-Chief at *Imerissia.gr* (2000-2001). Personal interview, 26 April 2002.

request into practice, *Ert.gr* will continue to lack video and audio news, despite the rich multimedia material available through its sister television and radio channels.

The reaction of website personnel on the 9/11 events, although quite similar in terms of workload and stress to that in newspaper newsrooms, carried a unique characteristic. Digital newsroom staffers were in a position to see their work published and move to the next news story. They were gaining ground as against their newspaper colleagues who kept re-writing their stories and extending deadlines for next day's papers. In the Internet news business, the immediate publication offers a sense of satisfaction to journalists who put effort on the process of a product that stands only a few minutes before it is routed for publication. On that day, off-duty personnel rushed in newsrooms to live the historic moments from within. As Lyrintzis put it: "Being part of the breaking news and seeing your work being published a few minutes later, is considered very important in this line of work".¹⁹³

A few months earlier another major event caused strains in Greek news. On May 4, 2001, 13:30 local time, Pope John Paul II arrived in Athens. It was the first visit of a head of the Catholic Church on Greek soil for 10 centuries. Greek media were ready to tackle an event that included the possibility of an official "apology" on behalf of the Vatican for the Crusades of the 14th Century. News websites participated in the live news game with television and radio. The schedule of the visit was tight and was already passed to the media with the relevant "embargo" instructions. Websites were restless. Online coverage started with small stories of the arrival and ended with special webpages that included full coverage of the event. The urge to break the story to the public pushed certain websites to obvious mistakes, while adding information in already published articles. For instance, the number of police forces that were spread throughout Athens to guard the Pope's movements ranged from 4,000 (*In.gr*), to 4,500 (*Flash.gr*), even 7,000 (*Daily.gr*). In a news piece posted at 13:16, *E-one.gr* wrote that the Pope was holding

¹⁹³ More experienced and large scale operations such as *In* and *Flash.gr* have managed to organise the relevant coverage into a section and included in their lists of specials. See *Flash.gr*'s special section

discussions with the Head of the Greek Church. However, this was impossible since the meeting was scheduled at 13:30. *Daily.gr* posted a news piece at 11:10 announcing the arrival of the Pope, which was not scheduled until 11:30. *Flash.gr* included in the same story the arrival of the Pope at the Archbishop's offices and the scheduled visit that was about to take place in the same place. *In.gr* published a news story at 13:31 saying that the Pope had arrived one minute earlier (13:30) at the Archbishop's office. It was physically impossible for a journalist to be there, witness the arrival, call in to report it and in-house staff to have it published on the web, all within a minute. Televisions were on, and pre-prepared articles were kept one click away from being posted.¹⁹⁴

A crucial advantage of news websites is their capability to create special dynamic webpage sections dedicated to on-going coverage of a specific event. In this way, users can log on this sections and monitor the whole story as this it developes. In the case of the Greek terrorist group "17 November" (17N), most major websites created special webpages, on which all developments appeared. The whole story itself was extremely significant, since after almost 30 years of terrorism activity in the country, 18 people were arrested and accused of a long series of deadly attacks. Internet news started dealing with the "17N" story by covering the early moments of an event that was considered as a lucky break for the authorities' hunt of the local terrorist network. According to Greek Police, the beginning of what appears to be the end of the activities of the 17N Greek terrorist group and the uncovering of the whole case begun when Savas Xeros (later known as a leading 17N operational member) was accidentally injured by a partial explosion of a bomb he was planning to plant in Piraeus Port, on Saturday June 29, 2002 at 22:25. At the same time, another coincidence assisted news coverage, offering the platform on which the news story was built. In two Sunday papers on the following day – when the explosion was still not related to 17N activities – information that the Greek Police were close to unravelling the case were published. In another Sunday paper, an interview by the Minister of Public Order, as well as an interview of the US

located at <http://flashfiles.flash.gr/world/Rid27/> (Accessed 25/11/2002). Also *In.gr*'s special section located at <http://www.in.gr/news/september/sept1.htm> (Accessed 25/11/2002).

Ambassador in Athens on State channel NET, included statements on the progress of 17N investigation.

On July 30, *Flash.gr* reported on newspaper publications, while *In.gr*'s piece on Piraeus incident, posted at 11:00 under the headline "Mysterious Explosion in Piraeus Port", included also information from the Sunday papers. *In.gr*'s articles until Monday night (July 1) did not connect the incident with the "17N" group. It was only the following morning (July 2) in a piece posted at 08:14, that *In* reported on possible links with the terrorist group, using information published in the sister *Vima* newspaper. In a piece posted in the previous day, *Flash.gr* had already published a statement by the Chief of Police assuming connections of 17N with the Piraeus incident.

In the months that followed, *Flash* and *In.gr* and other major local news websites covered the on-going story through special sections created for this purpose on which new information on the case was posted. A comparison between the two websites does not reveal any major differences. However, as appears from updates and spatial organisation of information, *In.gr* seems more organised in terms of content management and the provision of updated information, while *Flash.gr* has a competitive advantage in organising and presenting background information on terrorism, the ideological background and related issues that assist the reader to grasp the broader picture of the case. Finally, while *In*'s roundup texts that go with regular news pieces are written exclusively for the specials sections, *Flash*'s equivalent articles are chosen from the daily flow of information. Therefore, they do not really hold as roundups, whilst in some cases they are outdated; for instance, they express reservations about the accuracy of information that has been confirmed on a later stage.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Since these online stories were published on the spot and are quite different from those archived at the end of the day, relevant print-outs are included in the Appendix.

¹⁹⁵ For instance, see <http://www.in.gr/news/17n> for *In*'s section, or <http://newwar.flash.gr> at *Flash.gr*.

Table 5.1 - "17N" Special online news section

	<i>In.gr</i>	<i>Flash.gr</i>
Location	http://www.in.gr/news/17n/	http://newwar.flash/
Appearance on homepage	No	Yes (included in main menu)
Access	Through the 'Greece' news page. Then click on 'Specials'	Directly from the site's homepage
Content		
Major elements	Major <i>In.gr</i> headlines from June 30 th till November 11 th Developments per day as posted on <i>In.gr</i> Profiles of the accused and their official statements copied from the press (source: newspaper <i>Ta Nea</i>) Related articles on anti-terrorist law and the chronicle of the attacks throughout time	Profiles of the accused (based on outdated info however) as well as their official statements, copied from the press (source: newspaper <i>Eleftherotypia</i>) A brief chronicle of the events Profiles of major players Other related information, such as ideological background of terrorism, a lexicon of media terminology, etc.
Reference to supplementary sources used	Yes	Sometimes
'Front page' techniques	No (only a very brief introduction)	Yes (8 major news items are promoted as major pieces)
By-lines	No	No
News-agency style reporting	Yes	No
Updates always constitute separate news pieces	No	No
Indication of further updates on published pieces	Yes (not always clearly indicated)	No
Photographic material	Yes	Yes
Multimedia	No	No
Interactivity		
Opinion polls with relevant results	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Discussion forums	Yes	Yes, but not operational

Note: Both sites were accessed and analysed in September 2002. A re-visit on 26/12/2002 found no major alterations.

Both websites tackled selected news subjects as research projects in various fields of domestic as well as international interest. Each topic was explored through different articles, interviews and photographic material and included in a general index. However common problems of access can be observed, such as in the case of *In.gr*, where in the special on "9/11 US attacks", all hyperlinks of the news chronicle of the event are inoperative.

These periods of stressful news production are crucial for the further development of a new medium that functions with the strain of a news agency and at the same time targets users for whom competition is a “click” away. Problems in the news production processes have never ceased to appear, whilst weaknesses in archive management are commonly observed in most cases. Handling news in a period of limited availability in personnel and funding entails many different techniques from the early months of operation for both *Flash* and *In.gr* as well as for smaller competitors.

5.3.3.2.5 News analysis and commentary

Whereas, news research projects were primarily tackled in the special sections of the websites, news commentary and in-depth analyses, which constitute a crucial field of the traditional journalistic activity and a competitive advantage of newspapers, are generally absent from local Internet news sites. This phenomenon can be attributed to a series of reasons:

- First, in the general framework of a weak national digital culture, Internet news ventures preferred not to be considered as a medium that would actively participate to the definition of the daily news agenda. They chose to record it, rather than put it in context.
- Second, the extreme politicisation of Athens daily newspapers and subsequently Greek journalism whose representatives are treated with skepticism by the public could lead expensive online projects to be easily discredited in the eyes of the public.¹⁹⁶
- Third, the bulk of newsroom personnel was not recruited from the ranks of experienced journalists; therefore, very few could produce synthetic pieces and advanced news analysis on current affairs.

¹⁹⁶ A typical example is elections site *Ekloges.gr* [Elections] that keeps promoting the views of a New Democracy political consultant, thus ideologically categorising it in the eyes of the public in the general Centre-Right Wing, as against others, such as *Greekelections.com*, that had accommodated views from various political parties, preserving ideological independence and thus attracting audience of all political aspirations.

- Fourth, the strategic approach to building web news mechanisms as a service similar to that fostered by news agencies, promoted the breaking news function as the dominant product.

Therefore, in terms of analysing and commenting on the daily agenda, the bulk of local news websites continue to fall behind. Very few examples of informed opinions, analyses and commentary pieces can be found in the Greek Internet that could be considered as a local equivalent of foreign ventures such as *Breakingviews.com* in the UK. In this respect, *I-note.gr* was one of these exceptions.¹⁹⁷

I-note.gr was the first daily Internet edition in Greece that challenged the news agenda of domestic and international politics, economics and business. It was launched on April 2000 and operated until November 2001, when it was merged with its parent web venture *Economics.gr*. In its present form, its content was transformed into a daily news analysis service (called "I-noteReport") that continues to analyse and comment on economic and political development. In its 585-day life, *I-note.gr* produced 390 editions, publishing 1,386 news articles, produced by 21 journalists who constituted the pool of online contributors.¹⁹⁸

Editorial independence was a key reason behind the materialisation of this project. According to Spyros Vretos, the site's chief-editor during the period of operation, "The creation of *I-note* seemed to be an idea whose time had come: in Greece, newspapers have been going through a long period of decline, while television (and, to a lesser extent, radio) is increasingly dominated by the human interest story format and the atmosphere of populism. This journalistic climate is reinforced by several factors, such as the fact that many publishers are (thought to be) associated either with political parties or entrepreneurs".¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ *I-note.gr* is owned by *Allmedia Communications S.A.* The site ceased operations in November 2001.

¹⁹⁸ See closure piece of *I-note.gr*, located on http://www.inote.gr/?op=new_com&show_com=0&comid=1456. Accessed 20/4/2002.

¹⁹⁹ A situation often referred to as '*diaplekomena*', echoing the Italian term '*tangentopoli*'. Spyros Vretos, editor-in-chief of *I-note.gr* (2000-2001). Personal interview, 5 May 2000.

According to Vretos, additional reasons for proceeding with this project could be traced within the journalistic profession itself. He says:

...an apparently large number of journalists tend to be more interested in the promotion of their own public image, rather than news reporting, and much less in providing in-depth analysis. Accordingly, a serious problem has arisen: how to identify commentators who are distanced from these 'interwoven interests' and thus considered independent or non-partisan? Further aggravation was caused by the fact that politicians, entrepreneurs and journalists themselves were expected to form a fair share of *i-note*'s target audience, at least initially.²⁰⁰

The presentation of the "right mixture" of views has always been the primary goal of *I-note*. Its policy was to carefully solicit contributions. It was also expected that public debate – a formative element of the concept behind this website – would "flare up" on its electronic pages, ensuring the widest possible exchange of informed and structured opinions. In that case, according to Vretos, "...it would eventually capture an audience much wider than that of the 'chatterati', drawing in commentators who usually keep their views to themselves. Otherwise, it would only become evident that the Greek market was not ready for such a venture, in which case it will have to be attempted again later". As events proved, not only was the Greek market not ready for journalistic innovation, but also advertisers did not support the new venture. *I-note*'s problems were: first, that the company was too weak to market the new product effectively; second, that its launch coincided with the stock market decline that was deteriorated during 2001; third, the costs entailed in the production of original daily commentary and analysis exclusively for the web turned out to be higher than expected; and, finally, that in some occasions, its owner reacted negatively when critical pieces on political and economic figures were posted online.

Despite its failure as a business, the short online life of *I-note* was a significant and interesting attempt at producing independent journalism online in Greece.

²⁰⁰ Spyros Vretos, op. cit.

5.3.3.3 Multimedia & Interactivity

CNN.com and other mainstream news sites have mastered multimedia in the US market. Audio and video clips are available to users all over the world, accompanying every major news story posted online. In the UK, in *FT.com*, no multimedia content has ever reached the audience. In 2001, a 150,000 pound project on web-based radio and TV production that would lead to audiovisual footage syndication failed to be materialised, due to poor market conditions.²⁰¹

Unlike the case of FT's website, *BBC Online* has managed to utilize the resources of the parent corporation, constituting one of the best examples of Internet news on a global basis. The site's holistic approach to web news production and the organisation's traditional credibility have earned users' respect. According to Nielsen/NetRatings research data, *News.bbc.co.uk* is the most popular source for news and information in the UK, attracting an average of 2 million visitors per month.²⁰²

The Greek equivalent, *Ert.gr*, still remains heavily affected by the organisational weaknesses of the parent corporation. The editor's belief in the necessity of video and audio material for the enrichment of the final online news product cannot be satisfied due to the absence of a central audiovisual management system that *Ert.gr* could have access to. Also bureaucratic processes act as a barrier towards technical upgrading of the site's leased lines and the utilisation of more bandwidth in order multimedia applications to be offered to users. Finally, the parent organisation's historic audiovisual archive, which is situated in a separate building in another part of the city, is not used by *Ert.gr*'s newsroom, since it is not digitized and cannot be accessed online.

While *Ert.gr*'s online philosophy has at least wanted to include multimedia in news production from the outset, private ventures seem to consider it as an element of a

²⁰¹ Gibson, O. (2001) 'FT pulls plug on online broadcasting project', *Guardian Unlimited*, December 17. Available: <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newmedia/story/0,7496,618991,00.html> (Accessed 19/12/2001).

²⁰² Nielsen/NetRatings Press Release 'News.bbc.co.uk leads the UK's online news sector', 14th November 2002. Available: www.nielsen-netratings.com (Accessed 20/11/2002).

rather minor importance for their daily news processing. Tombras (*In.gr*) argues that the lack of multimedia applications was a technical as well as journalistic decision made from the beginning. However, he accepts that they would use such a practice if technically available. In *Reporter.gr*, multimedia news was never examined as an option, since it is considered, as in the case of photographs, irrelevant to the final product, which is financial news.

As argued, multimedia applications are so sporadically found in local news websites that their existence does not hold as a generalized practice. *In.gr* does not deal with it at all, whilst *Flash.gr* along with other sites such as *E-go.gr* have used video only in the 9/11 US attacks coverage. In early 2003, *Alphaworld.gr*, the Alpha TV site posted a 3-part series interview of a "17N" member, who was in jail and was extensively promoted as a journalistic scoop by the television station. Finally, *Naftemporiki.gr*, although currently not involved in the production of multimedia material, has started implementing plans for the creation of a multimedia studio in the premises of the site's newsroom that will be used in the future for the development of video and audio news material.

As previously argued, multimedia applications and new web layout formats do not suffice for Internet to be considered as a new medium whose distinct characteristics can influence the way the public read the news. The foreign paradigm however shows that the integration of ordinary journalistic texts with multimedia content into one unified news experience requires a strategic approach to digital content that needs to be explored by all Internet news players that wish to remain operative.²⁰³

In Greece, the paradigm of a new kind of journalism practiced by multi-skilled, sophisticated professionals who write and edit textual as well as audiovisual material is still a theoretical concept that requires dedicated people and large budgets. The plan for the materialisation of such a concept could use as primary

²⁰³ For the spatial organisation of texts and multimedia content, see Outing, S. (2002) 'Don't Hide Your Multimedia Content!', *EditorandPublisher.com*. September 11. Available: <http://www.editorandpublisher.com>

basis a synthesis of advanced utilisation of human resources, innovative thinking, as well as the implementation of in-house rules and guidelines that originate from a deep respect of journalism's social responsibility.

Moreover, when it comes to online or web-journalism, interactivity is of paramount importance. As Stone (2002), a member of the Poynter Institute has argued, interactivity is one of the keys for improving media credibility.²⁰⁴ The users' direct access to website newsrooms is considered as a means of empowering the public appeal of the new medium. It has the potential to enhance people's sense of participation and to encourage professional accountability.

Serious news ventures abroad have implemented various interactive techniques that allow users to comment on news articles posted online. In certain cases, comments are visible under the original journalistic piece, or are kept one click away in separate sections. For instance, hyper-linked by-lines offer the public a means of responding to a news report or commentary article directly to the email inbox of the respective journalist. This allows users to applaud or criticize a journalism product that has attracted their interest.

In a study of English-language web newspapers in Asia, Massey and Levy (1999) used an approach developed by C. Heeter that attempts to put together various definitions of interactivity that have been implemented to new communication technologies.²⁰⁵ In this framework, a series of dimensions are examined, five of which were chosen by Massey and Levy as relevant to online journalism. These are: "Complexity of Choice Available" (range of content topics that web journalism makes available to users), "Responsiveness to the User" (examined as the potentiality to respond to users or the extent to which newsroom email links are

editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/features_columns/article_display.jsp?vnu_content.id=1676531. Accessed 17/9/2002.

²⁰⁴ Stone, M. (2002) 'Interactivity and Transparency', *Poynter.org*. February 1. Available: <http://www.poynter.org/ethicssays/stone.htm> (Accessed 5/2/2002).

²⁰⁵ Massey, B. and Levy, M. (1999) 'Interactive' Online Journalism at English-Language Web Newspapers in Asia'. *Gazette*, vol 61(6): 523-538, Sage Publications. Carrie Heeter's work titled 'Implications of New Interactive Technologies for Conceptualizing Communication' is included in

offered for public use), "Ease of Adding Information to the System" (empowering readers' asynchronous, one-to-many communication), "Facilitation of Interpersonal Communication" (the site's role as a conduit for readers to carry one-to-one interaction) and, finally, "Immediacy of Content" (the extent to which news websites can offer their users "the most immediately available information").²⁰⁶

It could be argued that in the previous analysis, the use of such criteria as "immediacy of content" and "complexity of choice", meaning respectively the ability for breaking news on time and the offer of news content diversity to readers, do not offer much in the whole discussion of interactivity. On the contrary, these criteria mix two of the general aspects of news media with the interactive function of the Internet, which as a unique characteristic supports its distinction as an innovative news medium. According to King (1998), the term "interactivity" should primarily be considered as "...two-way communication between news producers and consumers" and less as a process of "...empowering users with additional control over the sequence in which information is presented to them".²⁰⁷ King has argued that the latter notion "...is flawed in at least three fundamental ways: first, it confuses action with interaction. Second, ... [it] does not change the relationship of the user to the material or the organisation. Third, ... [it] assumes that users want control over the sequencing of their material and that giving them that control is somehow empowering".²⁰⁸

As regards interactivity as a two-way communication between online journalists and users, King, based on research evidence produced at the end of the 1990s, argued that online media, although technically being in a position to foster such an option, they had done very little to facilitate communication of users with newsroom staff.²⁰⁹

Jerry L. Salvaggio and Jennings Bryant (eds) (1989) *Media Use in the Information Age: Emerging Patterns of Adoption and Consumer Use*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum (pp. 217-35).

²⁰⁶ Massey, B. and Levy, M., 1999, op. cit., particularly pp. 526-527.

²⁰⁷ King, E. (1998) 'Redefining Relationships: Interactivity Between News Producers and Consumers', *Convergence*, vol 4, no. 4 (pp. 26-32).

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁰⁹ Elliot King refers to two separate studies that produced evidence that journalists working in online media are in a position to respond more readily to reader feedback than their colleagues working in

For the purposes of this study, and given the general state of semi-development that characterizes the Greek online news market, a series of criteria will be used to evaluate interactivity according to King's framework. However, certain elements of the Massey and Levy's theory will be also utilized, such as the extent to which newsroom email links are offered for public use, the empowering of readers' one-to-many communication as well as the sites' role as conduits for readers to carry one-to-one interaction. Moreover, a series of additional criteria are applied, which although they may seem simplistic, are considered necessary for the complete understanding of the level of development of online journalism in Greece. These correspond to the existence of elementary "user reception" techniques that could encourage the reader's participation since they are designed to provide information on the identity of the online establishment per se, as well as to secure confidentiality of user's personal information posted online.

In order to examine Greek news websites against this theoretical framework, a series of online applications are examined that constitute a particular reflection of the user-medium level of interaction suggested in the above. The following Table 5.2 presents the efforts local online media have made towards the provision of interactive as well as simple informative "reception" means to their users. As becomes apparent from the Table, the "About Us" section is not always found in local news websites, whilst Disclaimers are absent in at least one case. All news websites examined (except *Ert.gr*) foster "My Site" services, with which users can organize homepage content according to their own wishes and can select certain types of news articles they wish to appear first. Advanced user services, such as email accounts and web-page hosting, are offered only by *In.gr* in the general framework of its profile as a portal. Newsletters via email are offered by all sites with the exception of *Flash.gr*, while *Naftemporiki.gr* is the only news site that provides alerts on major news. *In.gr* is the only site that does not offer a newsroom direct email access (the *info@in.gr* option is offered instead), while in none of the

traditional print or broadcast media. However, as argued, online media "have not fully capitalised on their ability to change the relationship between news producers and consumers." See King E., 1998, op. cit., p. 26.

above have hyper-linked by-lines being introduced, since by-lines are not in general posted. *In* and *Flash.gr* include opinion polls on a regular basis with thousands of users participating each time a new subject is posted. All sites, with the exception of the financial *Reporter.gr*, have created discussion forums, although in the case of *Flash.gr*, it appears to be inactive.

Table 5.2

"Interactivity": building confidence and opening gateways

	<i>In.gr</i>	<i>Flash.gr</i>	<i>Ert.gr</i>	<i>Reporter.gr</i>	<i>Naftemporiki.gr</i>
Reception services					
'About Us' section	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Disclaimer / Confidentiality	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Personalised services					
'My Site' webpage format and personalised news	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
User services (email, webpage hosting, etc.)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Newsletter service (headlines)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breaking news alerts	No	No	No	No	Yes
Interactivity (two-way journalist-user facilities)					
Newsroom Direct E-mail links	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hyperlinked by-lines	No	No	No	No	No
Interactivity (two-way user-to-user facilities)					
Discussion Forum / Chat	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Opinion polls	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Users' comments attached to news articles	No	No	No	No	No
Accommodating users' special information requests (ad hoc news service)	No	No	No	Yes	No

Note: the above evaluation occurred in the period November-December 2002

In all sites there is no facility offered to users who wish to comment on specific articles and none of the comments that are posted centrally appear on screen. Finally, *Reporter.gr* is the only site that, mainly due to its character, has created a special service through which users' requests on information are accommodated on an ad hoc basis.

Generally, as research has shown, local news sites do not encourage comments on news pieces expressed by readers and, when this happens, emails are answered privately. The only option that is available in most sites is discussion forums that can be characterised as a rather "closed" environment. Most users do not see them unless they register and are willing to talk online. All news executives declare that

readers' emails are answered. However, there is no way to verify the truthfulness of this assertion. As stated, users' queries have to do more with issues associated with navigation and technical problems rather than as regards news content itself.

Moreover, it could be argued that online elements characterised simplistically as 'user reception' techniques can be generally found in the bulk of local news sites. Also present are applications that allow feedback from users. However, encouraging users' active participation is something that Greek news sites seem to refrain from. A different strategy can be seen in the case of *Ert.gr*. As Stathakopoulos argues, "We have received criticism in our forums... it is not something bad. We need criticism as well as positive comments. Either way, we have made plans to create a space next to news articles for the audience to post their comments. This could be a step further towards reaching the real character of the news medium".²¹⁰

5.3.3.4 Online ethics and practices

Generally, in the digital news world, the strategy on which the creation and operation of news sites is based, the status of the professionals, as well as the presiding online practices and routines have affected the ways news is produced and presented to the audience.

In this changing online environment, ethical dilemmas are developing as rapidly as technology itself. The new eBusiness environment calls for the examination of ethical issues in the use of technology in general, the implementation of IT in businesses, the development of the Internet, eBusiness commercial platforms and finally, as regards the impact of technological advantages on society.²¹¹

The social significance of journalism puts online news media in the spotlight. New journalism practices cause new considerations in terms of their administration and

²¹⁰ Christos Stathakopoulos, *Ert.gr*, op. cit.

²¹¹ For a preliminary examination of these fields, see DeGeorge, R. (2002) 'Ethical Issues in Information Technology', in Bowie, E. N. (ed.) *Business Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

ethical basis.²¹² For instance, various links that accompany online news material and lead users to a website of a third party have caused discussion as regards the evaluation of balance and fairness in the new digital news environment. Moreover, news sites' 24-7 operation and their quest for breaking news and information immediacy require a re-consideration of the traditional discussion of accuracy of news readings. As quite characteristically Nikolopoulos of *Reporter.gr* has put it, "...one is the enemy of the other".²¹³

On the other hand, since mistakes are unavoidable online, how should corrections be made clear to users? Posting corrections on already published material as against posting separate corrected or updated news articles defined as such is a major issue of practical as well as moral importance.

Similarly, drawing boundaries between news content and sponsors and advertisers was always a difficult task in journalism; this is also the case for online news. In the US, the *American Society of Magazine Editors* has issued specific guidelines for digital media, calling for clear distinctions between editorial and advertising content. This has enhanced discussion already undertaken by commentators and analysts in the field.²¹⁴

No matter how spatially distinct editorial and advertising may be, distortions on news content may happen online as easily as they can occur in the print world. For instance, owner's intervention on content may become absolute and more direct, since on the web, content control is continuous, whilst corrections can easily be applied even after publication. In a well-known online medium in Greece, owned

²¹² For instance see Byrd, J. (1999) 'Online journalism ethics: a new frontier', *Editor*, November issue. Online edition of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). Available: <http://www.asne.org/kiosk/editor/november/byrd.htm> (Accessed 29/9/1999).

²¹³ Grigoris Nikolopoulos, *Reporter.gr*, op. cit.

²¹⁴ See ASME's *Guidelines for Editors and Publishers 2002*. Available in http://asme.magazine.org/guidelines/new_media.html (Accessed 21/11/2002). Also Berry, J. (1997) 'The Ethics of Online Publishing', *Webreview.com*, October 3. Available: <http://webreview.com/pub/97/10/3/feature/ethics.html> (Accessed 4/10/1999). Also Lasica, J. D. (1997) 'Preserving Old Ethics in a New Medium', *American Journalism Review*, December. Available at <http://ajr.newslink.org/ajrjd24.html> (Accessed 29/9/1999), Lynch, D. (1998) 'Without a Rulebook', *American Journalism Review*, January/ February (available at <http://ajr.newslink.org/ajrlynch.html> - Accessed 29/9/1999) and Black, J. (1998) 'Journalism Nethics', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 4 (pp.10-17).

by a print title, the owner-publisher considered the Internet as a new way of keeping sponsors and advertisers satisfied. He kept feeding journalists with press conference material that was accompanied by specific instructions of how to handle the articles. His aim was to please the business community not only by publishing positive articles of extensive length (since restrictions of space no longer exist on the web), but also by offering them immediate publication.

This practice has its origins not only in the immediacy of publication Internet can offer. It stems also from the certain media owner's impression that, at least for the time being, the new medium is somehow of lesser importance in terms of credibility and therefore could be used for promotional purposes. On the other hand, journalists employed in the print title, who at the same time had undertaken online tasks, although annoyed by this practice, chose not to react, since for them feeding the website was assigned as a secondary job with no extra pay. In their minds, the respect they felt for their primary job was not shared in the case of online writing, something that was thought as justifiable since no separate employment agreement was arranged for the online medium and their by-lines were never posted online.

Online ethics constitute already a discussion topic in mature online news markets. In August 2000 in Phoenix, Arizona at a convention of the *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* (AEJMC) a survey called "Online Media Ethics: A Survey of U.S. Daily Newspaper Editors" was presented.²¹⁵ Research focused on online journalistic practices and techniques as well as on ethical issues. The survey concluded that:

...anecdotal evidence indicates that few new media outlets have formalized ethics protocols built to deal with the issues of online publishing.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ The survey was conducted by M. David Arant, University of Memphis and Janna Quitney Anderson, Elon College. Available at <http://www.elon.edu/andersj/onlinesurvey.html> (Accessed 20/12/2002).

²¹⁶ 'Online Media Ethics: A Survey of US Newspaper Editors'. Available at <http://www.elon.edu/andersj/onlinesurvey.html> (Accessed 20/12/2002).

In the AEJMC Survey, editors were asked to make comparisons between standards of practice in traditional print media and those practiced in the online environment. Almost all editors shared the belief that publishing online or in print should cause no differentiation in terms of journalism ethics and standards. However, around half of editors argued that the

...ability to publish information immediately online has led to an erosion of the standards of verification for online publication versus the print version.²¹⁷

In the AEJMC Survey, formal corrections policy was found only in 36% of online establishments.²¹⁸ In general, rewriting news after publication is a routine practice in most major as well as smaller news websites.²¹⁹ However, there are cases such as *Reuters.com* that post corrections on a regular basis. *WashingtonPost.com*, *NYTimes.com* and *ChicagoTribune.com*, for example, have created 'Corrections Pages' to include corrected articles published in their print editions.²²⁰ An interesting example was found in *Forbes.com*, when an article on Walt Disney Co. was corrected and re-posted online accompanied by three asterisks that indicated what was mistakenly written in the previous version. The asterisks pointed to three paragraphs included after the end of the main text explaining errors and denial statements from the company in question.²²¹ In *CNET.com*'s 'Corrections' section the relevant policy is clearly explained as follows:

...it is our policy to always correct errors when they occur and to notify readers of changes to our content. We classify editorial changes as corrections, clarifications, or updates. A *correction* rights a factual error. A *clarification* adjusts statements that were not factually incorrect but may have been unclear or misleading. An *update*

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ According to the Survey, "of those who have a policy, 23 percent run corrections after publishing mistakes; 17 percent that they replace the incorrect story with a new, corrected version; 57 percent that they run a correction and replace the incorrect story with a new, corrected version; and 2 percent indicated another option. One respondent reported that the online edition runs corrections in a specified place and also inserts the correction into the original story, indicating it is a correction."

²¹⁹ A characteristic example of a CNN/Money story on one of the Microsoft trials that suffered a series of 'writethroughs' is presented in <http://slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=02/05/08/1924240> (Accessed 10/5/2002). Also,

²²⁰ Corrections pages can be found at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/print/corrections/>, <http://www.nytimes.com/corrections.html>, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/corrections/>. Also <http://www.reuters.com/additionalarticleshome.jhtml?type=corrections&page=firstpage&count=25>. (All accessed 23/11/2002).

²²¹ See http://www.forbes.com/2002/11/13/cx_cd_1113disney.html (Accessed 14/11/2002).

revises content with information not available when the story was originally published.²²²

No such official corrections policy can be found in Greek news websites, since, the so called “writethrough” is a common practice in local online news media. As the examination of Bakoyianni attack and 9/11 events online coverage has indicated, articles are continuously rewritten after they have been published, especially in the case of follow ups of a breaking news story.

In our research, all news executives admit that errors continuously occur and thus that correction is a daily and continuous practice. Most of them do not acknowledge serious factual errors, only those of a grammatical or spelling nature. In *In.gr* an occasional “update” sign appears not indicated as a correction, since no relevant explanation is included to point to the error. Corrections occur not only in order to replace errors in spelling or grammar but also in response to editors’ demands for necessary textual changes. This is a result of the relative independence offered to writers to treat articles all the way according to their judgement, mainly for reasons of immediacy. Naturally, in many cases shift-editors’ interventions had a reactive character, since they monitored articles after publication. In *Reporter.gr* corrections are a daily routine. In this case, also, no indication of such an action is posted online. In general, posting an ‘update’ sign that accompanies the new article is the most popular way of correcting errors and is not declared as such. In *Flash* and *Ert.gr* no corrections’ indication has ever been published, although “writethroughs” are a routine newsroom practice.

In mid-April 2001, Dan Fisher, a former newspaperman and *MSN’s MoneyCentral* editor-in-chief, was appointed at *MSNBC.com* as the first Online Ombudsman in the history of Internet news. Comments from the site’s editor-in-chief accompanied the new initiative that aimed at subjecting staff to “...a substantive feedback in order to critique our reporting”.²²³ In the ‘MSNBC Ombudsman’ page it wrote:

²²² See <http://www.cnet.com/corrections/0-850372.html> (Accessed 23/12/2002).

²²³ *MSNBC.com’s* editor-in-chief Merrill Brown’s words to Karim Mostafa, an *Editorand Publisher.com* writer. Article available at <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/ephome/news/newsthm/stories/042501n7.htm> (Accessed 9/5/2001).

MSNBC.com's Ombudsman has a dual mission: to take stock of the quality of our journalism via regular columns and to act as an advocate for readers, soliciting your comments in chats and e-mail about the way MSNBC.com reports the news.²²⁴

Needless to say, as in the case of newspapers, online establishments in the Greek market do not bother dealing with such complex issues. It is not a hyperbole to argue that the bulk of Greek editors and some media academics are not familiar with the concept itself. Moreover, the practice of publishing corrections as regards errors included in news articles is scarcely met in the press, since editors prefer to risk their credibility rather than admit errors by writing about them.

Overall, it is obvious that Internet publications leave room for continual alterations, which in many occasions are not defined as such. Research on Greek news websites has revealed that a great proportion of corrections and accuracy checking is done online, after journalistic pieces have been published. This phenomenon may force users to wonder: Is there such a thing as a finalized publication (in traditional media terms)? Put another way, can we consider the Internet as a public record?

The dynamism of the medium should not be a license to make mistakes (or repetitive corrections) that may lead to mis-readings on behalf of the audience.²²⁵

5.4 CONCLUSION

A study by Quinn & Trench (2002) in the framework of the MUDIA Project²²⁶ has concluded that little evidence can be found in European websites that point to the emergence of a "new paradigm" in online news. As argued

²²⁴ Available on 24/9/2001 at: http://www.msnbc.com/news/ombudsman_front.asp?0dm=C2070. Under this motto, a series of Ombudsman articles were posted on style, the role of the media, the use of online surveys and news credibility. Today, this page no longer exists on *MSNBC.com*, whilst attempts to locate these articles via *MSNBC's* "search" mechanisms produced no results (For an old MSNBC Ombudsman webpage see Appendix).

²²⁵ Kamaras, D. (2002) 'Web journalism, digital content and the audience'. Paper delivered at the 2nd International Congress of Sociology, *Sociology: A Lesson on Freedom*, held in Thessaloniki, 8-10 November 2002 - Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

²²⁶ MUDIA = Multimedia Content in the Digital Age.

...the traditional communication model of professional journalism as a form of authoritative story-telling shows considerable durability.²²⁷

Although success stories do exist in Europe and the US, for the bulk of online news players the utilisation of advanced applications and techniques in news production as well as in the field of journalists/audience interaction remains a goal to be accomplished. In Greece, traditional methodology in news delivery is still the norm in online newsrooms, whilst news processing is based on techniques that have emerged from the print world (e.g. inverted-pyramid writing style, linear news presentation, etc.). Moreover, interactivity remains poor, while multimedia applications and innovative non-linear news presentation are at an early stage of development.

Generally, in the Greek market, the public's news digital experience was not a thrilling one. Significant weaknesses that emerge from the traditional distortions of the journalistic profession and from Internet news strategies adopted by major online establishments have kept the market in a status of semi-development. In the light of previous discussion and analysis, these weaknesses can be categorised as follows:

- a weak understanding of the specificities and the technical abilities of the Internet as a distinct medium;
- heavy reliance for in-house staffing on young, cheap personnel, which, although familiar with the Internet, proved rather inexperienced as regards news reporting;
- too much reliance on external contributors, which has a dual effect: first, external reporters do not consider web reporting as their first priority and, second, internal staff are more occupied in gathering material from externals,

²²⁷ In the framework of the MUDIA Project, Gary Quinn and Brian Trench have performed a "Prognostic study of media content usage", as part of "Workpackage 1: Studies defining the wider context for media innovation." It was published July 2002. Available: www.mudia.org (Accessed 20/11/2002).

thus having a supporting role to news making, rather than act as producers of original content;

- a general disregard of the value of multimedia and interactive services, due to poor national telecommunications infrastructure as well as due to a lack of production facilities and multi-skilled human resources on audio and video production;
- heavy reliance on 'shareware news', or domestic news agency news material, a practice that has eroded the potential for synthetic and analytical news articles; and
- lack of ethical considerations, such as official policies in corrections and news updates.

In the Greek market, news production and presentation strategies remain largely a product of traditional thinking. Internet news executives seem to promote the philosophy either of the "electronic newspaper" or of the B2C-type, free-of-charge "news agency". These strategies do not take into account the digital nature of the New Medium and lead to stagnation of the Internet news market.

Epilogue: future challenges...

Focusing on problems and negative phenomena should by no means be seen as an element of pessimism for the future of Greek journalism and the news media. Surely, in the years to come, spectacular changes are about to happen in the ways news is delivered to the public. Hopefully, people will continue to seek intermediaries who will offer interpretations and analyses of current events, views and policies. The extent to which journalists will continue to play this role in the future depends on their own ability to adapt to the characteristics of the new digital environment.

... for journalism and news workers

In the Internet age, publication is one click away. But this is not something that per se could justify the claim for a news revolution. What is really revolutionary is that, nowadays, publication is not anymore a news organisation's exclusive privilege. A few years after the explosion of the dot-com news business, individual journalists who are in a position to offer sophisticated and occasionally exclusive content to readers-users are creating personal websites, which host articles that are not found in the mainstream media. These websites, known as "web-logs" were extensively utilised by war correspondents during the 2003 Iraq war, who found a way to publish their experiences and views about developments at large.¹ At this point, editorial obligations and restrictions put upon them by the media they work for were partially circumvented by the strong emotions they felt, as eye witnesses of war, as well as by their ability per se to publish them.

The rapid proliferation of web-logs should not be seen as an accidental journalism. It belongs to the core of the digital era's effect on the profession. As Fleming (2000) has argued, in the digital age, "...journalists will be better equipped to access alternative interpretations of events and information, which would allow audiences

¹ See for instance, <http://www.kevinsites.net/> (visited last 20/9/03).

the opportunity to arrive at their own interpretation, rather than a manipulated one... Perhaps more importantly, computers will also provide them with a way to publish their findings to a reasonably large audience free from the political constraints of traditional publishing".²

This example of a partial journalistic revolution offers a small hint of what is to follow. The Internet, besides being an easy way to publish, primarily functions as an empowerment mechanism for professionals. Certain elements, such as journalism training on digital techniques, a personal urge towards the new and the increasing interest in exploring the challenges of the new digital media scene may move things further in this direction.

The potential power of web-journalism is not really attached to technology or commercialism. It relies largely on the positive influence of the digital age on journalists' social duties and responsibilities and their professional empowerment in terms of knowledge and expertise. The Internet will allow journalists to enrich the public's view of the world, since it will reveal aspects that remain suppressed by those who exert influence on news content. As Meyer (1991) has argued:

The underlying theme in most modern criticism of journalism is that the media are too easily dominated by powerful politicians and their skilful 'spin-doctors' whose desires too easily determine what is defined as news and what is not. To defend against being manipulated, the media need more self-confidence, and the best route to self-confidence is through knowledge.³

Knowledge and public discussion is what the Greek market is lacking. Both can be offered by the new medium that increasingly enters the lives of the country's citizens. However, for Greek journalists to handle technological change and utilize the benefits of the Internet, they have to put substantial effort into becoming multi-skilled and educated. General education, specialisation, knowledge of foreign languages, computer efficiency, research skills, an open mind in order to grasp the

² Fleming, C. (2000) 'Journalism and New Technology', in Hugo de Burgh (ed.) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge, p. 178.

³ Meyer, P. (1991) *The New Precision Journalism*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press. Cited in Fleming, C. (2000) 'Journalism and New Technology', op. cit., p. 189.

dynamism of the converging industries and a positive attitude towards rapid technological evolution are key elements for Greek journalists to survive professionally in the future. Particularly, Greek journalists may benefit from the use of the Internet for a variety of reasons. Amongst the most important⁴ are the following:

1. Increased access to information and stimuli for the development of interesting angles to journalistic research. Accessing more information sources would enrich the initial approach and background research.
2. Less contact between journalists and “established” and “official” sources for securing background information, thus minimizing the risk of obtaining information produced through a subjective “filtering process” reflecting the desired version of reality put forward by the sources.
3. Widening of the journalistic exploratory scope that usually suffers from the influence of an ethnocentric way of viewing things.
4. Proliferation of sources of information, providing increased capability of cross-checking and confirmation.
5. Ease of access to electronic archives containing previous journalistic work, which enriches the research work and leads to the development of new innovative story angles.
6. Assistance to younger journalists, for whom Internet acts as an “infinite library” with historical data, research papers, statistical surveys and analyses.
7. Widening of the audience as a receiver of journalistic work. For instance, a PC with Internet access installed in a public place in a remote village in the Greek periphery, to which the mainstream press does not reach, may prove to be a “window to the world”, providing the bulk of the Greek and foreign press easily on screen.

⁴ Kamaras, D. (2000) ‘The Internet, the Role of the Press and Journalism’, in G. Gantzias & D. Kamaras *Digital Communication, New Media and Information Society in Greece: Convergence, Electronic Commerce and Portals*, London: Zeno Publishers (in Greek). See also Reddick, R. and King, E. (1997) *Online Journalist: Using the Internet and other Electronic Resources*, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

8. Ease of access to newspapers, magazines and electronic services from all over the world. The Internet provides the opportunity for (Greek) journalists to learn the ways foreign media around the globe handle news content.
9. Instant access to journalists' unions, media organisations and related research institutions all around Europe and the US, where ethical issues, journalistic practices and values are subject to serious discussions and research.
10. Minimization of the volume of journalists' individual archives and press clippings, since most information can be increasingly accessed electronically as necessary.

However, these benefits and others entailed in the on-going digital revolution cannot be materialised unless suitable learning mechanisms are organised, funded and managed by Greek journalism itself. In the digital age, the constant empowerment of journalists is the only course of action. In the Greek market, which is characterised by spasmodic and inconsistent reactions towards technological progress and by poor implementation of ethical standards, it is becoming increasingly clear that the journalistic profession can no longer rely on the old traditional practice of on-the-job training. Moreover, the act of intermediation per se, namely the plain task of publicising facts, information or elite views to the public, no longer suffices to hold the public image of a profession that has already lost a great proportion of its credibility.

...for news organisations

News media proprietors, editors, journalists, organisational structures and cultures, sources and advertisers constitute vital parts of a production process that handles information in very particular ways. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, both Greek daily newspapers and Internet news sites are characterised by unique, as well as quite common problems.

In order to meet future challenges successfully, the daily press industry has to deal with a variety of problems, such as news content biases originating from political, economic and business activity and proprietors' interventions, decreasing circulation

figures, the inflation of print titles, newsroom management techniques that lack sophistication and innovation, the poor utilization of Internet technology for corporate purposes and the need for the creation of “technologically advanced newsrooms”,⁵ as well as human resource inadequacies.

In the future, and as the European Union is increasingly integrated into a single market, old State protectionism will start to disappear, giving place to strict competition. For instance, in the case of the business daily press, the situation is about to change rapidly. Currently, the four leading financial dailies (*Express*, *Imerisia*, *Kerdos*, *Naftemporiki*) receive around half of the revenues generated by compulsory balance sheets publications, which amounts to around 12 million euros a year. This is split in four equal shares amongst the newspapers, after a mutual agreement between them.⁶ This source of revenues, which, according to unofficial estimates by editors at business dailies, represents around 50-60% of total newspaper income, is directly jeopardized by new draft directive of the European Commission, which aims to harmonize legislation as regards transparency requirements for publicly quoted companies.⁷

The vulnerable Greek daily press is directly affected by the developments of EU central policy as well as local political fluctuations. Strong affiliation of press proprietors with political parties has made newspapers directly dependent on the political process. The lack of entrepreneurial independence results in the

⁵ “Technologically advanced newsrooms (TANs)... may be defined as newsrooms that have moved beyond simple use of personal computers for word processing and production... In essence the terms ‘TAN’ simply reflects a state of operation and a state of mind about the practicality of computing as part of the information gathering and processing effort.” See Garrison, B. (1998) ‘Coping with New Technologies in the Newsroom’, *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 18-25 (p. 20).

⁶ See newspapers: *Axia* [Value], 10 May 2003, p. 2 and *Kosmos tou Ependyti* [Investor’s World], 8 March 2003, p. 61. In October 2002, besides the four financial titles, another group of 24 political dailies were allowed to publish corporate balance sheets (Source: *Kerdos* [Profit], 11 October 2002).

⁷ According to the EC, member countries will no longer be in a position to oblige corporations to publish their financial results to more than one newspaper or website located at any EU member state. See “Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the harmonisation of transparency requirements with regard to information about issuers whose securities are admitted to trading on a regulated market and amending Directive 2001/34/EC”, Brussels, 26/3/2003.

Located at:
[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/finances/mobil/transparency/index.htm# proposal](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/finances/mobil/transparency/index.htm#proposal).
 Accessed 5 July 2003.

reproduction of corporate weaknesses and the absence of modern strategic planning for future growth. Nowadays, modern newspaper management strategies appear more than a necessity; they are a prerequisite for survival.

Greek newspaper owners who wish to survive and operate in the battlefield of the already foreseeable rapid developments in the media industry have to think of the future in digital terms. The new theories of electronic entrepreneurship (commonly known as e-Business) can offer great services to all production stages of contemporary news organisations. Preparing for the digital age requires innovative management techniques and procedures, which will emerge from organisational restructuring schemes based on the developing e-Business doctrines: news gathering, processing and dissemination processes, newsroom organisation and promotional strategies all can benefit from the incorporation of e-Business best practices into the media function.

In the following Table, a series of newspaper and Internet news sites' characteristics are presented, following the classic SWOT analysis.⁸ The most important strengths and weaknesses in the internal organisation of news corporations and the opportunities and threats for newspapers and Internet news ventures are summarized in a parallel form that allows comparisons between the two media. Most entries represent evidence from research utilized in the present thesis, whereas others originate from widely accepted characteristics found in the international newspaper and Internet literature.

⁸ SWOT analysis focuses on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing organisations. "Strengths are those positive aspects of the organisation which it can build upon... Weaknesses are those deficiencies in the present skills and resources of the organisation, which need to be corrected... Opportunities usually arise from the nature of environmental change... Threats are the converse of opportunities and refer to external developments, which are likely to endanger the operations of the organisation..." See Mullins, L. (1994) *Management and Organisational Behaviour*. London: Pitman (Third Edition), p. 288.

SWOT Analysis (Newspapers vs. Internet News Sites): Global and local dimensions

	NEWSPAPERS	INTERNET NEWS SITES
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organised news mechanisms and rich content archives. - Experienced workforce, widely known professionals and pools of external contributors. - Historic connections with political, economic figures and business players, which preserve the newspapers' function as the primary platform for the promotion of particular interests. - Increased professional prestige than Internet news sites in terms of source-journalist interaction. - Higher credibility than television in term of news presentation. - Portable, friendly, easy to consume. - Availability of content in all fields of journalism writings (breaking news, analysis, commentary). - Strong consumer of advertising expenditure. - Capability of measuring public penetration and sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advantage of the newcomer. - Immediacy (24/7 operation); the Internet is the fastest text-based medium. - Constant presence of news, and of specialised and feature news sections. - The distance between the audience and the news is dramatically narrowed. A great number of news organisations are one click away (and usually for free). - Easiness of access enhances brand building. - Provision of specialised information and personalised services. - Non-linear presentation of news (dynamic); The user enters the news on his/her own pace (still weak in the Greek market). - Rapid circulation of ideas and views (in many cases, users act as re-transmitters of news). - Combination of textual and audiovisual news presentation forms (still weak in the local market) - Interactivity enhances news readings and promotes audience-newsroom interaction (not always found locally).
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perishable product. - Human resources' credibility crisis, due to distortions observed in journalism routines and practices (e.g. participation in corporate Press Offices and PR strategies). - Strong affiliation to party politics and subsequent influence of editorial policies (biased content). - Low quality of news output, mainly due to relaxed newsroom policies as regards journalists' parallel employment in other media. - Linear presentation of news (static); Readers follow pre-organised entry points, based on prearranged newspaper layout. - Decreasing public penetration (especially as regards the daily political press). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hardware reliant. - Reliance on traditional forms of journalism practices. - Limited utilisation of columnists and specialists. - Limited use of interactive applications and multimedia. - Preservation of structural distortions of journalism market; no evidence of a "new journalism". - Online content easy to alter after publication (pressures and influences can lead to post-publication censorship). - Development of unethical techniques (e.g. unsigned 'write-throughs') into standard practices. - Security risks. - Intensive competition (the competitor is one click away). - Ineffective models of measuring users' visits and usage. - Weak absorbers of advertising revenues. - Ineffective revenue models. - Poor multilingual news presentations. The Greek language acts as a barrier for internet sites, which carry exclusively Greek-content, to operate globally.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition with the new medium could lead to major improvements in the print industry. - Organisational restructuring in accordance to new e-Business strategies being formulated in the framework of the new economy. - Integration of Internet ventures and traditional news production lines into a single multimedia news production mechanism. Use of e-Business strategies for restructuring outdated newsrooms. - Use of newspaper sites and online marketing applications to expand readership and improve corporate image and credibility. - Global reach through modern newspaper sites and multilingual content presentations. - Sophisticated subscription strategies, which may combine package offers to different news platforms, as well as special added value content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appeal of the Internet to younger ages. - Development of independent media voices (promotion of alternative ideas). - A useful platform for criticism to established forces and mainstream media. - Increasing power of users on news agenda setting. - Promotion of interests and issues of provincial communities. - Internet's role as an infinite window to the world; best journalism practices and foreign media paradigms are now easy to reach. - Empowerment tool for young journalists (easy-to-reach archives of past journalism work and news writings).
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuance of declining circulation. - The young generation seems unwilling to follow the mainstream daily press. - Increasing operational expenses. - State protectionism towards its end. - Loss of credibility due to political affiliations. - Negative effects on news making from various traditional structural distortions of the media market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low penetration of users and limited bandwidth. - Digital divide (social and geographical disparities in usage). - Pressures by commercial concerns (e.g. journalism content supporting e-Commerce activities). Also, lack of revenues may lead to a rapid increase of Infomercials & Advertorials (sales and advertising strategies mixing with content). - Paid content models threatening universal usage of news services. - 'Write-throughs' and loose content update newsroom policies may lead to severe questioning of the value of the Internet as a public record.

The main challenge for web-journalism lies in its capacity to produce original content and news services that will really make a difference to the consumer. In the rapidly changing digital media environment, credibility, honesty and ethical behaviour, along with the capacity to handle information creatively, to research and utilize multiple sources, to use modern content management techniques are the key challenges for both print and online media.

...for media research

In Chapter III it is argued that the academic exploration of the press in general and newspaper journalism in particular is in an embryonic stage in Greece. Few written accounts have examined the human factor alongside the journalistic practices and routines that the international literature considers to be the key factors determining the quality of news output. The same is true for broadcasting.

Researching the case of television privatisation in Greece, Karamanis (2003) argued that institutions as well as culture play an important role in determining media developments.⁹ This interdisciplinary approach constitutes one of the few accounts in a field that requires more thorough treatment.

It could be argued that interdisciplinary research is a key area for the modernisation of media research and policy for the 21st century. In the general globalisation context, the division of the world into powerful and competing geographical unities (e.g. EU, USA, Asia, etc.) is expected to lead academic research into the exploration of intercultural differences in the media industry in general. Academic analysis and research of the converging media environment needs to address not only differences, similarities and prospects in the media output per se, but also in media management and in the exercise of government media policy. As Karamanis has put it:

...media policy in the future will need more than ever to be informed by imaginative and independent research, in which the old models of analysis are superseded in favor

⁹ Karamanis, T. (2003) *The Role of Culture and Political Institutions in Media Policy: The Case of TV Privatization in Greece*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

of a new approach that recognizes the impact of economic, cultural, political and institutional factors on media developments.¹⁰

The ability of academic research to conform to the changing needs of the digital era depends heavily on its perspicacity in examining new principles, which are gradually being introduced to cover the needs of the digital era, such as reliability and responsibility, education and training, security, privacy and confidentiality, participation, universal services and social inclusion, etc.¹¹

However, academic research into the Greek market still needs to cover basic ground that has already been exhaustively investigated elsewhere. These range from quantitative explorations of the exact size of the Greek media market as a whole to more sophisticated concepts, such as the processes of ethical reasoning in everyday journalistic decision-making (and its effect on newsroom practices), the practical effects of the existing local media education and training and the repercussions of the lack of organised vocational training and on-going learning schemes (which, hopefully, would lead to their creation and widespread usage by news organisations).

It should be noted that, in recent years, research in the newspaper industry benefited from the advent of the Internet. For instance, newspaper circulation and advertising expenditure statistics were made available online through the EIHEA site.¹² However, although the online presentation of these data may ease the work of the researcher, more needs to be done as regards the analysis of the internal corporate environment of the Greek media, especially in the broadcasting field. As this thesis has relied on the investigation of the daily newspaper human resources, other research should focus on television reporters and the various influences exercised on their work.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 278

¹¹ Gantzias, G. (2001) *The Dynamics of Regulation: Global Control, Local Resistance*. Aldershot: Ashgate (pp. 28-31).

¹² See <http://www.eihea.gr>. Traditionally, statistical circulation series on contemporary Athens newspapers are kept by the Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (EIHEA). EIHEA categorises sales coming from the two main distribution agencies, *Argos* and *Evropi* (Europe), both

Particularly in the new technology field, advanced research is required for the exploration of the influence of information technology on daily journalistic routines and practices as well as the ways audiences perceive and utilise news readings. Particularly as regards news organisations, future research should focus on the exploration of the capability of newspaper newsrooms to develop from being employers of traditionally trained journalists into sophisticated multimedia content providers. Management academics in cooperation with media specialists should research the attitudes of news executives in order to identify mentalities and forms that would potentially act as barriers to progress and modernisation.¹³

Finally, all above areas should be explored through another significant prism: that of cultural specificities of Greek societal, political and economic environment in comparison with foreign practices that function in the context of other societies and cultures.

Nowadays, managing change may prove the most difficult, but at the same time, the most challenging field in the media industry. Although in this thesis, people and organisations were occasionally seen as adversaries in order to illustrate problems, distortions and various pressures on journalistic work, success in the future lies somewhere in the middle. The dichotomy between the two does not necessarily lead to a zero-sum result; it expresses the necessity of deconstructing old philosophies for the benefit of the new. And this deconstruction cannot escape conflict between conservative forces and visionary strategy makers.

In the new era, the provision of content holds a central role for media industries. In the case of Internet, whoever owns the content controls the medium. Traditionally, newspapers have proved quite effective in delivering sophisticated content. The question is: can they be effective in cyberspace too? That is the challenge.

publishers' cooperatives, which have replaced the old *Athens Newspapers Agency* (PEAT) that served the industry for many years and ceased operations in January 2000.

¹³ According to Garrison, "a technologically resistant news organisation will move forward only after a planned and coordinated effort, perhaps starting at the highest levels of management." See Garrison, B. (1998) 'Coping with New Technologies in the Newsroom', *Convergence*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 18-25 (p. 21).

If, in Greece, the construction of a newspaper website can be considered as a first small step towards digital awareness, then sophisticated software applications that would contribute to the re-structuring of the contemporary newspaper's fatigued corporate body should be seen as a priority for survival.

In the emerging digital world, news media entrepreneurship no longer means expensive investments in hardware, buildings and printing presses. It increasingly means the utilization of sophisticated and experienced human resources. In this context, the discovery of the "new journalism" is a central task for all participants.

The discovery of this "new journalism" requires redefining some of the core elements of traditional news work. In this context, the cooperation of journalists, editors and media proprietors under the same visionary umbrella is required in order for a series of new considerations to be addressed and successfully managed. New web-journalism practices and techniques, as well as issues concerning immediacy and accuracy, constant deadlines, the changing scope of reporting, etc., along with ethics, rules governing professional practice, codes of conduct and regulation as regards safety and intellectual property rights should evolve into the necessary operating bases for the new era.

Even if newspapers are to survive in a paper form for many years, their Internet clones will require the development of innovative growth strategies. Traditional forms of news coverage will have to be redefined to fit an emerging digital news environment of continuous breaking news digital outlets that are constantly expanded to carry in-depth analysis, background information, multimedia applications and interactive services. The intrinsic qualities of the Internet news world transform the textual presentation of breaking news into a continuous multimedia event that encourages audiences' active participation. Major changes have already occurred, since digital "news packages", combining audio, video, images and text, are the typical way most major and resourceful news web sites cover news in our times.

On the threshold of the 21st century, the media's struggle for survival may lead them to value certain qualities that only journalists can ensure. Education, specialization, expertise, critical thinking and ethical moral reasoning are contemporary journalists' tools for the future. These are the essential means of dealing with distortions, influences and particular interests, including politics.

Appendices

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Journalists working in the Athens daily press)

NOTE: *Data and opinions offered in the questionnaire are confidential and are collected on the basis of anonymity*

I. Profile

1) Please state your sex, age and marital status:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) male <input type="checkbox"/> | c) married <input type="checkbox"/> | e) divorced <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) female <input type="checkbox"/> | d) single <input type="checkbox"/> | f) age |

2) How long journalism has been your main profession?

- | | |
|---|--|
| a) less than 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> | c) 10 to 15 years <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) 5 to 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> | d) more than 15 years <input type="checkbox"/> |

3) What made you choose this profession?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a) the opportunity of being the first to be informed about events | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) the potential of a brilliant career | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) my personal desire for publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) my personal desire for a profession with no fixed routines and working hours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) an accidental coincidence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) I followed the profession of my father or mother | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4) In which media are you mainly employed?

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) daily newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> | d) magazine <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) weekly newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> | c) internet site <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) other <input type="checkbox"/> please specify..... | |

5) How do you consider your salary, offered by the medium in which you are mainly employed, in relation to the amount of work you are producing?

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) non acceptable <input type="checkbox"/> | c) satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) the less possible <input type="checkbox"/> | d) very satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> |

6) How many full-time or part-time jobs do you hold in various media?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| a) one <input type="checkbox"/> | c) three <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| b) two <input type="checkbox"/> | d) four <input type="checkbox"/> | e) more <input type="checkbox"/> (please state a number)..... |

7) What is the level of your total monthly earnings from journalism?

- a) 300-600 euros c) 900-1,500 euros e) 2,100-2,950 euros
 b) 600-900 euros d) 1,500-2,100 euros f) over 2,950 euros

8) Are you a university graduate? If yes, what was the main field of studies of your first degree?

- a) theoretical (humanities) Please state the specific area of studies
 b) practical (science)

9) Do you possess a postgraduate degree on communications, media, journalism or other area of studies?

- a) YES
 a1) communications and media
 a2) other area of studies Please state accordingly.....
 b) NO postgraduate studies

10) Have you ever taken any training courses in journalism or communications?

- a) yes Where?
 b) no
 c) I intend to in the near future If so, what kind?

11) What is your position in the medium you are employed?

.....

12) What is your area of specialization in reporting?

- a) politics f) arts
 b) economics g) crime
 c) social issues h) freelance
 d) business i) other
 e) finance-stock market Please specify.....

13) Have you ever participated in investigative journalism?

- a) very often c) rarely
 b) a few times d) not at all

14) Do the journalism items you produce express your conclusions alone, or do they express the general "line" of the medium?

- a) they express my conclusions b) they express the "line" of the medium
 c) they appear to express my conclusions, but I am practising self-censorship, so my pieces are in accordance to the medium's official "line" of thought

15) Do you consider the handling of your texts by your subordinates as satisfactory (titles, leads, handling of certain parts, etc.)?

- a) yes c) rarely satisfactory
 b) no d) often satisfactory

16) Do you use the Internet as a source of information?

- a) rarely b) often c) some times d) not at all

17) Have you ever used other media in order to publicize opinions which you were unable to "pass" in the medium you are employed, or to explore issues you did not have the chance to do so in the past?

- a) Yes, using my name b) Yes, by staying anonymous
 c) Yes, under a false name d) No (ignore question 18)

18) Did this action have any effect on your career?

- a) No b) I received complaints c) I had serious problems
 Please explain.....

19) Are you an active member of press unions, and if yes of which?

- a) Union of Athens Journalists b) Union of Athens Magazine Journalists
 c) Union of European Journalists
 d) Other Please specify.....

20) How many times have you participated to trips abroad, whose expenses were covered by private companies?

.....

21) How many times have you followed public figures (ministers, public CEOs or others) to their trips abroad?

.....

22) Have you ever worked, in parallel with your main occupation, for the promotion of communications policy of private businesses?

- a) Yes b) No

23) Have you ever worked, in parallel with your journalism occupation, at press offices in ministries, public enterprises, or other public utilities?

- a) Yes b) No

II. General issues

24) Do you think that the average Greek journalist is capable of informing the public accurately?

- a) Yes b) No

24a. If YES, how does this ability have been developed?

- a) from on the job training
- b) from personal education and expertise
- c) from personal values and beliefs
- d) from other factors (please specify).....

25) The function of the Greek news media today is predominantly characterised by:

(please tick as many as applicable):

- a) strong competition and continuous struggle for profit
- b) objective and accurate reporting
- c) attempts to promote political and economic interests
- d) the absence of journalism ideal and the malfunction of ethical values

26) News is presented in the Greek media: (please tick as many as applicable)

- a) accurately and objectively
- b) in a sensational and extravagant way, assisting the competitive needs of the media
- c) systematically manufactured in that way so to serve the dominant economic and political interests
- d) in such a way so to serve the lower instincts of the public

27) Press proprietors:

- a) intervene to serve their personal ideology
- b) intervene to serve their other non-media entrepreneurial interests
- c) intervene so to improve journalism functions
- c) play a neutral role

28) Newspapers in Greece are predominantly:

- a) strongly politicised, affiliated with political parties
- b) accomodating their own economic interests
- c) independent, serving the common good

29) As far as the function of the press, the government should:

- a) remain completely neutral
- b) proceed to a minimal intervention in terms of the protection of privacy and fair play in the news media market
- c) create a more strict legal framework concerning the press
- e) intervene in extreme cases, such as publication of classified information, invasion of privacy, etc.

30) Self-regulation in the press:

- a) is generally the best way to protect the public
- b) is not an effective means of protecting the public
- c) is a useless idea in the Greek case

31) Newspaper news in our country represents:

- a) the dominant, established ideology of the powerful social groups
- b) all ideologies and sociopolitical trends
- c) events as they really happen
- d) events of no hierarchy, since they mostly apply to emotional instincts and public satisfaction

32) Official and accredited sources of information play:

- a) the most important role in news gathering
- b) a relatively limited role
- c) an equally important role as all other information sources

33) A local news story breaks out. What is the main source of information that you usually address your request in order to get the first news details?

- a) official sources (Ministries, State departments)
- b) other Media (e.g. radio, news agency, news sites, etc.)
- c) other colleagues (journalists) in the same medium
- d) friends – journalists in other media
- e) your own personal sources

34) According to your experience, which is the most usual initial source of information for the Greek newspaper journalist?

- a) press releases
- b) personal sources
- c) official sources (Ministries, Press Offices, etc.)
- d) other media
- e) the Internet

35) What kind of sources do you use during the collection of information and news research?

- a) official sources (Ministries, Press Offices, etc.)
- b) the Internet
- c) personal sources
- d) libraries, research centres, Universities, etc.
- e) media clippings
- f) personal archive

36) The Journalism unions' function in Greece is predominantly characterised by:

- a) attempts to promote exclusively union claims
- b) struggle to protect and further develop the journalism profession
- c) inefficiency and weakness to promote the ideals of journalism and to protect the profession
- d) collaboration with the political and economic powers of the day
- e) attempts to promote personal interests of the Union's leading players

37) An established and broadly accepted code of ethics and code of conduct for Greek journalists could:

- a) offer a great service to the development of the profession
- b) limit the freedom of the press and broadcast media
- c) limit excessive phenomena observed in the news business
- d) prove worthless in the current situation

38) How often, according to your estimation, your proprietor intervenes - directly or indirectly - in the way news is presented, or in the coverage of news?

- a) very often c) occasionally e) never
- b) often d) rarely

39) Why do you think media owners intervene in the production of news?

- a) to serve their personal beliefs and ideology
- b) to serve their business interest that often mix with the news coverage
- c) to serve the business interests of media themselves (sales, advertisements, etc.)

40) Under which form of ownership, journalism is best served?

- a) in a medium which is part of a media group
- b) in a medium owned by a traditional proprietor
- c) in a medium owned by journalists themselves
- d) in a medium owned by a corporate non-media group

41) What is the dominant role of a journalist?

- a) to produce reliable but neutrally presented information, so the public to be able to decide by itself about the truth
- b) to try to discover the truth by cross-checking information, offering to the public the best version of the truth according to his/her estimations
- c) to present conflicting arguments, playing the role of a liaison, between the public and the news sources

Thank you very much for filling the questionnaire

Appendix 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

Editors working in the Athens daily press

I. Profile

Age __ Years in current position _____ Years in the newspaper _____
 Years in the journalism profession _____
 Previous position in the newspaper or elsewhere _____

1. What made you choose this profession?

- a) the opportunity of being the first to be informed about events
- b) the potential of a brilliant carrier
- c) my personal desire for publicity
- d) my personal desire for a profession with no fixed routines and working hours
- e) an accidental coincidence
- f) I followed the profession of my father or mother

2. Are you a university graduate? If yes, what was the main field of studies of your first degree?

YES NO
 Area of Studies _____

3. Do you possess a postgraduate degree?

YES NO
 Area of Studies _____

4. Have you ever taken any training courses in journalism or communications?

YES NO
 Please state the name of the Institute or School _____

5. Are you an ESHEA member?

YES NO
 Number of years _____

6. Do you simultaneously work for other media?

YES NO
 If YES, what kind? _____

7. Do you write for other media anonymously, or under a false name? YES NO

8. Do you work as a Press Officer in private or public corporations in parallel with your job at the newspaper?

YES NO

If YES, for how many years? _____

Please specify the name of the company/corporation _____

8a. If NOT today, have you ever worked in the past as a Press Officer in private or public corporations, while being in your present position?

YES NO

If YES, for how many years? _____

Please specify the name of the company/corporation _____

8b. Before being placed in your current position, have you ever worked as a Press Officer in private or public corporations?

YES NO

If YES, for how many years? _____

Please specify the name of the company/corporation _____

9. Do you participate in the formulation of communications strategy or content production in the benefit of...

Private companies YES NO

Public Organisations YES NO

Political Parties YES NO

Think Tanks YES NO

Social unions YES NO

Research Institutions YES NO

10. Are you involved in teaching in the area of your professional expertise?

YES NO

If YES, please specify the name of the institution _____

11. What is your area of specialization in reporting?

12. Do you write op-eds in the newspaper?

YES NO

If YES, how often? _____

13. What is the level of your total monthly earnings from journalism?

< 2.000 euros 2-3.000 euros 3-4.000 euros > 4.000 euros

14. Do you travel abroad professionally? YES NO

If YES, who is paying for these trips? _____

15. Do you use the Internet?

YES NO

If YES, how often? _____

If YES, for what purposes? _____

II. Newsroom organisation and operation

1. Total number of newsroom employees _____
Number of immediate subordinates _____

2. Which is your area of responsibility? _____

3. Who is your supervisor? _____

4. Do you participate in recruitment and selection of employees? YES NO

5. Do you have direct contact with the newspaper proprietor? YES NO
 If YES, regarding what issues? _____

6. Does a written newsroom organisational chart exist? YES NO

7. Do you participate in meetings in which newspaper strategy is discussed? YES NO
 If YES, how often do you participate? _____

8. Do journalists in your newspaper work also for other media? YES NO

9. Is there an official newspaper policy against multi-employment? YES NO
 If YES, do you monitor offenders? YES NO
 If NO, is there any unofficial process against it YES NO

III. News production process

**1. Which are the most important news values according to your view?
 Please grade from 1 to 10 in terms of importance.**

- Event being close to deadlines _____
- Event of great magnitude _____
- Clarity of the meaning of the event (easy to handle) _____
- Cultural / geographical proximity _____
- Expected, scheduled event _____
- Peculiar, unexpected event _____
- Continuity (on-going news coverage) _____
- Thematic composition (content matching existing news items) _____
- Existence of prominent figures _____

2. Please grade from 1 to 10 the following news sources in terms of importance and frequency in usage as starting points for further journalism research.

- Inflow of Press Releases _____
- Beats _____
- Internet _____
- News agencies _____
- Readers' letters _____
- Readers' E-mails _____
- Original journalism research _____

3. Which news agencies your newspaper subscribes to?

4. In your newspaper, daily news coverage is dominated by...

- Mainly scheduled events
- Mainly unexpected events
- Both equally

5. Please describe briefly your role in the news production process

6. How many hours do you spend in the newsroom on a daily basis? _____

7. How many hours are journalists required to be present in the newsroom? _____

8. In how many meetings you participate on a daily basis? _____

9. Do you communicate via email with journalists when they are within the newsroom? YES NO

10. Which of the following are the most important criteria on which the formulation of editorial policy is based? Please grade the following from 1 to 10 in terms of importance:

- Owner's non-media business interests _____
- Owner's ideology _____
- Top news executives' ideology _____
- Newspaper copy sales _____
- Advertisers' demands _____
- Readers' values and beliefs _____

11. In what ways do you communicate editorial line to journalists?

- Via personal guidelines for proper news handling
- Via interventions after the article is written
- Via guidelines in departmental meetings
- Via other ways – Please specify: _____

12. Do you believe that journalists in your newspaper are practising self-censorship?

YES NO

If YES, how often this is the case? Always Very often Some times

13. How often do you give back articles to journalists for further improvement?

Very often Some times Rarely Never

When you do so, what are the reasons? Lack of evidence Poor writing
Other reasons _____

14. Do you personally re-write articles? YES NO

15. Are there any written codes of ethics and conduct in your newspaper?

YES NO

Have you ever discussed the possibility of issuing such codes? YES NO

Are you aware of the respective practices in the US? YES NO

Are you familiar with the role of the ombudsman in the US press? YES NO

16. Do you print corrections in your newspaper?

YES NO

If YES, how often this is the case?
Always Many times Some times

17. Do you receive readers' complaints? What are the main issues addressed?

YES NO

Issues addressed: _____

18. Do you publish articles or letters of people who consider their reputation has been harmed by news published in your newspaper?

YES NO

If YES, how often this is the case?
Always Many times Some times

19. Is there a clear distinction between news facts and journalism comments in your newspaper? YES NO

IV. News distortions and production pressures

1. Do you receive suggestions from your newspaper's Commercial / Advertising Department for the promotion of specific news content?

YES NO If YES, regarding which news topics? _____

2. Please grade (1 to 10) the following factors in terms of their highest negative influence on the quality of news produced by your newspaper.

- Newspaper owner's interventions _____
- Communication strategy of Press Offices and PR Officers _____
- Journalists not keeping deadlines _____
- Limited news hole _____
- Competition with other newspapers _____
- Readers' demands _____
- News executives' philosophy _____
- Journalists' multi-employment _____
- Inadequate journalists' general education _____
- Inadequate level of journalists' professional competence _____

3. Is PR Officers and Press Officers' interaction with journalists a factor of news distortion? YES NO

4. How does multi-employment affect your news product?

Negatively Positively Irrelevant

5. How often your proprietor intervenes - directly or indirectly - in the way news is presented, or in the way news events are covered?

- a) Quite often
- b) Some times
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

6. Why do you think media owners intervene in the production of news?

- a) to serve his/her personal beliefs and ideology
- b) to serve his/her business interest that often mix with the news coverage
- c) to serve business interests of media themselves (sales, advertisements, etc.)

7. Does your newspaper support a particular political ideology or political party?

YES NO If YES, please specify _____

V. General views on Greek journalism

1. Do you think that the average Greek journalist is capable of informing the public accurately?

- a) YES
- b) NO

1a. If YES, how does this ability have been developed?

- a) from on the job training
- b) from personal education and expertise
- c) from personal values and beliefs
- d) from other factors (please specify).....

2. Press proprietors:

- a) intervene to serve their personal ideology
- b) intervene to serve their other non-media entrepreneurial interests
- c) intervene so to improve journalism functions
- c) play a neutral role

3. Greek newspapers are predominantly:

- a) strongly politicized, affiliated with political parties
- b) accomodating their own economic interests
- c) independent, serving the common good

4. As far as the operation of the Press, the government should:

- a) remain completely neutral
- b) proceed to a minimal intervention in terms of the protection of privacy and fair play in the news media market
- c) create a more strict legal framework concerning the press
- d) intervene in extreme cases, such as publication of classified information, invasion of privacy, etc.

5. Self-regulation in the press:

- a) is generally the best way to protect the public
- b) is not an effective means of protecting the public
- c) is a useless idea in the Greek case

6. Newspaper news in our country represents:

- a) the dominant, established ideology of the powerful social groups
- b) all ideologies and sociopolitical trends

7. Official and accredited sources of information play:

- a) the most important role in news gathering
- b) a relatively limited role
- c) an equally important role as all other information sources

8. According to your experience, which is the most usual initial source of information for the Greek journalist?

- a) press releases
- b) personal sources
- c) official sources (Ministries, Press Offices, etc.)
- d) other media
- e) the Internet

9. The Journalism unions' function in Greece is predominantly characterised by:

- a) attempts to promote exclusively union claims
- b) struggle to protect and further develop the journalism profession
- c) inefficiency and weakness to promote the ideals of journalism and to protect the profession
- d) collaboration with the political and economic powers of the day

e) attempts to promote personal interests of the Union's leading players

10. An established and broadly accepted code of ethics and code of conduct for Greek journalists could:

- a) offer a great service to the development of the profession
- b) limit the freedom of the press and broadcast media
- c) limit excessive phenomena observed in the news business
- d) prove worthless in the current situation

11. Under which form of ownership, journalism is best served?

- a) in a medium which is part of a media group
- b) in a medium owned by a traditional proprietor
- c) in a medium owned by journalists themselves
- d) in a medium owned by a corporate non-media group

12. What is the dominant role of a journalist?

- a) to produce reliable but neutrally presented information, so the public to be able to decide by itself about the truth
- b) to try to discover the truth by cross-checking information, offering to the public the best version of the truth according to his/her estimations

13. Please grade (from 1 to 10 in terms of their importance) the following factors, as reasons for the decline of newspaper circulation in Greece.

- The existence of a large number of newspapers _____
- The advent of private television / radio _____
- Greek journalism's decline in credibility _____
- The intense affiliation of newspapers with political parties _____
- The decrease of the public's spare time due to new interests _____
- The rapid growth of the Internet _____
- The consumer offers (coupons) by the press _____
- The increasing price of newspapers _____

14. Do you think that the Greek society is getting the Press it deserves?
 YES NO

VI. Technology and the Internet

1. To what degree the Press is affected by the advent and constant expansion of the Internet as a new mass medium?

Quite Not at all Irrelevant

2. Do you consider Internet as a competitive or supplementary medium to the press?

Competitive Supplementary

3. Do you think the Internet will evolve into a 'killer medium' of the Press?

YES NO

4. Since the advent of the Internet, do you acknowledge any audience's shift from TV watching to active news reading?

YES NO

5. How the Internet has affected old journalism practices and routines?

Positively Negatively Did not play any role

6. Which Greek websites could you trust as primary sources of information?

7. Please grade (1 to 10 in terms of importance) the following effects on newsroom practices caused by the introduction of IT in newsroom (besides Internet).

Increase in journalists' productivity	_____
Improvements in the quality of news	_____
Improvements in newspaper printing schedule	_____
The journalists' job was made easier	_____
The editors' job was made easier	_____

8. Are there any negative effects caused by the introduction of IT in your newsroom?

YES NO If YES, please specify _____

9. Is there a newsroom intranet in operation?

YES NO

10. Do all journalists have access to the Internet?

YES NO If NO, who has access? _____

11. Do all journalists have personal email accounts?

YES NO

12. Journalists' access to the Net is provided through:

Dial-up connection Dedicated line

13. Are there any negative effects caused by individual access to the Net?

YES If YES, please specify _____
 NO

14. Which of the following statements do you find more precise as regards the usefulness of the Internet as a journalism tool?

The Internet is a particularly useful source of information	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Internet is just another supplementary source of information	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Internet is of no substantial usefulness; other sources are more important	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Do you think that newsroom staff finds 'ready-to-use' material through the Net?

YES NO *If YES, does this affect the quality of their work?*
YES Positively YES Negatively NO

16. What is the primary effect of 'copy-pasting' from 'ready-to-use' electronic material?

Even less process of ready-to-use material channelled from official sources
More time for research and cross-checking of information

17. In general, has digital technology affected the quality of news in your newspaper?

YES, Positively YES, Negatively NO

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Appendix 3

S-JNG 2002 Major findings

The identity of the human factor

- 73.6% of newspaper professionals have stated that they have entered journalism for reasons not related to the communication function of the profession itself (54.4% due to their personal desire for a profession with no fixed routines and working hours, and 19.2% have entered journalism by accident).
- Almost 44% of newspaper journalists possess less than a decade of working experience.
- 70% of newspaper professionals were found to maintain multiple jobs in other media (magazines, television, radio and internet sites); 27% hold three to four jobs.
- 25% of newspaper journalists staff Public Relations or Press Office positions in the private and public sector.
- 72% of newspaper journalists hold a bachelor degree in various academic fields (from those, almost one out of 10 in media studies).
- 22% of newspaper journalists are post-graduates (of whom only 1/3 are post-graduates in media-related fields).
- 56.4% of journalists surveyed declare that they have not acquired any vocational training or have attended journalism seminars of any kind.
- 73% of the respondents are unionized, a percentage that is much higher than that found for the profession as a whole; non-union members are 52.1% of total local journalism population (V-PRC 2002 survey).

Source: Survey on Journalism & Newsmaking in Greece 2002 - S-JNG 2002. The sample included 126 newspaper journalists employed in the 15 largest Athens-based newspapers, which included the daily business market as a whole and corresponded to 90% of total circulation of the political press.

News work in the daily press

- 90.6% of newspaper journalists say that newspaper proprietors intervene in news production and presentation.
- 78.3% say that newspaper proprietors intervene in news making in order to serve his/her own non-media entrepreneurial interests.
- The inadequate level of journalists' professional competence and general education is reported by newspaper editors as the most influential factor for low quality of news in the press.
- The views and values of newspaper readers and the ideology of top executives are considered by newspaper editors the most important factors that influence the editorial line.
- Personal sources are used as a primary source of information by 83% of newspaper journalists.
- 64.4% of newspaper journalists argue that news articles express their own professional conclusions alone.
- The magnitude of an event, the possibility for follow-ups, the cultural/geographical proximity of an event as well as an event's peculiarity are noted by newspaper editors as the most important news values.
- 68.9% of newspaper journalists have participated in trips abroad, whose expenses were covered by private companies, at least once during the last decade.
- 77.5% of newspaper journalists use the Internet as a source of information.

Source: Survey on Journalism & Newsmaking in Greece 2002 - S-JNG 2002.

Journalists' view of the profession

- 60.8% of newspaper journalists consider the promotion of political and economic interests of news organisations as one of the major characteristics of the Greek media.
- 75.8% of newspaper journalists view the accommodation of media's own economic interests as the dominant function of the news media.
- only 5% of newspaper journalists maintain that news media are independent, serving the common good.
- 60% of newspaper journalists consider journalism unions to be inefficient and weak in promoting the ideals of journalism and in protecting the profession.
- 69% of newspaper journalists are in favour of State intervention in the newspaper and broadcast market.
- 39.3% of newspaper journalists believe that self-regulation in the newspaper industry is a useless idea in the case of Greece.

Source: Survey on Journalism & Newsmaking in Greece 2002 - S-JNG 2002.

Major characteristics of journalism practiced on Greek Internet news sites

- Unclear development strategies that range from the creation of 'news agencies for the masses', 'electronic newspapers', which foster front page news practices, to newspaper sites that rely primarily on 'shovel-ware'.
- Utilization of multi-employed external contributors with low Internet culture and weak sense of commitment.
- Website newsroom staffed predominantly by 'content handlers' (newsroom staff lacks a professional identity).
- Lack of bylines, thus limited identification of journalism professional activity with readers-users.
- Limited news analysis texts and commentary.
- Not clear use of sources; heavy dependence on news agencies.
- Extensive 'write-through' practices, which jeopardize online journalism's credibility and the medium's function as a public record.
- Lack of multimedia applications, partly due to limited bandwidth;
- Poor communication between readers-users and newsroom staff (interactive applications are partially explored).
- Limited benefits from online advertising and lack of successful paid online strategies.
- Most Internet news sites target locally; limited bilingual material.

Source: Research in major Greek Internet sites. See chapter V.

Appendix 4

Survey of 15 Athens Newspaper Editors

Age	41 on average
Years in present position	5 on average
Years in the paper	10 on average
Years in the profession	19 on average
Why journalism?	10 out of 15 by coincidence and due to relaxed routines and working hours
Bachelor degree	YES: all
Postgraduate studies	YES: 5 out of 15
Attended journalism seminars	YES: 6 out of 15
Members of Athens Journalists Union (ESHEA)	YES: all
Years of ESHEA membership	10 years on average
Working in other media	YES: 7 out of 15
Writing elsewhere anonymously	YES: 2 out of 15
Working as press officers	YES: 1 out of 15
Worked as press officers before current position <i>How many years?</i>	YES: 6 out of 15 2-3 on average
Working for private business, social, political groups, research institutes or think tanks as content producers or communications consultants	YES: 6 out of 15
Teaching journalism?	NO: all
Writing articles (op-eds) in the newspaper	YES: 14 out of 15
Travelling on journalism assignments abroad	YES: all
Using the Internet	YES: 14 out of 15
Participation in employee recruitment	YES: all
Direct contact with owner (publisher)	YES: all
Existence of newsroom chart in print	NO: 12 out of 15
Participation in strategic meetings	YES: all
Do journalists in your newspaper work for other media?	YES: all
Is there an official policy against moonlighting?	NO: all
Most important news values (grading 1-10 in terms of importance)	
<i>Matching deadlines</i>	55
<i>Very important event</i>	145
<i>Clarity of event (easy to handle)</i>	64
<i>Cultural/geographical proximity of event</i>	99

<i>Scheduled (expected) event</i>	72
<i>Peculiar, unexpected event</i>	96
<i>Possibility for follow-ups</i>	105
<i>Possibility for thematic conformity to existing material</i>	47
<i>Celebrities as key players</i>	64

Sources of information (grading 1-10 in terms of importance)

<i>Press Releases</i>	84
<i>Beats</i>	125
<i>Internet sites</i>	89
<i>News Agencies</i>	122
<i>Readers' letters</i>	70
<i>Readers' emails</i>	64
<i>Primary research</i>	138

Communicating through email with reporters when in newsroom NO: 10 out of 15

Major factors influencing the editorial line (grading 1-10 in terms of importance)

<i>Non-media interests of newspaper owner</i>	39
<i>Ideology of owner</i>	86
<i>Ideology of top news executives</i>	115
<i>The circulation figures of the paper</i>	83
<i>Advertisers' demands</i>	37
<i>Views and values of newspaper's readers</i>	132

Do journalists in your newspaper practise self-censorship? YES: all

Do you personally re-write articles? YES: 10 out of 15

Are there any written codes of ethics and conduct? NO: all

Have you ever discussed the possibility of issuing such codes? YES: 3 out of 15

Are you aware of the respective practices in the US? NO: 8 out of 15

Are you familiar with the role of the ombudsman in the US press? NO: 11 out of 15

Factors having negative influence on the quality of news (grading 1-10 in terms of importance)

<i>Owner's interventions</i>	33
<i>Communication strategy of Press Offices and PR Officers</i>	46
<i>Deadlines not respected by journalists</i>	59

<i>Limited News hole</i>	72
<i>Competition with other newspapers</i>	51
<i>Readers' demands</i>	29
<i>News executives philosophy</i>	44
<i>Journalists' multi-employment</i>	65
<i>Inadequate journalists' general education</i>	91
<i>Inadequate level of journalists' professional competence</i>	93
Is PR Officers and Press Officers' interaction with journos a factor of news distortion?	YES: 10 out of 15
How does multi-employment affect your news product?	NEGATIVELY: 12 out of 15
When owner intervenes, is in order...	
<i>to serve personal ideology and views?</i>	6
<i>to serve personal business interests that hit the news?</i>	0
<i>to serve the business interests of the newspaper itself?</i>	8
Newspaper supporting an ideology or political party	YES: all
Do you think that the average Greek journalist is capable of informing the public accurately?	YES: 11 out of 15
<i>If yes, how does this ability have been developed? (ticking where applicable)</i>	
<i>on the job training</i>	5
<i>personal education and expertise</i>	6
<i>personal values and beliefs</i>	5
Press proprietors... (ticking where applicable)	
<i>intervene to serve their personal ideology</i>	3
<i>intervene to serve their other non-media entrepreneurial interests</i>	15
<i>intervene so to improve journalism functions</i>	0
<i>play a neutral role</i>	0
Newspapers in Greece are predominantly... (ticking where applicable)	
<i>strongly politicised, affiliated with political parties</i>	9
<i>accomodating their own economic interests</i>	10
<i>independent, serving the common good</i>	0
As far as the function of the press, the government should...	

<i>remain completely neutral</i>	3
<i>proceed to a minimal intervention in terms of the protection of privacy and fair play in the news media market</i>	7
<i>create a more strict legal framework concerning the press</i>	2
<i>intervene in extreme cases, such as publication of classified information, invasion of privacy, etc.</i>	3
<hr/>	
Self-regulation in the newspaper industry...	
<i>is generally the best way to protect the public</i>	10
<i>is not an effective means of protecting the public</i>	0
<i>is a useless idea in the Greek case</i>	5
<hr/>	
Newspaper news in our country represents...	
<i>the dominant, established ideology of the powerful sociopolitical and economic groups</i>	11
<i>all ideologies and sociopolitical trends</i>	3
<hr/>	
Official and accredited sources of information play...	
<i>the most important role in news gathering</i>	7
<i>a relatively limited role</i>	2
<i>an equally important role as all other information sources</i>	6
<hr/>	
Which is the most usual initial source of information for the Greek journalist? (ticking where applicable)	
<i>press releases</i>	2
<i>personal sources</i>	10
<i>official sources (Ministries, Press Offices, etc.)</i>	10
<i>other media</i>	0
<i>the Internet</i>	1
<hr/>	
The Journalism unions' function in Greece is predominantly characterized by... (ticking where applicable)	
<i>attempts to promote exclusively union claims</i>	3
<i>struggle to protect and further develop the journalism profession</i>	2
<i>inefficiency and weakness to promote the ideals of journalism and to protect</i>	6

the profession

<i>collaboration with the political and economic powers of the day</i>	1
<i>attempts to promote personal interests of the Union's leading players</i>	5

An established and broadly accepted code of ethics and code of conduct for Greek journalists could...

<i>offer a great service to the development of the profession</i>	5
<i>limit the freedom of the press and broadcast media</i>	1
<i>limit excessive phenomena observed in the news business</i>	4
<i>prove worthless in the current situation</i>	5

Under which form of ownership, journalism is best served?

<i>in a medium which is part of a media group</i>	3
<i>in a medium owned by a traditional proprietor</i>	7
<i>in a medium owned by journalists themselves</i>	4
<i>in a medium owned by a corporate non-media group</i>	1

What should be the primary role of the newspaper journalist?

<i>to produce reliable but neutrally presented information, so the public to be able to decide by itself about the truth</i>	4
<i>to try to discover the truth by cross-checking information, offering to the public the best version of the truth according to his/her estimations</i>	11

The most important reasons for the decline of newspaper circulation (grading 1-10)

<i>The existence of a large number of newspapers</i>	107
<i>The advent of private television / radio</i>	122
<i>Greek journalism's decline in credibility</i>	109
<i>The intense affiliation of newspapers with political parties</i>	62
<i>The decrease of the public's spare time due to new interests</i>	104
<i>The rapid growth of the Internet</i>	38
<i>The consumer offers (coupons) by the press</i>	46

<i>The increasing price of newspapers</i>		47
Do you think the Greek society is getting the Press it deserves?	YES: 8 out of 14	
Is the Internet a competitive or supplementary medium to the Press?	SUPPLEMENTARY: 10 out of 15	
Do you think the Internet will evolve to a 'killer medium' of the Press?	NO: 11 out of 15	
Which Greek websites could you trust as primary sources of information?	NONE: 11 out of 15	
Since the advent of the Internet, do you acknowledge any audience's shift from TV watching to active news reading?	YES: 10 out of 14	
How the Internet has affected old journalism habits and routines?	POSITIVELY: 11 out of 14	
Effects by the introduction of IT in newsroom (grading 1-10 in terms of importance) (excluding Internet)		
<i>Increase in journalists' productivity</i>		122
<i>Improvements in the quality of news</i>		69
<i>Improvement in newspaper printing schedule</i>		122
<i>The journalists' job was made easier</i>		120
<i>The editors' job was made easier</i>		103
Are there any negative effects caused by the introduction of IT in your newsroom?	NO: 13 out of 15	
Is there a newsroom Intranet in operation?	YES: all	
Do all journalists have access to the Net?	YES: 9 out of 15	
Do all journalists have personal email accounts?	YES: 8 out of 15	
Access to the Internet is provided by...	Dedicated line: all	
Usefulness of the Internet...		
<i>It is a particularly useful source of information</i>		7
<i>It is just another supplementary source of information</i>		7
<i>It is of no substantial usefulness; other sources are more important</i>		1
Do you think journalists find 'ready-to-use' material through the Net?	YES: 10 out of 15	
Primary effect of 'copy-pasting' from 'ready-to-use' news material:		
<i>Even less process of ready-to-use material from official sources</i>		7
<i>More time for research and cross-checking</i>		4
Generally, has digital technology affected the quality of news in your newspaper?	YES, Positively: 13 out of 15	

Appendix 5

TOP-10 ATHENS DAILY POLITICAL NEWSPAPERS 1975-2002 (YEAR AVERAGE, NATIONWIDE DAILY COPY SALES)

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	Total 1 to 10	Total daily circulation	Top-6 titles' circulation as % of total
1975	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Vradini	Eleftherotipia	Acropolis	To Vima	Athinaiki	Kathimererini	Elefth. Kosmos	Rizospastis	871.259	844.766	-
1976	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Eleftherotipia	Vradini	Acropolis	To Vima	Kathimererini	Athinaiki	Rizospastis	Elefth. Kosmos	797.668	813.835	98
1977	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Vradini	Acropolis	To Vima	Rizospastis	Kathimererini	Elefth. Kosmos	Avgi	758.058	768.726	99
1978	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Acropolis	Vradini	Proin. Eleftherotipia	To Vima	Rizospastis	Kathimererini	Elefth. Kosmos	798.757	801.044	-
1979	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Vradini	Acropolis	To Vima	Proin. Eleftherotipia	Rizospastis	Kathimererini	Elefth. Kosmos	729.631	745.684	98
1980	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Eleftherotipia	Avriani	Acropolis	Vradini	To Vima	Proin. Eleftherotipia	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	722.455	718.800	-
1981	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Ethnos	Avriani	Vradini	Acropolis	To Vima	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	810.404	805.954	-
1982	Ta Nea	Ethnos	Apogevmatini	Avriani	Eleftherotipia	Vradini	To Vima	Acropolis	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	863.496	900.584	96
1983	Ethnos	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Eleftherotipia	Avriani	Vradini	El. Typos	Acropolis	Rizospastis	Kathimererini	871.333	913.689	95
1984	Ethnos	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Eleftherotipia	Avriani	Vradini	Rizospastis	El. Typos	Acropolis	Mesimvrini	906.397	979.306	93
1985	Ethnos	Avriani	Ta Nea	Apogevmatini	Eleftherotipia	El. Typos	Vradini	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	Acropolis	1.005.231	1.072.160	94
1986	Ethnos	Ta Nea	Avriani	Eleftherotipia	El. Typos	Apogevmatini	Vradini	Rizospastis	Proti	Mesimvrini	916.916	980.574	94
1987	Ethnos	El. Typos	Eleftherotipia	Ta Nea	Avriani	Apogevmatini	Vradini	Rizospastis	Proti	Mesimvrini	891.708	955.535	93
1988	El. Typos	Ethnos	Eleftherotipia	Ta Nea	Avriani	Apogevmatini	Apogevmatini	Rizospastis	24 Ores	Proti	883.267	971.872	91
1989	El. Typos	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	Avriani	Niki	Apogevmatini	Epikairoitita	Rizospastis	Proti	981.609	1.026.632	96
1990	El. Typos	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	Apogevmatini	Avriani	Epikairoitita	Niki	Kathimererini	Rizospastis	766.862	840.867	91
1991	El. Typos	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	Apogevmatini	Avriani	Kathimererini	Niki	Epikairoitita	Rizospastis	681.492	720.484	95
1992	El. Typos	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	Apogevmatini	Avriani	Kathimererini	Niki	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	620.809	642.476	97
1993	El. Typos	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Ethnos	Kathimererini	Avriani	Niki	Rizospastis	Mesimvrini	579.686	603.619	96
1994	Ta Nea	El. Typos	Eleftherotipia	Adesm.Typos	Apogevmatini	Ethnos	Kathimererini	Rizospastis	Avriani	Mesimvrini	668.394	636.502	-
1995	Ta Nea	El. Typos	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Adesm.Typos	Ethnos	Kathimererini	Avriani	Rizospastis	Eleftheros	577.469	595.599	97
1996	Ta Nea	El. Typos	Eleftherotipia	Apogevmatini	Ethnos	Adesm.Typos	Kathimererini	Eksousia	Rizospastis	Avriani	646.031	633.971	-
1997	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	El. Typos	Ethnos	Apogevmatini	Adesm.Typos	Kathimererini	Kathimererini	Rizospastis	Vradini	522.748	529.835	99
1998	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	El. Typos	Kathimerini	Apogevmatini	Apogevmatini	Eksousia	Adesmefotos (RIZ)	Vradini	427.381	470.059	91
1999	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	Kathimerini	El.Typos	To Vima	Apogevmatini	Eksousia	Sto Karfi	Adesmeftos (RIZ)	426.641	465.188	92
2000	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	El.Typos	Kathimerini	To Vima	Apogevmatini	Hora	Adesmeftos (RIZ)	Rizospastis	408.052	473.017	86
2001	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	To Vima	Kathimerini	El. Typos	Apogevmatini	Adesmeftos (RIZ)	Rizospastis	Hora	403.122	483.359	83
2002	Ta Nea	Eleftherotipia	Ethnos	To Vima	Kathimerini	El. Typos	Apogevmatini	Rizospastis	Adesmeftos (RIZ)	Hora	395.003	455.763	87

Source: EIHEA, further processed by the author.
 Note: In the years 1975, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1994, 1996, total newspaper circulation is affected by closures of titles. Therefore, it cannot be compared with the leading titles' circulation.
 Ta Nea (News), Ethnos (Nation), El. Typos (Free Press), Avriani (Tomorrow's), Apogevmatini (Afternoon), Eleftherotipia (Freedom of Press), Vradini (Evening)
 Adesm. Typos (Uncommitted Press), Kathimerini (Daily), To Vima (The Tribune), Proin. Eleftherotipia (Freedom of Press, Morning edition), Niki (Victory)
 Eksousia (Power), Athinaiki (Athenian), Rizospastis (Radical), Epikairoitita (Timeliness), Hora (Country), Adesmeftos (RIZ) (Uncommitted, owner D. Rizos)
 24 Ores (24 Hours), Sto Karfi (At the nail), Proti (First), Elefth. Kosmos (Free World)

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