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MEDIATIZED WORD. INFORMATION. EDUCATION. MANIPULATION

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to propose a twofold approach on the subject matter at hand, namely: a “positive” outlook which seeks to demonstrate that the media in general, and television in particular, are perceived as having a well-defined role in informing and educating the public; and the second one would be a “negative” spin on the situation which would expose the untold purpose of the media – manipulation. The education achieved through mass-media in an informal one, encompassing the totality of influences which exist outside the classic school environment and its adherent extra-curricular activities. In certain situations, this may very well provide a chance, an opportunity to those who lack access to basic information or education, individuals living in secluded areas, disoriented young people, destitute groups, or families living their lives isolation. Mass-media affirms a system of values which advocates for the public right to information. Its educational role is paramount to the proper functioning of a free, civil, and democratic society, as it combats corruption and power abuse. Media is the gatekeeper to our very way of life, promoting a standard of civil defense which guards against the threats of injustice.*

Keywords: *media, education, manipulation, dominance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to provide a twofold approach on the subject matter at hand, namely: a *positive* outlook which seeks to demonstrate that the media in general, and television in particular, are perceived as having a well-defined role in informing and educating the public; and the second one would be a *negative* spin on the situation which would expose the untold purpose of the media – manipulation.

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extra-curricular activities. In certain situations, this may very well provide a chance, an opportunity to those who lack access to basic information or education, individuals living in secluded areas, disoriented young people, destitute groups, or families living their lives isolation.

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There are several circumstances under which education and information of young people take place. The media represents that

group of factors of education, called to amplify, create, or diversify knowledge and behavioral experiences of individuals. Press along with other factors: church, school, family, cultural institutions should not work independently or isolated but together by combining their functions. Most importantly, instead of competing against each other, it is crucial to establish and maintain a relationship of mutuality and reliability among these educational environments.

The media today is perceived as an essential component of the modern world, with a universality that is not ascribed to any other type of institution. Written media, radio, and television can act on: individuals, groups, institutions, or even society as a whole. At the same time, it could affect the human personality: on a cognitive level by changing the image of the world, on an affective level by creating or changing attitudes and feelings, and on a behavioral level by disrupting the individuals' way of acting and reacting.

The system of values that media claims to promote: the right to public information, freedom of speech and information, and also the access to information. Its educational role is paramount to the proper functioning of a free, civil, and democratic society, as it combats corruption and power abuse. The facts may be accompanied by reviews and comments involving the journalist's personality provided that he does not distort the events by presenting biased or malicious formulations, all of these aspects constituting the tradition of the old European journalism.

Other times, the media can be criticized for creating worthless cultural products, being considered as a powerful means of mass manipulation and gradual destruction of personality at both individual and collective levels.

From this perspective, the media creates false needs and offers the public artificial pleasures imperceptibly turning that audience into slaves.

The information itself has virtually no value pertinent to the subject of education if it is not intended to judge, interpret different contexts [1]

An uninformed or less informed individual is a citizen who is easy to manipulate by

interest groups. The right of citizens to information involves the possibility of a person to have access to all information sources. The meaning given by Article 31 of the Constitution defines the concept of information saying that "citizens only have access to information of public interest, not the state Secret" is clear.

The purpose of education in human values is the accession to independence and professional competence. The media has no power of control, like state institutions, but the impact on society is overwhelming, develops critical spirit, creates currents of opinion, launches, and propels personalities and public figures. But not everything circulated bears the stamp of validity and relevance of value, for example: a slapstick film, a useless product, a drug that proves to be injurious to health etc.

2. MEANS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

2.1 A SWOT Analysis of the Media. In the last century, the media has developed an impressive, overwhelming, platform in speech, expression, and communication. "Competition between newspapers, competition between newspapers and television stations stands the test of time. TV journalists are forced, due to the fact that a competing television media covered the flood, to seek to cover items that others have not had" [2].

In past centuries, the media was in its seriousness era, available only to a small circle of initiates, Enlightenment thinkers who discovered it as a necessity to enlightenment, empowering representatives of the popular classes in an effort to develop autonomous thinking training, elevated and even critical analytical prowess.

A SWOT analysis is used to identify and evaluate the following aspects: Strong Points, Weak Points, Opportunities, and Threats

2.2 Weaknesses. We can say that we are dealing with thriving business information pouring plentifully without the possibility of verifying whether the informational material is true or false [11]. Communist legacy media strongly influenced the nature of a current lack of a clearly defined political system, relevant to central control, attitudes of journalists



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formed in the fifty years of communist rule contributing to the maintaining of the old system. Mass media today "remains more of a political than an informational tool" [7], according to Peter Gross's observations, "perpetuating the communist enthusiasm for manipulation being unfamiliar with the themes and events of the day, a tool for control rather than education; the repercussions of such misinformation and manipulations thriving in a state of civic and political infantilism" in which most Romanians are maintained [1].

Journalistic manipulation: the opposite hypostasis always aggressive and threatening, we have today envisioned the image of a subject controlled by the power press owners. This phenomenon is defined as a 'Lap-dog', when the dog licks the hands of its master. Limiting the media, manufacturing controlled reports results in loss of credibility.

2.3 Strengths. One of the media's strong points is its ability to act like a 'watchdog', regarding the proper functioning of state powers (legislative, executive and judicial). It is recognized as the fourth state power, monitoring how everything is respected and defended, overseeing the constitutionality of the rule of law and the power it has transferred unto the citizen in order to help him resist the abuses Power.

Through the press the people will always have a voice, and that voice shall be their absolute guarantee for freedom and protection against all types of abuse.

Mass media protects all social categories for one reason or another seeing beyond interests or particular problems in the power structure, acting as a 'watchdog' - always in an aggressive and threatening stance - "acting on behalf of the public drawing attention towards abuses of power" [4].

The programs and the amount of information provided entails forming a common consistent baggage of ideas and images, and the effects may trigger desired or undesired changes in the way different people are defined and in particular the extent to which the information they need is made available to them.

The press is a factor of global solidarity, meeting the needs of individuals: communication, adapting to the community, perpetuating the common values and identifying itself with those models that the community considers to be 'landmarks of action'. Also it is making efforts to change the old identity: combatting ideological indoctrination, endeavoring to mobilize the population, combat the personality cult, acting as a compelling vector of truth, creating a new image, obtaining credibility, the pursuit of unlimited roles for freedom and social evolution: educational, formative, the very consciousness of the free people, voice of the critical spirit.

2.4 Threats. Mihai Coman believes that the classical forms of limitation and influence burdening the mass media might be: a rigid legislative framework and system of regulations, economic pressures, political conventions through hegemony (and neutralizing the imposition of an ideology) denying access to information by manipulating journalists [4].

There is a 'pursuit of profit' in the press today, which is likely to disappear under the economic pressure. Some analysts provide solutions that seem to be at hand: to turn to other institutions in various areas of activity, able to assure the existence of alternative forms of financing.

The problem with wooden language, which seeks not to inform but to impress the receiver through an incantation emptied of content, placing the information submitted at the end of sentences that start with superfluous platitudes also represents a threat to the media as we know it.

Besides this, the danger of low morality in guidance shows an aesthetic detachment in relation to the serious problems of uncollected ways in which veracity tends to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction.

2.5 Opportunities. “A positive step for the future of Romanian journalism if and only if young people will be able to influence the profession and society in more ways than they wish to change their older brethren” [7].

- Freedom – “a free market of ideas” a competitive space, a space balanced only by the logic of supply and demand (intellectual) “may face a space where different streams of opinion can converge” [4]

Changes occur based on innovative visions and progress is made not by respect for traditions but by challenging the beaten path. Hegel used to think that history progresses through the worst of events.

It is important for man to form the personality of the modern individual, facilitating the handling of media messages in order to decrypt the meanings of various information relating to media operative sectors so as to select and appropriate information sources. It is about the sources relating to the issuing of new codes of reading itself, we are connected simultaneously to alternative issuers thus neutralizing false information, activating the skills needed to communicate with peers, behaviours that can perform and process through various exercises and educational practices.

3. MANIPULATION AND DOMINATION

“The effects of (political) changes in the media reinforce attitudes; or even change them altogether. The impact is greater on the undecided, especially if they say the same thing at the same time (= consistency) or when analyzing a small number of problems (= strength). Depending on how the media deals

with the political phenomena, the influence can be positive or negative” [10]. Despite the methodological difficulties in solving this problem, one thing is certain for sociologists: “No summary of the effects, however brief, could neglect the role of the media in supporting, strengthening and orientating patterns or in maintaining social control and sometimes in shaping the symbolic legitimacy of a government” [14].

Centuries ago Sun Tzu glorified manipulation by disinformation, deception and division.

“If the code relative to the rewards and punishments is clearly drafted and implemented expeditiously, then you can use the crowd as if it were a handful of people” [13]. Or consider the known guile of Ulysses and the gift offered to the Trojans: a wooden horse inside of which the Greeks were hidden in order to conquer the city - encompassing all modern manipulation techniques. Since the early years of school we learn that even the Dacians were skilled in inventing wiles to mislead opponents on their intentions or the number of fighters available.

In our century, we saw the emergence of specially designed psychological weapons: radio and print media have contributed a lot from this standpoint especially during the two world wars, as precursors to the television media. “The first Gulf War was an overall success in handling all modern media techniques. The images of prisoners had a strong emotional impact on the enemy, like those scenes in which soldiers came out of the underground shelters and kissed the winners’ boots, contributed substantially to the demoralization of the enemy and their mass surrender” [12].

The Second Gulf War brought a new formula: the embedding of journalists in teams of fighters, on-site, thus making journalists radiate emotion to the general public whose hearts are ‘ticking’ with love towards the ‘hero’ that transmitted, sometimes live, every event with spectacular effect. We are again dealing with the notion of manipulation.

Very convincing, as was the live experience is the media experience of the Revolution of 1989, which generated more feelings of doubt, mental bewilderment



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because of manipulated news, false rumors and misinformation.

Modern European society tries to explain, but also to define the need for handling individuals, and for that, we must admit that: if our system of accumulation allows us, then the media domination will undoubtedly occur.

The French, for example, launched the concept of psychological field actions aimed at two levels of organization. The first relates to strengthening its own psycho-moral actions of mental protection. The second level includes actions of demoralization, poisoning and disinformation of the enemy [9].

The concept of manipulation itself leaves freedom for interpretation. Perhaps this unravels all the confusion of terms under which we analyze and comment on the phenomenon. We are talking about manipulation "when a particular social situation is created intentionally to influence the reactions and behavior towards the desired effect of the manipulator" [5].

Another feature of manipulation indirectly concerns itself with the concept of distance, between the one who manipulates the one manipulated. First it acts on the unconscious force of suggestion which is very large and the individual acting under pressure is not aware of this influence.

Therefore, cracking or changing the reference system may be easier as the shock caused by formulas (slogans) can elicit a strongly emotional response. There is talk of grooming and handling information, although both are intertwined.

Among the techniques that illustrate the effectiveness of these effects or events, which are all generative, we can detect "the foot-in-the-door technique", "the door-to-the-nose technique" bait strategies, manipulation

protocols achieved through subliminal perception [5].

Informational manipulation is basically the method by which the actual act of domination and media influence extends in order to disseminate modified information throughout the world, aided by the development of communications technologies, diversification of media outlets that broadcast the information contributing to the achievement of this reality.

The term propaganda originally had a neutral sense, which is to spread the faith, then an opinion, a certain doctrine. Propaganda continues to be associated with lying and manipulation. It can be *open*, and would correspond to all modern public relations services, and *covert* (hide its origin), based on libel, slander and defamation.

Black propaganda is the most effective, addressing the most pressing issues and giving the impression that there are sources in the enemy territory. It may use the most perverse means of causing panic, confusion, tension, insecurity, by rumors, false alarms and phone calls, blackmail, imitating the voice of personalities known or psychological pressure on them (threats, seizure).

The grey propaganda, does not specify the source, but openly operates against the opponent, addressing topics that capture public hungry for the sensational. Depending on the method predominantly used propaganda may have emotional support, factual or persuasive [3].

The first aims to provide the deliberate provocation of strong emotional feelings and adhesions using images, verbal formulas and symbols with great emotional gravity. This propaganda manipulates the population vulnerable because of a low level of education,

especially in areas of the world where poverty and illiteracy prevail.

Propaganda with factual support is based on concrete facts and specially chosen criteria generally intertwined with the persuasive, through skillful use of rhetorical rules for capturing the emotional and intellectual audience. It is of great importance to ensure protection because “confrontation occurs on the battlefield of the human psyche, where opinions, beliefs and attitudes, are consistently reinforced or modified in the desired direction” [8].

3.1 Countering Manipulation. The strategy of countering should be aimed at the source (from where manipulation originates), understand the factors that mediate communication, motivation, technical means, the characteristics of targets, always monitor the effects arising due to manipulation, and explore new methods of countering them.

At an individual level, it requires a level of analysis and thorough self-analysis, alternating moments of detachment with involvement [5], the identification of discontinuities, the search for hidden motivations, the use and comparison of independent information sources and even a certain independence from the mainstream mentality.

Eventually, we cannot escape manipulation easily. We are often dominated, but in fact we manipulate ourselves at times, nobody forces us.

If aggression is an attribute of power and power is knowledge, victory shall favor the one who knows more. Everything is manipulation, conscious or not, negative or positive, depending on whose interests are satisfied. The dominator is aware that his domination brings forth an imperceptible influence over the person or group concerned.

Wars come and go, victories and failures are often reversed, history judges and the history is written by the winners. Only manipulation remains eternal, as a weapon of deception and awakening, as a weapon that does not kill, but only poisons and cripples our fragile intellects.

3.2 Recent acts manipulation. In July 2006, a reporter of the newspaper *Adevărul* posed as a representative of the School Inspectorate in Dambovită, and took 40

envelopes belonging to the National Examination and Assessment Service (SNEE). Only a few minutes after the fact, the Ministry of Education was informed about the daily management of employee negligence SNEE. The reporter went to a police station and handed over the sealed envelopes. What were the consequences: The Minister of Education sacked the Director of SNEE and the Romanian Prime Minister announces resignation of the state secretary for school education.

Effects of manipulation: the newspaper *Adevărul* devotes the front page to the story, and almost all other publications take on the subject. But there was no issue of journalistic fairness involved. Following this, conclusions are drawn towards terrible generalizations, political statements are made in haste, and the subject enters the media agenda. Nobody addressed the issue of deception regarding the reporter who had no formal quality regarding the matter. The purpose and consequences are all that matters.

Revista 22, through its editor Bogdan Diaconu, published an article in July 2006, to trigger public awareness into action. Diaconu condemns the newspaper's gesture, stating: “The action of the media escapes from the truth and profession of journalism, legitimizing a morally bankrupt journalistic approach. From now on, everyone will do the same, proving flaws, incompetence, errors, and frauds utilizing incorrect and immoral methodologies. This will encourage: 1) an innovation in investigative journalism, namely, creating events; 2) an old practice, but lawful, undercover investigation by falsifying identity, borrowing an official capacity; and 3) the introduction of new functions in the utility of a free press in a state of law, namely the press controls state institutions. The inventor is the Romanian press as a whole - with its lack of accountability, professionalism, values and self-analysis” [6].

In journalism, according to the teachings of David M. Friedman, “documentation is not theft [...] it is perfectly legitimate to consult, ask to borrow or buy any documents from their rightful owners, but it is dangerous to sneak in without authorization” [6].



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Ethical codes prohibit practices such taking formal qualities. According to the Charter of the French journalists' professional duties, "A journalist worthy of the name will not permit the use of securities or qualities that they have to resort to dishonest means to obtain information or to abuse the good faith of someone". The Code of Ethics for Romanian journalists says that "The use of unfair means to procure news shall not be allowed".

3.3 Another blatant example of manipulation. In the September issue of the newspaper *Gardianul* we encountered an article which stated that "The Roma man Valeriu Nicolae had bamboozled UEFA and through his action he had done his country of Romania a grave disservice".

The article sadly demonstrates that racism in Romania is not only limited to a handful of football hooligans, it is also very much present in mainstream media as well.

The article starts with the following statement: "After Steaua's home pitch was suspended by UEFA, the vice-president of the European Bureau for Roma Information, Valeriu Nicolae, took credit for this abominable attack against Romanian football". Not only does the article initiate and manipulate feelings of racial hatred, through the expression pattern *Rroma X...*, but the author of the article himself directly commandeers emotional functionalities of racism by referring to the event as an "abominable attack against Romanian football". The article published by the newspaper *Gardianul*, has all the makings of blatant incitement towards racial hatred.

4. CONCLUSION

A message will stream across multiple stages in order to reach its media zenith, from the release of that pertinent information, its subsequent transference inside the pages of a newspaper, until the final conception of intact information.

The obsession with media manipulation exists within a paradoxical functional paradox, as it is often ludicrous and justified at the same time.

On many occasions, The term "manipulation" is wrongly used, launching ridiculous theories that someone is "watching from above", but basically the Romanian press has all too often fostered its own existence between extremes, and luring its audience down this dangerous rabbit hole as a result.

We have debated, analyzed and exemplified this phenomenon, through the thorough understanding of the entire informational chain: influence, persuasion, propaganda, advertising, intoxication, hypnosis, brainwashing, neuro-linguistic communication, misinformation and manipulation,

If the audience is vigilant and duly warned over these phenomena, then he/she shall learn the necessary technique needed to resist media manipulation.

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