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THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON POLITICS: PERSUASION AND POLITICAL PROPAGANDA IN THE MEDIA REALITY

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Abstract

In the era of computer technology and globalization of communication, the media today have a crucial role, while a successful society needs a good created and organized politics which will reflect righteously on the citizens. In democratic societies media have a complex connection with the sources of power and the political system. Firstly, they should emit information and attitudes independent from the government and interests of power, secondly, those with interests promote news and information closely related with the political parties and other groups. Hence, there has always been a close relation between the mass communication and the product of politics. In the relation between politics and the media the good informative function is very evident. As a part of the media reality, communication contents not only transfer messages and information from the political factors, but they also analyze, select, make comments, give their own opinion and share attitudes on them. Media effects on politics is realized through manipulative and propagandistic techniques of persuasion, contrary to the professional standards and criteria of the functioning of the mass media communication.

Key words: *media reality, politics, means of mass communication, persuasion, propaganda*

1.INTRODUCTON

Since their establishment, till nowadays, the theories in the media studies and mass communications through examples showed in practice that the following question is unbasical- if the media have an influence on the audience and specific spheres from life. On the contrary, the developing theories on mass- media are trying to clarify the different aspects of the media influence, that is the effects of the media reality. There is no doubt that the media do not cause identical effects on all the people. Different possibilities are conditioned by the type and topics which have been treated in the communication contents. There are distinctions among the topics as well as from media to media. The latent period in principle is brief in reporting about the threatening situations, that is, in situations which demand quick reactions. Taking into consideration the contents of various media, and the connection between the cause and the effect, prevails the rule that the more homogenous the contents of different media, the better the possibilities for the media to specify topics. An important factor is the degree of the cognitive dimension of the recipients that is the audience. It also has to be mentioned the rule that the smaller is the primary experience of the receipents or the capacity of information, the bigger is the opportunity to influence the media. And in this ordering of the most important factors for a media influence, is numbered the frequency of the media presentation of an event. Or in other words, it means the more it is reported for an event, problem, or happening, the more the public opinion is being provoked and keeps the interest of a highest rank. The notion media means that any mean of communication through which a message or an information can be transmitted from the communicator to the recipient. The media ensures the transmition of the message through the space and time from the source to the recipient. The mass communication is a process of transmitting the messages helped by the mass media from the source to the countless mass of recipients.

In order to accomplish a mass communication it is necessary to exist a mass media which will perform diffusion of the message that is the information from the source to the massive audience. In mass media, within the channel to transmit the messages are included: the press, radio, television and internet. All this media have a specific technical-technological characteristics with which the completed messages will be difused.

The role of the mass media in creating and strengthening of the public opinion is big. Much bigger is the role of the free and independent media in the process of democratization because contributes in the growth and freedom of expression and thinking. "In modern societies, getting the information is critical for the quality of decision making by the citizens and the legislators".1

With the growth of the mass media and their capability to transmit information and messages of whole populations at the same time, the communication itself is changed at the same time. With a bigger scope of the electronic media, combined with the enlarged over prepareness of the journalists and with the commercialization, have turned the media into a more basic social institution, to a large scale shifting the traditional organizations of the civil society as a basic mean connecting the individuals with the wider social and political world.

For a longer period of time the media have been observed as a protection of the citizens from the misuse by the goverment. "The media has been for a longer period of time a source of citizenship, known as the fourth power, a power opposing the decisions of the government which might have had a harmful effect on the people. The fourth power does not have this power any more"- says Ignatio Ramon, editor of Le Monde Diplomatique and professor on communications in the University of Paris. 2 Ramon quotes that transnational companies became more powerful than the governments and they also overtake the media.3

The meaning of the media in politics is getting bigger and bigger with the time passing by. These two fields are more and more connected, and independently from the type of the media whether they are newspapers, radio, television or internet. Politics in the modern societies can be understood as a system organizing and governing the public life and taking care of the overall interests of the citizens. Organizing the public life should enable a process of free choice of multiple possibilities. Politics as an activity of organizing public affairs and public interests of the citizens deals with all the citizens, on different levels and that is why the interest for the political happenings is always great.

The role of the mass media in creating and strengthening the public opinion is big. It is much bigger the role of the free and independent media in the process of democratization because contributes to enlarge the right of freedom of expression and thought. „In modern societies, availability of information is rather critical for the quality of making decisions by the citizens and legislators."4

With the growth of the mass media and their ability to transmit information and messages of whole populations, and at the same time essentially is changed the communication itself. With a higher reach of electronic media, combined with the enlarged credibility of the journalists and with the commercialization have made media more and more a basic social institution, to a great degree shifting the traditional organizations of the social society as a basic mean with which the individuals are connected with the wider social and political world.

2.MASS MEDIA AND MASS COMMUNICATION

The notion „media" in the literature of encyclopedia and vocabularies means the mean of communication through which the message or the information can be transmited from the communicator to the recipient without considering who takes the role of the communicators, that is recipients, individuals or groups, as actors of the communication practice. The notion *„mass media"* shows a mean

for mass communication with the mediator of which is realized a diffusion of the message, the information from the source toward a countless mass of recipients, that is massive audience. 5 In mass media are counted : press, radio, film, television, internet. Each of this media have their technical-technological specifics and is functionally able to difuse the already collected messages

If we begin from the widest definition that each mean with the help of which is ensured the transmittion of the message through space and time, till the source of the recipients , is a medium for communication. Than parallel to the communication techniques, for that aim, can serve and the organic functions of the man - the function of the language, organs of the speech and stating the message. As media techniques, are counted: the printed technology, techniques of massive diffusion of the message helped by the radio waves, TV channels, that is film tapes etc. According to this, the way of shaping the message is in direct dependency from the media techniques. The modalities of the communication practice, are also in a direct dependency from the type of the media. Within the interpersonal form of communication very typical are the means for oral communication: the live man`s language, oral communication of messages, while on the other hand the communicative techniques such as: print, radio-wave, television channel or a film projection, fit the model of mass communication, that is of direct communication.

Mass communication is a process of sending messages through mass media (means of mass communication) from the choice of the countless mass of recipients. As any other type of communicative practice and mass communication is realized by manipulating the symbols that carry completely specific meanings. Without that can not be transmitted the message to the source of the recipient. That is why mass media are just channels through which messages are transmitted, organized by their important media. The subjects of the communication act can exchange messages only if they are used the same code systems and language. If this condition has not been fulfilled, the communication can not be realized, leaving aside the functioning of the mass media.

2.1. The characteristics of mass-media

The mass media are a subsystem of the system of mass communication. In vthe communicology literature there are several explanations, but in this research, the determination is for the definition and characteristics explained by Dennis McKwail (2000) in his work: „The theory of mass communication”. 6 Mass media are:

A different sum of activities (creation of media contents);

Include different technological configurations (radio, television, videotext, newspapers, books);

They are connected with the formally constituted institutions or media channels (systems, stations, publications);

Operate in accordance with certain laws, regulations and attitudes (professional codex and practice , audience, social expectations and habits);

They are a product of people that have certain roles (owners, regulators, producers, distributers, advertisers. parts of the audience);

They transmit to the mass audience informations, entertainments, images and symbols.

Its influence on the work of the mass media is also done by: business-groups: through announcements, advertisements, then the government: through its regulation and control, laws,imposing control, as well as imposing of taxes, the phenomena of ads which the government and the legal institutions give. The third type of influence which is made on the mass media is the influence of the judicial system, especially , the judicial decisions, then some members from the criminal and citizen`s laws. The influence on mass media is done by the audience as well 7.

There is no doubt that the media are the most important mainsprings in the creation of the thoughts of the people in one society. But in order to realize the influence, it has to be stressed that depending on the topic there are different possibilities for influence. It also should be taken into consideration the rule that the less the primary experiences of the consumer are (it is spoken about young people, or people who have tasted very well their life) or the capacity of the information, the bigger is the capacity of the influence of the media. The more it is reported for an event, problem or happening, the more is being provoked the public opinion and maintains the interest of a higher rank.According to Michael Schenk (1987) "The media influence the process of the structuring of the themes of the public opinion, whenever there are conditions for that". Here under the conditions are meant: the differences among the media; the meaning of specific topics; the development of the topic and the intensity of reporting. 8 The power of the media can roughly be defined as „direct or indirect influence on the societies or better said on a rough or refined manipulation of the public opinion“. 9

2.2 Functions of the media

The mutual influence of politics and media is very big. In their mutually conditioned relation to a great degree can be noticed to a large scale the informative function of the means for mass communication. In today`s conditions, the political reality in one society to a large degree depends on the kind of picture the audience gets from the political happenings about the media. On the other hand, the media are directed toward the political factors and happenings as a result of the interest of the public opinion about politics. The mutual interest of the media and politics is mostly seen in the mutual function of the media. But, still, aside this the media undertake other functions as well on their work from which the most important ones are the analytical, observation and critical function (as well as Media Watchdog-function). As part of the usual journalist`s practice and tradition, the media not only transmit the messages and information from the political factors, but they also analyze, select, make comments, give their opinion and reflect their own attitudes about them. They also ask for and transmit opinions and attitudes of other competent figures and groups (professional figures, ex doers of public functions and responsibilities.) When speaking about mediating, in the media practice are shown frequently numerous differences in their functioning and interests. Politics as a very sensitive public function, carries a huge responsibility, and many times tries to have a bigger control on the contents and information which the media get from the political factors, as well as on what the media transmit to the public. The media are on a constant race for new and exclusive information which try to get or find for those who perform the functions or within the frames of the political institutions. As a result of this contradiction, very frequently happen arguable situations. When speaking about the analytical function, the media put the happening and situations from the political sphere under a constant analytical lens, which mainly this realized as a critical one, in this way it contributes in a continous contradiction with the political factors. From this can be concluded that the political factors and the media are on a constant push for overpower in the process of creating the public opinion. The political subjects are in a constant attempt to impose their attitudes as natural and acceptable for the media. The media on the other hand reformulate and analyze political situations and put themselves in a partnership relation with the political factors when it comes to sending messages toward the wider public and the creation of the public opinion. This kind of media reality can result with a situation when a media will give up under the pressure of the political factors which can be imposed on the media and thus restraint or completely stultify the freedom of the media.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF POLITICS AND MEDIA

The media and politics are closely connected, that is they can not exist without each other. The majority of sociologists, an expert on communication argue about the influence of the media on politics and vice versa, and they proved that the basic condition of existence and functioning of the media and politics is their mutual functioning.

Politics represents a process through which a group of people brings decisions about crucial social questions on which depends the living of the wider mass of people. It has got such a power and force, because leads all the internal as well as the external actions, dealing with a concrete country, dictates the law, regulations and the norms of life, that is from it depend the quality of people`s life and the overall life of the people of a country. All this is connected with the extremely desire to rule, to be dominant to be able to realize radical changes sometimes with a very good but sometimes with a very bad aim. Politics moves the whole world, because from her the business depend on, and furthermore from the business depends the profit, from the profit depends the way of life. The fact that politics has the right to decide on the name of the whole nation, determines its power. But the solutions which it finds for the whole nation, undoubtedly ask for improvement from the citizens. Here the media take their role.

The basic aim of the media is to enable information for the public for what is going on in the world. In this context media serve the people, at the same time gaining profit as well as benefits in the sense of building credibility and trust in relation with the objectivity of the information which they represent. Here also lies the right of the dispositions of the public word. Having power is very closely connected with the profit which the media can gain. The media are interdisciplinary field, which elaborate topics which are above all interesting and appealing to the percipients, and politics takes the first place. That is why, the media sell information from which they can profit. Public debates and public political discussions which are being launched on our TV are a subject of interest for the majority of population, that is why the dame are being as marketing from where the media realize their main profit. The most expensive advertisements are not shown during movies or entertaining shows, but after or during programs of political content where the guests are high government representatives who debate about relevant and critical social issues.

Politics, on the other hand, can not exist without the voice of the media, because only through it, it will get to know the plans, activities, actions, the plans of the political parties with which would inform about the political goodness of everybody. The media are necessary for politics, because without them even the political elections would not be possible. They are channels which the parties use to emphasize their missions and visions, through which the citizen will be given the chance to create perception for the same party. During this period the politicians use tacticts and techniques which would enable them a better understanding and reception of ideas which they would like to transmit, especially for that structure of the society which lacks schooling and education. Since politics in principle is manipulation, the politicians very skillfully can transform the bad news. That is why the media about politics help them in building an individual political image as well as an identity.

3.1.Ownership as a factor in the relation media-politics

Theoretical-practical procession of the media brings us to the fact that they function in a very complex social context and that there are many factors that have a big influence on them and generally can be devided into general and individual ones. As general factors are considered ideology, the system of values and habits, tradition, moral and ethical principles which are present in the same society. Individual factors of influence are personal persuasions and understandings, the level of education, experience, ethnical, religious and national belonging, political inclination, etc. The political factors deal with the political figures such as those who carry public functions, institutions, organs, political parties

and their representatives. The negative political-economic influence can be indirect. It means obstruction of working in media through blocking or selection of the running of information from institutions toward the media. Another way is interruption is sponsorship and advertisement activities, lobbing as well as dealing with the ownership. Another way of realizing the negative political influence on the media is making pressure on the directors and journalists. In this atmosphere of a different influence, the media choose topics and the way of their presentation. The result of this kind of influence is a retroactive influence on the media within the political subjects and the audience through creating `an agenda setting` or a media framework.

3.1.1. Agenda setting

The agenda setting, that is the media framework is a product of the media reality which can be characterized as a media process of creating a public consciousness for the most emphasized and the most important public works From the great number of happenings and topics which have been registered during only one day by the media, the editor chooses only some of those which he considers as the most important ones or the most interesting ones. This means that the media have the key role in forming the public topics or rejecting the events or information which do not enter in their program plan. The agenda setting influences on the type of questions which should be given an information about, be debated and thought about. In this context, the expert on politics Bernard Cohen says- "The press, that is the media, are not that successful in telling the people what to think, but it is surprising how successful it is in telling people on what to think". 10 The process of forming the political-informational contents of the media, create the media reality which differs a lot from the real reality. The continous presence of a certain topic and its media treatment through various forms of media expressions turns out to be a media hostage or Media Advocacy (Media Advocacy). In media terminology it is defined as- "strategic usage of the media in promoting a certain initiative or attitude". 11 When the media will become hostages of a certain problematic and they will openly express that in public, than the specific problem treated, will be transformed into a public question by them.

3.1.2.The filtration of the content

Neglecting specific questions as media problem, that is when in media situations it will be pushed from the public promotion and exposed in front of the public, represents a process of filtration of the contents which can be registered on all the possible levels of functioning of the media. Still in practice it is mainly located in higher instances of the media structures, that is more frequently on an ownership or editorial relationship where the most important decisions are brought and which form the editorial politics of an editorial board of a medium in general. As a matter of fact, the selection of the events and contents is one of the main processes during the journalistic work with the information. Thus the media use a versatile and terminological language and material which forms this kind of a struggle on the behalf of their interests, different from the rest, as for example-special interests, "national interests", "`state or economic priorities". There are several levels of filtering the contents on which the media make their reports on:

a) ownership and orientation towards the profit

The media in spite of their declared democratic role and existence because of their consumers, still are organizations which are oriented toward the economic maintenance and realization of the profit.

b) the withstanding of the sponsors

Investing in publishing a newspaper or emitting a TV-programe requires a strong support from the sponsors, and those who can not get this simply dissappear from the media scene. In that way the media must ask for their support and as soon they will get it, there is no other way to afford themselves to lose it with which they would publish stressed critical contents for the work and interests of the companies.

c)information from institutions and other ``centers of power``

What the media most frequently emit is an information or paraphrasis resulting from a very small circle of subjects who share mutual ideological, political as well as economic interests. Their main aim on one hand to keep their attitude about the openness of the institutions for the public, but on the on the other hand to unable uncontrolled flow of information.

3.2The media and the public opinion

The phrase of Marshal McClown, "Media is a message", clarifies the thesis that the medium itself is a message, thus creating a simbiotic relationship through which is noticed the influence of the media on the recipients through the way in which the message has been presented and transmitted. This shows that the media have an enormous role in creating an image about the reality or unreality, especially in the political processes. The existence of the democratic society is conditioned from two inter-connected factors- politics and media. The fact that the media have in their disposal the right of the public word, determines their power. They are the public voice which contact the public consisting of millions. That is why, they are a very important tool in creating the public opinion.

The public opinion consists of attitudes, opinions, and believes for certain political as well as social matters which are present within a certain public or a great number of people. The public opinion is conditioned from three elements: public, message and media. There has to be a message directed toward somebody, toward the citizens or other target group, and there must be a way through which the same message will be transmitted, that is a communication channel depending on the choice and competency. The public opinion is inevitable for politics because it is the only way through which the politicians can gain support, votes, sympathies, but on the other hand, it can also be their greatest opponent. Public opinion is directed and controlled directly from the politicians, who tend to create the kind of perception on the audience which will appeal to them, which will be useful to them, which will help them in realizing certain plans. The perception which they will create in the public is the public opinion. The propaganda and different types of manipulation, as well as other tactics, which help in forming and shaping the public opinion.

Apart from the role of the politicians in the process of creating the public opinion, a great role play the owners of the certain media houses. The Macedonian media market is small and unstable because our television companies are properties of certain political personalities or big businessmen who own a capital to own even two media, televisions and a newspaper. The rest of the media which are unprofitable consider themselves as second ones and not that important, maybe as a result of the fact that they themselves have not managed to form their own faithful audience. But,since there are little televisions which are dominant, powerful and influential, it is those who create the media scene in Macedonia, thus gaining the possibility to create, to entice the public opinion.

The recipients of the media content have the right of choice. That choice is connected with the way in which the media function, with the way in which it places the given information and what it wants to achieve with it. Since the media today represents a channel of information, it is the one that dictates the rules. The political happenings, events, quarrels and debates are presented by the media, the way in which the media will decide to transmit that, it is it that has an influence on the audience, because through the media it learns, judges, analyses, makes contexts. But finally, they are so powerful that manage to persuade the audience, to suggest as well.

4. PERSUASION AND POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

"People as a matter of fact, believe that they direct the words, but it happens sometimes that the words with their power come back and have an influence on the ratio".12

Explorers of the mass culture must concentrate with those factors that have for an iam to predetermine somebody`s behavior (mental or physical), on a direct, or camuflated way, that is with a persuasive function, one of those of which the mass culture is being made of. The function which was above mentioned, is based on the tendency to realize a real influence on the way of thinking or behavior of the user, so that the offered content will be dominated a different kind of function, such as: esthetic, emotional, and similar. The user as a matter of fact, does not want to be a subject manipulation, that is why it functions so that the function of persuasion is more efficient if it is hidden. *Persuation has to be understood as a long range process, action or activity. Government mainly uses a conservative speech full of praising of its deeds, while the opposition* mainly uses liberal speech with promises for a better tomorrow. Macedonia has passed long enough a period in a pluralistic atmosphere of the persuader is to notice these two opposed kinds of communication of the politicians with the people, from the aspect where the politician is found at a given time, position, or opposition. The taskp of the persuader is to make a shift the audience from the position of ignorance, being careless and apathethic into a position of knowledge , care and action which suits him.

Manipulation as a discourse marks the use of different data or information with one aim, to seduce the public, that is to direct the attention of the audience toward a message or meaning which the author, without paying attention about the difference of the validity of the data, tends to challenge to achieve a total control over the recipients of the data.

"The notion propaganda means an activity the aim of which is to influence the wider number of classes through the path of spreading ideas". 13 The word propaganda has got an emphasized negative meaning because it means dissemination of ideas, information, roumurs, with one and only aim, to help or to make harm to a certain institution, cause, matter or an individual.

Mainly, the bigger political subjects own their media through which are being dispersed the truths, half truths, and lies with one and only aim to over- influence the audience and to change the general truths, that is to strengthen or to weaken the same ones. The selection of the news is a very powerful tool in the hands of the politicians. For example, not any ruling political party is interested to talk about the corruption of the state administration or for how unsuccessful its political plans on economics are. On the contrary, the political elites are trying to obtain the media of the political opponent, to discredit them, to intimidate them, to buy them, to close them with one and only aim- the creation of a monopole on the market of information, which actually makes it easy to continue further on with the propaganda. In the apsence of a free media space, the rest of the political subjects can not present their ideas, achievements, and dissolutions. The cult of the personality as a propaganda technique is created when an individual uses the mass media to create an idealized and heroic image for oneself. In public is forced an image of the leader as an honest, sincere, faultless and wise person who dedicates his life to the nation. The analysis from the use of propaganda techniques in media reality in Macedonia show that the attention is frequently shifted in moments when news are to be presented, which destroy the image of the political subject-the doer of the propaganda.

5. CONCLUSION

In the developed democratic societies, the effects of the public opinion are reflected negatively on the government if it tries to run away from its self responsibility or transparency, misusing the media. Sharing the government, is not enough to guarantee the democratic values as well as the ruling of the

righteousness. That is why, it is the public opinion which has the role of the invisible, uninstitutional guardian of the democratic principles, on which has to lean the work of the state institutions and carriers of the functions. The public opinion has got the force to ask for an answer, responsibility as well as openness toward the government. It has got three elements: audience, message and media. The audience are the citizens as a whole, or a group of citizens from a particular profession or field. The message is their mutual thought for a specific, more or less a general problem or an important issue which is built on the basis of their interests. The political reality initiated and shown through the media, is nothing but telling that to a high state official can lack money from the budget or support from the coalition partner, but nothing can irritate or challenge him more than criticism from the public. Of course, if it is spoken about a personality with a highly developed political culture, and for the society a personality with a highly developed political culture for the society and with a functional democracy for the society. This is so, because the public can not live without democracy, the same as democracy that can not live without the public. Above all, the biggest advantage of the public opinion formed through the media consists of the fact that the responsibility or irresponsibility about the work of the government and the political subjects is not requested only from one election to the other, but keeps this matter open day after day. That is why the public opinion represents a powerful democratic , which protects and promotes the basis of a good government.

The media is the only one which mostly has an influence on our attitudes, thoughts and interests. It is the media with its mixture of languages, image, tone and context which is the main source of information in the XI century and which has an enormous influence on the public, thus creating the values of a society. In the Republic of Macedonia there is one already practiced way of the influence of the media on the public opinion. The Macedonian political parties according to the character of their job, tend to be more frequently in front of the eyes of their public. In their struggle of conquering a bigger segment from the audience they use communicational techniques for getting a bigger segment of the public, and to occupy as more space and time as possible in the channels of the informational-communicational system. In this way, the Macedonian politicians enjoy in the pleasures-to be spoken about them publicly all the time-. Their media political functioning in achieving legitimacy in front of the public, that is a function of maintaining the legitimacy or getting into the government, corresponds with the thesis that communication decides about the success or unssuccess of the individuals, organizations, social groups, as well as the overaall society. The manipulation of the media in accordance with the politicians is made with the selections of topics, events and the language on which are presented on a certain media and on a certain time, during which are made different attempts for a beforehand creation of the public opinion. So the fierce criticism of George Orwell about the politics and the English language of the past century, still very safely stands on the ground of the 21 century. Focusing on the language as an instrument of expression, the media create a message toward the public thinking, with a language which hides or hinders the thought. So, the message as an element of public opinion, represents a tool that can manipulate the same. This manipulation is possible, and at the same time successful with an enlarged manifestation of incencerity while formulating the message. With this incencerity the public is faced while formulating and presenting the political messages.

“In our era there is no thing like standing aside from politics. All the questions are political questions,

and politics itself is a sum of lies, movements, stupidities, hatred and schizophrenia.” (G. Orwell)14

This criticism by Orwell today is based on the constant struggle among the politicians and the media which leads toward a constant struggle between the politicians and the media, which leads toward the striking changed construction of the messages and the language in general.

Endnotes:

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9 Gruevski, T,2007:158

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