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MEDIATISATIONS OF EMOTIONS IN THEORY: THE MEDIA STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

1. THEORIES OF EMOTIONS ADOPTED BY MEDIA RESEARCHERS

Below are the theoretical concepts that are often invoked by media researchers.

1. Psychoanalytic approaches, which are especially popular in film studies and gender studies, mostly refer to the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. The psychoanalytic concepts of artifact (synonymous with symptom) reduces emotional reactions of the reception to the unconscious psychosexual processes, which are supposed to affect the physically experienced visual pleasures.[1]

2. Psychobiological approaches combine media psychology with neuroscience. Affect is defined here as a physical phenomenon, it is feedback that triggers cognitive dispositions. These concepts refer to Charles Darwin's biologism, the motor mimicry expression of emotions by Paul Ekman, as well as psychobiological concepts by S. Tomkins. What is typical of this model is the studying of psychological expression, with the simultaneous measurement of physical reactions to the message. A good example are studies in visual culture, its reception in international and intercultural contexts.[2]

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[1] Jane STADLER, "Affect and Film," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (London: Routledge, 2014), 1–6.

[2] Maria ANGEL and Anna GIBBS, "Media, Affect and the Face: Biomediation and the Political Scene," *Southern Review: Communication, Politics and Culture* 38, no. 2 (2006): 24–39.

3. A critical perspective of media cultural studies relies on the socially and culturally determined understanding of affect and emotion.[3] Studies in this area refer to the concept of structure of feelings[4] as proposed by Raymond Williams, which points towards a variety of institutional relations (understood as structural limitations) with non-specific forms of everyday social and cultural practice.

4. Philosophical approaches focus on affect understood as "the flow of intensity",[5] and on emotions understood as a processual phenomenon. This model, represented among others by Briana Massumi, Mieke Bal or Ernest van Alphen, has its roots in the philosophy by Spinosa and works of Gilles Deleuze. It relies on the concept of new materialism,[6] or media technology as crucial elements which shape social relations.[7] For example, "reality show", analysed by Misha Kavka and described as "technology of intimacy",[8] was immanently inscribed in the process of relationship building between the media producers and audiences. The philosophical perspective on affect attempts to understand the relationship between the users of media technology and its message and meaning that it carries across, as well as media environment, both in the context of competition and cooperation. Such an approach is developed by Affective Societies at Freie Universität Berlin.

Media researchers rely on various, often contradictory conceptualisations of affective phenomena, straddling areas such as psychoanalysis, cognitive studies, phenomenology, cultural studies, neurophysiology. Psychologists and philosophers describe emotions with the use of multi-element models, which rely on the interaction between evaluation, neurophysiological reactions, personal dispositions to act, think, perceive and feel, or facial mimicry, subjective feelings, etc. It is a model mostly used by audiovisual media researchers. Cognitive scientists place emphasis on valuating components,

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[3] Jenifer HARDING and E. D. PRIBRAM, eds., *Emotions: A Cultural Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[4] Raymond WILLIAMS, "Structures of Feeling," in *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture*, ed. Devika Sharma and Frederic Tygstrup (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 20–26.

[5] Gregory J. SEIGWORTH and Melissa GREGG, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham: Duke University Press), 1–25.

[6] Marie-Luise ANGERER, *Ecology of Affect. Intensive Milieus and Contingent Encounters* (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2016).

[7] Diana COOLE and Samatha FROST, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press 2010).

[8] Misha KAVKA, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (London: Palgrave, 2008).

and phenomenologists focus on an analysis of the experience of media usage. It should be mentioned that various theories (e.g. constructivism) are incorporated into studies on media representations of emotions, which proves that emotions are a phenomenon linking interoceptive and exteroceptive signals with conceptual, factual and procedural knowledge.

All these theories are based on the assumption of a variety of emotions. They borrow from methods of various scientific disciplines. What is more, they are motivated by divergent scientific interests: some aim at describing certain emotional experience, others try to explain the current or past emotional reactions and to predict the future ones. Some others aim at increasing the viewing figures for media broadcasts, or to conduct a critical analysis of sociocultural contexts. Nevertheless, how affective processes are perceived has long term effects on the understanding of structure/technology of the media which shape the representation of emotions and effectiveness of their production, and shape the creation of "the culture of emotions". The choice of a specific theory shifts attention towards various media structures/technologies and feelings of their users: towards the media, which evoke emotions of a local or global range (cultural studies); on programmes of inborn affect (evolutionary psychology); on feelings and impressions which could be conceptualised in a reflexive way (phenomenology); or those related to the evaluation of a situation, social objectives and values of the users (cognitive psychology). These theories may differ in terms of study objects and objectives, i.e. while analytic philosophy lays emphasis on conscious moral judgments, psychoanalysis highlights subconscious desires and amoral fantasies. Further differences concern the extent to which affective processes are shaped by culture, social groups, individual personality and situational context. Even though theories agree on the importance of socio-cultural factors, they differ in terms of which factors are the most important ones: dispositions rooted in childhood, habitual schemas, moral norms, social identity or peer experience.

Another important issue is how the abovementioned theoretical approaches are used in media studies.

2. SYSTEMATIZATION OF RESEARCH AREAS RELATED TO MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF EMOTIONS

The phenomenon of emotions in media studies is related to the studies of effectiveness of media messages as its major determinant. However, there

are more and more studies focusing on the correlations between emotions and political, cultural, and social events. Such diverse research areas could be divided into five groups, in which the emotions subject to analysis are treated as follows.

1. The marker of the choice of media broadcast: the study results show that the need to evoke certain emotional states in the audience may influence the choice of a given media broadcast.[9]

2. Element of media exposition: representations of emotions are studied and questions are raised concerning the ways in which various emotions are presented in the media, and how they are expressed.[10]

3. The determinant of the psychological and behavioural effects of a media message: how emotional reactions affect the media message in terms of attention, processing depth, cognitive and behavioural effects.[11]

4. Affective reaction to exposition: theories of how emotions are evoked highlight the necessity to study media expositions in the context of cause–effect correlations together with affective dispositions and situational contexts of the users. There are questions raised: What emotions are suitable for what forms and what content of the media? Which dispositions and contexts lie at the foundation of affective reactions? What is analysed are the main reactions of fear and pleasure, which go together with the media message.[12]

5. Culture of emotions: the latest studies expand their scope, reaching beyond the reactions of the addressees, and encompassing subjects/technologies, historical, social, cultural contexts. They treat digital media as a specific nature of relation. They raise questions concerning socio-cultural causes and effects of popular emotions in the media in given cultures and epochs. They try to demonstrate how they are correlated with the authorities, ethics, culture, politics, and how they changed over the years. They show how representations of emotions in the media shape the way the media function. The

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[9] Stanisław MICHALCZYK, "Kognitywne i afektywne motywy korzystania z mediów. Rekonstrukcja koncepcji teoretycznych," in *Współczesne media. Status, aksjologia, funkcjonowanie*, vol. 1, ed. Iwona Hofman and Danuta Kępa-Figura (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2009), 235–48.

[10] Dezheng FENG and Kay L. O'HALLORAN, "The Multimodal Representation of Emotion in Film: Integrating Cognitive and Semiotic Approaches," *Semiotica* 197, (2013): 79–100; Carl PLANTINGA, *Moving Viewers: American Film and The Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[11] Brigitte HIPFL, "Affect in Media and Communication Studies: Potentials and Assemblages," *Media and Communication* 6, no. 3 (2018): 5–14.

[12] Arjun APPADURAI, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

"culture of emotions"[13] is analysed together with the social sharing of emotions, connected with media expositions.

Most of the studies concern how emotions are evoked (item 4 above), while the issue of the culture of emotions and their sharing (item 5) enjoys less attention.

3. CONDITIONS AND CONTEXTS OF EMOTIONS IN THE MEDIA

Media studies differ not only in terms of theoretical concepts but also in terms of description of emotions, their conditions and contexts. The literature offers the following groups of determinants and affective contexts for media situations:

3.1 MEDIA TYPES

The media offer various affective affordance and gratification for its users; specific affective niche, which makes it possible to experience emotions typical of the given media. The print-based media can refer to imagination, the audiovisual media are based on perception processes, while social media can stimulate communication. What is important in this context are the places of media exposition, i.e. a cinema facilitates a better concentration on the message than TV or the radio do.

3.2 CO-RECIPIENTS OF THE MESSAGE

Emotions in the media can be of a collective character; that is, they can be shared by a community. When the message is received together with family members, friends, the processes of collective attention, emotionality can be activated due to their contagious nature (laughter or shame). However, the same media productions can evoke different emotions in mixed audiences, with different psychosocial dispositions, as it is often the case with political advertising.

3.3 THE ROLE OF WITNESS/OBSERVER

Many emotions in the media do not refer to the situation of the viewer/reader but rather to the situation related to the actors performing a given

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[13] WILLIAMS, "Structures of feeling."

role. The recipients are witnesses of emotions evoking empathy or sympathy in situations which do not require or permit any action. It can be reassuring but also can build up tension connected with helplessness. For example, it can be a situation of a pre-scripted threat, known to the viewer but not known to the characters of the media production.

3.4 The level of identification

Media experience can be described on a scale spanning weak-to-strong identification with the character. A fictional character in a TV series or an actor performing in a commercial cannot evoke such emotions like the avatar of a gamer does. The aesthetic theories point towards the so-called fiction paradox, which can be explained by means of pre-conscious engagement of attention and reaction to a stimulus,[14] as well as by processes of simulation and imagination.[15]

3.5 Forms and means of emotion channelling

The media use biased representations, evoking emotions with the means of certain narrations, rhetoric, audiovisual elements, etc. They present pre-focused texts,[16] which provoke certain emotions, of a specific intensity, duration, etc. This is possible due to various techniques, e.g. close-ups, detailed descriptions.

Affective reactions are shaped by the awareness that media texts serve to carry meaning across, that the producer addresses the audience with certain intentions. The knowledge of narrative genres and conventions helps one to shape the objective and style of the media production, and can be enriched by individual experience. We talk then of aesthetic emotions and meta-emotions, i.e. feelings and thoughts channelled towards a given emotion,[17] e.g. being ashamed because of laughing at a poor joke in a comedy.[18]

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[14] Andrea E. Abele and Guido H. E. Gendolla, "Satisfaction Judgments in Positive and Negative Moods: Effects of Concurrent Assimilation and Contrast Producing Processes," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 25, no. 7 (1999): 883–95.

[15] Wiesław Łukaszewski, "Pragmatyczna strona wyobraźni," *Przegląd Psychologiczny* 51, no. 2 (2008): 181−96.

[16] Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Context: A Sociocognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[17] Lynn Fainsilber Katz and Erin C. Hunter, "Maternal Meta-Emotion Philosophy and Adolescent Depressive Symptomatology," *Social Development* 16, no. 2 (2007): 343–60.

[18] Anne Bartsch, "Meta-Emotion: How Films and Music Videos Communicate Emotions about Emotion," *Projections* 2, no. 1 (2008): 45–59.

Theoreticians and media experts offer various classifications of emotions presented in the media. One such classification centres around the duration and range of emotions: "global/local", "short-lived" or "long-lived".[19] Another classification concerns levels of affective causes[20] through media expositions. Affective reactions may be a consequence of a temporary, ephemeral feeling activated in contact with a media event, character or gesture. They can also be based on the reflexive processing of information, aesthetic evaluation of the project, or the meanings of a communicative situation.

Most of the studies concentrate on an analysis of emotions evoked by media images and texts, e.g. on identification with the characters, reactions to the experienced conflict situations or to narration suspense.[21] Some of the researchers highlight the significance of forms, means, styles of media productions. Ed Tan coined the term of *a(rtifact)-emotions* in order to emphasise the significance of camera movement in igniting the feeling of anger in the addressee.[22]

Studies on media representations of emotions have been carried out for years; however, it is the last decade that has witnessed a rapid increase of studies, together with the development and growth of digital, network and mobile media. Their features, such as interactivity, participation, social networks or artificial intelligence, shape the emotional character of the message and confront media studies with challenging questions, e.g. How do players react to the characters they play in video games? How are affective publics[23] created on micro-blogs, e.g. on Twitter? What is unique in media representations of emotions in the context of visual social media? How to study the emerging sensory tools, whose artificial intelligence registers users' emotions but also creates loops of feedback, processing the downloaded data about emotional reactions and manipulating users' emotions with the use of interface? These are but a few questions that crop up after an overview of the literature on emotions in the media.

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[19] PLANTINGA, *Moving Viewers.*

[20] Ed TAN, *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996).

[21] Greg M. SMITH, *Film Structure and the Emotion System* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2008).

[22] TAN, *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film.*

[23] Zizi PAPACHARISSI, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

The often used term "the affective turn"[24] could suggest a coherent research project. In reality, we deal with various and differing concepts, perspective. The affective turn in media studies is used more often to refer to the media understood as "emotion generators"[25] or to institutions establishing the "rules of feeling".[26] Phenomena such as hate speech, so widespread in social media, are treated as a public expression of emotions. They stimulate affective forms of communication, also known as viral ones. Emotions, obviously, are employed in public communication, in journalism, advertising, politics, in order to grasp attention. Especially, online communication, owing to its dynamics, range and effectiveness, is used in the context of viral "affective flows".[27] To sum up, what all these theoretical approaches have in common is the treatment of emotions as "a driving force", a communication facilitator, in the context of rapid changes in modern societies and media cultures.

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THE MEDIA STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

Summary

This article provides a synthetic review of key theoretical approaches adopted by media experts in their studies: psychoanalytic, psychobiological, philosophical approaches and critical perspective of media cultural studies. An attempt is made to systematize the major research areas of media representations of emotions. The analysed emotions are treated as a predictor of the choice of media broadcast, an element of media exposition, a determinant of psychological and behavioural effects of media message, an affective reaction to exposition, and a "culture of emotions". A synthesis of the conditions and contexts behind the emotions presented in the media. Groups of determinants and affective contexts for media situations were defined as: media types, co-recipients of the message, the role of witness/observer, the level of identification, forms and means of emotion channelling, media competence.

Keywords: media studies; media representations of emotions; determinants and affective contexts for media reception.

MEDIATYZACJA EMOCJI W TEORII
Z PERSPEKTYWY MEDIOZNAWCZEJ

Streszczenie

Niniejsze opracowanie przedstawia syntetyczny przegląd kluczowych podejść teoretycznych, na jakich opierają się medioznawcy w swoich badaniach. Są to podejścia psychoanalityczne, psychobiologiczne, filozoficzne oraz ujęcia krytycznej perspektywy medialnych badań kulturowych. Podjęto próbę systematyzacji głównych obszarów badawczych zjawiska mediatyzacji emocji. Emocje poddawane analizie traktowane są jako predyktor wyboru przekazu medialnego, element medialnej ekspozycji, determinanta psychologicznych i behawioralnych efektów odbioru przekazu, reakcja afektywna na ekspozycję oraz „kultury emocji" (w kontekście społecznego dzielenia emocji). Dokonano również syntezy uwarunkowań i kontekstów medialnych emocji. Opisano następujące ich grupy, dzieląc je na: typy mediów, współużytkowników odbioru, rolę świadka/ obserwatora, poziom identyfikacji, formy i środki ukierunkowania emocji, a także kompetencje medialne.

Słowa kluczowe: medioznawstwo; medialne reprezentacje emocji; uwarunkowania i medialne konteksty emocji.