

News Literacy facing media populism

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ABSTRACT

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Changes in contemporary media are multi-dimensional and are the result of technological conditions having a significant impact on the functioning of media institutions. Taking into consideration that the media are the main providers of information on the compound socio-political reality, these changes should be diagnosed, and their impact on the news created by the media should be analyzed.

From the beginning of mass communication research, one of the most important academic reflections was the impact of media on audiences, which can be observed on three levels: cognitive, affective and behavioral. From the perspective of News Literacy, each of them is important. Cognitive and affective attitudes may have an effect of individuals' behavior, manifested, for example, during political elections. The hallmark of recent years in media news production, especially in coverage of political and economic issues, is the increase in populist communication, due to the following overlapping reasons: the progressive commercialization of the media, the increasing concentration of media ownership, media dependence on sources of financing (advertising), a strong focus on the commercial values of news, and the development of the Internet.

The concepts of framing and agenda setting / agenda building theory, that relate to shaping individual as well as group imaginations about social, political, economic realities in which people live and make decisions, are still heuristically useful. Studies related to the media logic and criteria of gatekeeping processes in media institutions are also of a great importance. The latter are part of the international comparative research project devoted to populist political communication and the role of the media in this process. As the aforementioned theoretical concepts are well described and discussed in literature and research, this presentation will focus on the phenomenon of populist political communication as a new theoretical category.

The phenomenon of populism in the media itself seems to be one of the most important challenges for News Literacy in contemporary democracies. According to recent European experiences, three approaches to the media populism can be identified: populism by the media, populism intended for the media, and populist

citizen journalism, created by audience members who are invited to publish their opinions and attitudes by media editors.

The abovementioned approaches define a complex area of challenges marked by ambiguous links between media and populism. These connections should be a matter of special interest to researchers and practitioners of News Literacy. The aim of this paper is to validate how and on what levels News Literacy may be a response to the challenges marked by the media populism.

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