The Activity of Mass Media Companies in Europe. The Impact Generated in the Economic, Social and Politic Systems

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Abstract

In the present research I will analyze the reactions and opinions of the interviewed persons regarding the efficiency of media at European level and also it will be analyzed the impact of media on the economic, social and politic systems in Europe. At the same time, it is followed the presentation of some comparisons between the public media companies and the private ones, in which concerns the generated impact.

Thereby, I will use the interview as a qualitative research method, to confirm or infirm the hypothesis of the present research.

1. Introduction

Mass media always represented a reference point for economy, society and politics, at global, and, implicit, at European level. Since antiquity, the communication networks offered opportunities for development and innovation, providing new structures for the economic and social systems. From the railway networks to the satellite networks and those of communications from the XX-XXI centuries, the communication networks allowed humanity to cross the borders of time and space, and to access and open new borders of human interaction and ingenuity (Iancu, 2006).

Starting with Lippmann’s theory, the theory of cultivation, of dependency, of establishing a daily order, of the silence spiral, etc., all those reveal the way in which mass media influences behaviors, directly or indirectly, for long or medium term. E. Noelle-Neumann appreciates that there is a percent, of approximately 20% from the individuals,
who express their convictions firmly, even if those are in contradiction with the dominant opinion (Almond, Verba, 1996).

The most important internal and external events, about which the majority of us have extremely strong formed opinions, were brought to us through mass media. From here the easiness with which media can influence the valuable judgments and the choices that people make and the decisions they can take following them. In accordance with the events presented at the news bulletins, in the written media, at radio, etc., people organize their lives. People depend on media to be informed, and those who know how to take advantage from this win a high percent from the public audience. First of all, all those modern ways, models of mass communication, act on human mind, probably television being the most used form of mass communication, because “the audience” is formed from a highly increased number of persons. Theorists agree that press and the other mass media instruments have effects on individuals, groups, institutions and masses, modeling the human personality under a cognitive, affective and behavioral aspect. A model, called the silence spiral, created by the German researcher Elisabeth Noelle Neuman, imagine the effects of communication on the individual in time, pushing the individual slow and weak to the boards of a spiral, in accordance with the communication that is accessible to the individual. Another model, simply than the other one, is that of the “two steps flux”, which takes into consideration the role of the opinion leader as a mediator between mass media and individual. The first step is the effect of media on the leader, the second step representing the influence of the leader on the other audient individuals (Almond, Verba, 2004).

One of the main functions of mass media is the function of socialization. Mass media determines a specific mode of social interaction, stimulation and organization of the human need for sociability. (Rotariu, 2010)

2. Case study

In the present research I will analyze the reactions and opinions of the interviewed persons regarding the efficiency of media at European level, and, at the same time, it will be analyzed the impact of media on the economic, social and politic systems in Europe. I will use the interview as a qualitative research method, to confirm or infirm the hypothesis of the present research:

- Mass media has a strong impact on the European economy, due to the very high budgets allocated for this field
- Mass media has an increased influence on the European society, having the role to initiate and promote a series of social campaigns addressed to European citizens
- The political parties generate a negative influence on media organizations from Europe

The theme of the used interview is: The mass media activity in Europe. The impact generated in the economic, social and politic systems.

The main objective of the research consists in presenting the reactions of the interviewed persons regarding both the efficiency of media at European level, and the impact of media on the economic, social and politic systems in Europe.

The interview targeted individual subjects, living in Europe, over 20, with higher education, employed at public or private companies, who visited a wide number of countries in Europe. Certainly this category is represented by persons who inform themselves frequently form media, and who have a clearly comparison terms in which concerns the media activity at European level. The interview was addressed to a number of 26 persons.

The medium duration of an interview is of 15 minutes, including detailed answers for the addressed questions. The period in which the interviews were made is: 1 March 2014 – 13 March 2014.

After centralizing, interpreting and analyzing the data, I will answer to the two research questions formulated:

- Does media generates a negative or a positive influence on the economic, social and politic systems in Europe?
- If media wouldn’t exist, how would economy, society and politics in Europe be?

Interview’s structure is as follows: 10 questions which have as main object to measure the reactions of the interviewed persons regarding the efficiency of media activity at European level, and the impact of media on the economic, social and political system in Europe.

At the same time, it is followed the presentation of some comparisons between: the public media companies and the private ones, in which concerns the generated impact.
At the end of the interview, after the 10 questions that follow the presented objectives, I addressed 4 more questions, which have as main objective confirming by the targeted subject, of their age, field of activity, locality of residence and what countries from Europe were visited by they. I opted for a structured interview, in order to maintain a number of questions in the same order for all the interviewed subjects, and because it deeply approaches the subject of the present research.

I will realize the interpretation and analysis of the answers for each question from the interview guide.

2.1. From an economic perspective, what impact do you think mass media has in European countries?

After addressing the first question from the interview guide, the following percents result, in which concerns persons’ trust in the impact that media generates on the European economy:
- Approximately 73% of the interviewed persons consider that media has a high impact on the economy of the European countries
- Approximately 27% of the interviewed persons consider that media has a very high impact on the economy of the European countries

2.2. What budgets do you think there are allocated for the media activity in Europe?

After addressing the second question from the interview guide, it results the following percents, with regard at the volume of the budgets allocated in Europe for the media activity:
- Approximately 80% of the interviewed persons consider that high budgets are allocated for mass media activity in Europe
- Approximately 12% of the interviewed persons consider that very high budgets are allocated for mass media activity in Europe
- Approximately 8% of the interviewed persons consider that low budgets are allocated for mass media activity in Europe

2.3. From a social perspective, do you think that media influence the society in Europe? Please argue.

Yes. In an increased measure, because it is a source of continues information.”
- “Yes. Mostly the information presented through media is intentionally distorted to influence the audit.”
- “Of course. Especially when the media lean towards consumerism, despite its purpose to maintain the cohesion in the communications between the state power and the market.”
- “Yes, because by presenting the serious poverty case, the ones in the middle class can consider themselves rich… a manipulation.”
- “In a high measure.”
- “Yes, media has a high impact on the society through the information given, so I consider it has an increased manipulation power.”
- “Yes. It is the main source of information that society has.”
- “Yes, through the social campaigns population can be sensitized/influenced, encouraged to act.”
- “Yes, I think that the majority of the models are those presented in media. So, society’s values are established.”
- “Media has an important role in society from a social perspective. We all know how it is said that media represents the fourth power in a state. Beyond this saying, already a cliché, we cannot not see that the means of mass information influence, through the exposed ideas, the way in which human beings act or express their points of view in various social environments: work, family, friends group, etc. I consider that an opinion/idea expressed through a strong, influent, plausible voice, through any media channels, has a social influence, and can change even the way in which individuals act, moreover if the exposed ideas are similar, even if in a small quantity, with individuals’ personal opinion.”
- “Yes, I think that the influence is high because society is formed by people, and people are yielding.”
- “It is a former of opinion, and not always a positive one.”
- “Yes, media influence the way of living of many persons.”
- “Yes, it can highly influence the society, through many awareness campaigns, in which concerns health, economy, politics…”
- “I consider that media can influence the society of Europe, because through media the information arrives very fast to citizens. The transmitted information can be correct and complete, but can also not be, the citizen being influenced by the accuracy of the received information.”
- “Yes, it represents the main source of information for population.”
- “Definitely, in Romania are many people who watch TV.”
- “Certainly, because information and its transmission speed as a new production factor are one of the most important facts in society’s progress.”
- “Yes, because the masses of people copy what they see on TV.”
- “Yes, for sure, being possible to influence the position of society regarding different subjects.”
- “Mass media always influence society, under all its aspects. It develops trends, opportunities. It innovates and improves life, convinces and conquers new markets. Mass media is a constant in our lives. We are social and behavioral patterns aggressively promoted in society through media, with the purpose to influence the formal and non-formal education and people’s lifestyle.”

After addressing the third question from the interview guide, the following percents result, in which concerns the influence of media on the European society:
- All the interviewed persons consider that media highly influence the society in Europe. To mention is the fact that the opinions are divided, in which concerns the way in which media influence the society at European level:
  - Approximately 42% of the interviewed persons appreciate and sustain the fact that mass media has a positive influence on society (their opinions and arguments are presented above)
  - Approximately 38% of the interviewed persons don’t appreciate the way in which media influences society, and they sustain that media has a negative influence (their opinions and arguments are presented above)
  - Approximately 20% of the interviewed persons don’t argue if the media has an positive or a negative influence for the European society. Those persons only sustain that the society is influenced by media, without motivating their opinion.

2.4. What social campaign do you propose to be promoted from tomorrow in the media from all over Europe?
- “Something like: lets look deep inside us, and only after that to others”
- “Respect towards everybody!”
- “I would promote a social campaign through which the effects of each mass communication type would be described: from a simple media campaign that promotes a product, through mass manipulation, or, differently said, the propaganda and the harmful effects that it can have or it had have during history (ex. Hitler’s propaganda, the reason why the Olympic Games from Berlin in 1936 were the first televised, etc.). The objective of the campaign would be to provoke people through an personal thinking filter any information received from outside, through media.”
- “A pro-nature campaign.”
- “Giving up smoking.”
- “Campaign for sustaining the children from the disadvantaged areas. Campaigns against poverty.”
- “Health and life insurances.”
- “Restoring the integrity of journalism.”
- “A campaign anti garbage throw.”
- “A campaign in favor of reading.”
- “Donations for the victims of natural calamities.”
- “Promoting the values for key functions. Gipsy isolation.”
- “It depends on area: personal hygiene in Central and Eastern Europe, or, at European level: promoting the reading.”
- “Saving the middle class of society.”
- “Social responsibility.”
- “Organs donation.”
- “Integration of the persons with disabilities in society.”
- “An educational campaign, with the purpose of promoting ideas as teamwork, self-education and the importance of moral among youngsters.”
- “Respecting the human rights, and work place security, states with 0 unemployment rate.”
- “I don’t have any proposal.”
- “Campaign anti deforestation. Campaign “Chance to a better living”.
- “Xenophobia. Health.”

The main objective of that fourth question from the interview guide is to present a series of social campaigns, proposed by the persons living in Europe. This list, which includes 26 social campaigns, was generated mostly due to the needs that the interviewed persons aware. Some of the proposed campaigns took place in the European media, others were never realized, maybe because they were never proposed.

Very important is the following aspect: 80% from the interviewed persons proposed at least one campaign previously presented, which shows that the majority of the interviewed persons consider that is a necessity that media involve in society and to promote various social campaigns, in community’s wellbeing.

2.5. *Do you consider that the political parties can influence the media activity in Europe? If yes, which are influenced?*

After addressing the fifth question from the interview guide, the following percents resulted, in which concerns the influence of the political factor on developing the activities of the mass media organizations:

- all the interviewed persons consider that the European media is influenced by the political parties, with the following mentions:
  - 50% of the interviewed persons consider that the political parties mostly influence the public media institutions
  - 50% of the interviewed persons consider that the political parties mostly influence the private media institutions

From the answers received to this question, we can conclude that almost any mass media institution of Europe is influenced by the political parties, whether they are public or private.

2.6. *How much it counts the presence of the political leaders from Europe in media? In which concerns their public image.*

The question number 6 has the role to present the importance of the public image of the political leaders in Europe, from the perspective of their presence in media.

The results are the following:

- Approximately 58% of the interviewed persons consider that the presence of the political leaders in media is very important, or even decisive for their public image
- Approximately 38% of the interviewed persons consider that the presence of the political leaders in media is important for their public image
- Approximately 4% of the interviewed persons consider that the presence of the political leaders in media is not very important for their public image

The conclusion is that mass media offers, to all the political leaders, and not only, a very important opportunity to make them “visible” to population, to electors. Implicit, media influences each person’s public image, positively or negatively.

2.7. *How do you think that the European society, economy and politics would be, without media?*

“Weaker”.

- “Same! Not media harms, but people’s actions”
“Blind”
“Society would be less informed, economy would be less speculative and politics would be fair for citizens, because the citizen would vote more the results obtained and less the promises.”
“Everything would be manipulated by the politic.”
“Certainly, if they have something good to present and they prove this, sooner or later media would present the good parts vs. the bad parts, and in leak of those reactions of media, citizens would tax each wrong movement against them. They are interposed, so it can not exist.”
“The public opinion is an active part of democracy. Like an engine without clutch.”
“Probably they would miss their bigger support. But I don’t think that it could be a world without mass media.”
“Less animated. The information would difficult reach the citizen.”
“Erased.”
“Primitive.”
“Less influenced, but also less informed.”
“Mass media represents one of the elements that contribute to the economic movement, increase of consumption in society, so economically mass media has a positive contribution. The same situation is in a political plan, contributing to corruption diminishing.”
“There is no socio-eco-political development without media.”
“With important problems unsolved, with lots of law violations.”
“Society – less attracted by the “sensational”; economy – the asymmetry of information would be emphasized; politics – beautification of truth would be less necessary.”
“Uninformed.”
“As would media be without politics, society, economy – an enormous vacuum.”
“Less corruptible, and people would be happier; with a worry less.”
“Would be a chaos, would be confusion. Precisely because media is so present in each persons’ life that it provokes a dependency that we don’t realize.”
“Less corrupt.”
“Quite difficult, I cannot conceive it.”
“Less informed.”

After addressing the seventh question of the interview guide, the interviewed persons appreciate that media has a special importance for economy, society, politics, and other fields. The majority of the interviewed persons, approximately 75%, consider that the economy, society and politics would suffer if media wouldn’t exist. Approximately 15% of the interviewed persons consider that media is not good for economy, society and politics. At the same time, approximately 5% of the interviewed persons hadn’t an opinion referring to this subject, or they considered they couldn’t conceive the world with no media, in the 21 century.

2.8. Do you think that media could exist in Europe, without the organizations that invest increased budgets in advertising?

The main objective of the eighth question from the interview guide is to present the importance of publicity and of the revenues resulting from publicity. In many situations, especially in the case of the private media organizations, the publicity revenues are the only financing source. Without publicity, many of the media organizations from Europe and from the whole world wouldn’t exist.

The interviewed persons answered as follows:
Approximately 73% of the interviewed persons consider that the media organizations couldn’t exist without the incomes from publicity, money collected from public and private companies.
Approximately 27% of the interviewed persons consider that media organizations could exist without the incomes from publicity. In this case, I mention that the interviewed persons probably thought at public media companies that benefit of governmental financing. In the case of private media companies, without publicity almost no company would exist.
2.9. In which measure media depends on publicity?

The ninth question is very linked of the previous question. The results for this question are the following:
- Approximately 95% of the interviewed persons appreciate that media depends much or very much on publicity, and, implicit, on the revenues from publicity.
- Approximately 5% of the interviewed persons appreciate that media don’t depend too much by the publicity and by the revenues from publicity.

2.10. Which media companies generate a higher impact?

The main objective of the tenth question from the interview guide is to present the importance of passion and salaries, in which concerns developing the activity of mass media on the part of the collaborators and employees. In many media companies from Europe, there are, on one side, persons employed with medium, high or very high salaries, but also collaborators, who activate inside the media company without having substantial gains. We would rather name those persons “volunteers”, because their revenue for the activity performed is close to zero. In this case, the only motivation that those persons have is their passion for the media, which, often, makes their activity more appreciated that the activity of the ones with high salaries, but who activate in the field with no passion. The results for this question are the following:
- Approximately 70% of the interviewed persons sustain that the media organizations which invest large amounts of money in employees generate a higher impact in economy, society and politics.
- Approximately 30% of the interviewed persons sustain that the media organizations which have volunteer collaborators generate a higher impact in economy, society and politics.

2.11. Which is your age?

The questions were addressed to persons over 20, as follows:
- 69% of the respondents have their age between 20 and 30 years old
- 31% of the respondents have their age between 31 and 40 years old

2.12. Where do you live now?

The questions were addressed to persons who live in Europe, especially in Romania, England and Germany.

2.13. In which field do you work?

The answers regarding the area of activity for the interviewed persons include: advertising, finances, tourism, insurances, sells, banking, trade, education, human resources, research, automotive, IT, economy, media, health, administration and accountancy.

There are various areas of field, exactly to reach a different approach from each of those persons in which concerns the media and a directly or indirectly connection to media.

2.14. Have you visited countries in Europe?

I used this question in order to detailed present the persons who answered to all the questions, and to highlight that the answers come from persons who had and have a direct connection with the media in Europe. The main objective is to realize a list with the countries visited by the interviewed persons, from which I mention: Hungary, Czech Republic, Greece, Germany, Austria, France, Netherlands, Turkey, Spain, Bulgaria, Italy, Swiss, Latvia, Lithuania, Israel, Belgium, Serbia, Portugal, Scotland, Slovakia, Finland, Cyprus, Luxembourg, England and Norway.

Practically, I addressed the questions previously presented to persons who are connected to the media from 25 European countries.
3. Results and Conclusions

The majority of the interviewed persons consider that media has a high impact on the economy of European countries, and 80% of the interviewed persons consider that high budgets are allocated for the media activity in Europe.

All the interviewed persons consider that media highly influence society from Europe. To mention is the fact that the opinions are divided, from the perspective of the way in which media influences the European society (positively/negatively).

Almost all the media institutions from Europe are influenced by the political parties, whether they are public or private, according to the answers of the interviewed persons.

Mass media offer to all the political leaders a high opportunity to make them visible for population, for electors. Implicit, media influences each one’s public image, positively or negatively.

The majority of the interviewed persons, approximately 75%, consider that the economy, the society and politics would suffer if media wouldn’t exist. A small part of the interviewed persons consider that media is harmful for the economy, society and politics.

The majority of the interviewed persons consider that media organizations couldn’t exist without the revenues resulting from publicity, collected both from private and public companies. At the same time, a big part of the interviewed persons sustain that the media organizations that invest high amounts of money in their employees have an increased impact in economy, society and politics.

The present research opened an horizon for a vastly research, in which concerns the media activity both in Europe and worldwide. Mass media always passed through difficult periods, since its beginnings. But each obstacle was a step forward to development, innovation and new horizons. Probably each day a part of mass media disappears and another arise. Mass media will always exist and will be strongly connected with all that surrounds us, at global level.

4. Equations

Equations and formulae should be typed in Mathtype, and numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals in parentheses on the right hand side of the page (if referred to explicitly in the text). They should also be separated from the surrounding text by one space.

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References