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MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN THE POLISH AND GERMAN PRESS

INTRODUCTION

This study addresses mechanisms generating emotions, and specifically journalistic observation and coverage of the emotions which determine the functioning of individuals and groups, available through press materials during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland and Germany. These mechanisms are discussed in the context of a challenging time, fraught with stress, fear, and uncertainty. Press articles of that time relied on various attention-drawing mechanisms, e.g. using lexical, phraseological, grammatical, semantic units. They tried to present emptiness and silence experienced in big cities during the lockdown period, and covered abstract issues such as uncertainty and fear. What such an approach required from journalists, apart from standard reporting-editorial competence, was particular diligence in faithful coverage of the news and the creation of new vocabulary (e.g. lockdown), neologisms (e.g. new normalness), explication of previously unknown terms (e.g. social distancing), as well as in the adapting of medical terms to the needs of everyday conversation.

This study seeks to explore those new circumstances in the media and in society, arising amidst the pandemic, and having a social, individual, and professional impact all over the world. The article attempts to present mechanisms of generating emotions on the basis of selected press publications in Poland, in light of media and linguistic studies. The material subject of the

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analysis are articles published by *Polityka*, *Newsweek*, *Do Rzeczy*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *Onet* (web portal). The comparative material are articles published by the German press: *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Handelsblatt*, *Der Spiegel*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Heilbronner Stimme*.

Emotions, as noted by Leszek Tymiakin, are human spontaneous reactions, they “can be pleasant or unpleasant, and what is characteristic of them is that they accompany the process of evaluation in a natural way. They can be evoked just by a chance that will prove to be good or bad for the experiencer, or by an event being associated with something good or bad.”¹ The constant interdependence, their dichotomic character, leads to a distinction between two types of emotions: positive ones and negative ones, which could be found across various scientific disciplines. Other types of emotions, viewed in more detail, seem to be distinguished later. Similarly, the emotions generated by the Polish and German press in 2020 are mainly positive or negative, with the latter dominating.

Jolanta Panasiuk observed that “biology prefers emotional elements, emotions are more powerful than reason,”² which is also evidenced in the press materials published during the pandemic. Progressive emotionality of media messages could be overwhelming to the readers, even frightening. However, in the course of time it made the readers grow accustomed and resilient to everyday portions of information related to the sick, deceased, recovered, under quarantine, isolated, hospitalised, etc. The addresses subject to manipulation, understood here as a social influence,³ become indifferent in the face of an overload of information, even the most dramatic ones. Panasiuk claims that “an excess of information of a great emotional load makes people stop reacting to them as the human organism defends itself from a state of chronic fear and anxiety. Experimental studies show that tired brains switch off the ability of moral and ethical evaluation of reality.”⁴ Therefore, an ever-increasing number of stimuli exceeds the recipients’ perceptual capabilities, and the ability to process and rationalise them. Excess information makes them unable to think critically.

¹ Leszek TYMIAKIN, “O triadzie komunikacyjnej: wartościowanie – emocje – ekspresja,” *Annales N – Educatio Nova* 2 (2017): 204–5.

² Jolanta PANASIUK, “Neurobiologiczne mechanizmy przetwarzania informacji medialnej,” in *Człowiek i kultura w komunikacji medialnej*, ed. Małgorzata Karwatowska, Robert Litwiński, and Adam Siwiec (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015), 28.

³ See Joanna AKSMAN, *Manipulacja: pedagogiczno-społeczne aspekty*, part 1, *Interdyscyplinarne aspekty manipulacji* (Kraków: Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego, 2010).

⁴ PANASIUK, “Neurobiologiczne mechanizmy,” 30.

1. REPRESENTATION OF EMOTIONS IN THE PRESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

In media studies emotions are viewed as determining the quality of the message and the way the message is carried across. According to Paweł Nowak, authenticity of the message is an important issue, both from the perspective of its perception and presentation: “artificially produced message is identified as not genuine, and, consequently, unconvincing”.⁵ An important part of communicative competence is the proper expression of emotions, often subconscious. Elżbieta Łątka claims that “we are immersed in a specific culture of emotions, the rules of which we get to know in early childhood; we react according to these rules and through them we read and interpret linguistic behaviour of our interlocutors.”⁶ This could be evidenced during the coronavirus pandemic, especially its first wave, during the lockdown period, when the media created a specific culture of emotions resembling the war rhetoric⁷ (e.g. through article titles such as “Idziemy na wojnę z wirusami”⁸ (We are going to war on viruses), and furthermore, manipulated the readers with emotion-filled messages related to COVID-19.

The first months of the pandemic were described in Poland by negative press accounts speaking of a catastrophe, e.g. “Siedzimy na bombie”⁹ (We are sitting on a bomb), “Szukanie kozła ofiarnego”¹⁰ (Looking for a scapegoat), “Policja na łowach”¹¹ (The police hunting), “Czarna środa: 242 ofiary koronawirusa”¹² (Black Wednesday: 242 coronavirus deaths), “Pierwsza ofiara koronawirusa w Polsce”¹³ (First victim of the coronavirus in Poland),

⁵ Paweł NOWAK, “Retoryka polityczna – poprawność i skuteczność,” in *Logopedia artystyczna*, ed. Barbara Kamińska and Stanisław Milewski (Gdańsk: Harmonia Universalis, 2016), 403.

⁶ Elżbieta ŁĄTKA, “Czy mówienie o emocjach w języku obcym jest możliwe? O potrzebie rekonstruowania skryptów kulturowych wyrażania emocji dla glottodydaktyki polszczyzny,” *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Kształcenie polonistyczne cudzoziemców* 19 (2012): 35.

⁷ Its other manifestations were press conferences and briefings involving soldiers, police officers, border patrols, city guards, fire fighters, etc.

⁸ Dorota ROMANOWSKA, “Idziemy na wojnę z wirusami,” *Newsweek* 8 (2020): 76.

⁹ Jacek TOMCZUK, “Siedzimy na bombie,” *Newsweek* 17 (2020): 26.

¹⁰ Renata KIM, “Szukanie kozła ofiarnego,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 21.

¹¹ Violetta KRASNOWSKA and Piotr PYTLAKOWSKI, “Policja na łowach,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 23.

¹² Maria KRUCZKOWSKA, “Czarna środa: 242 ofiary korona wirusa,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 37 (2020): 12.

¹³ WK, PMD, “Pierwsza ofiara korona wirusa w Polsce,” *Wiadomości*, *Onet*, March 12, 2020, <http://www.wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/koronawirus-pierwsza-ofiara-w-polsce-kobieta-z-poznania-nie-zyje/r45502n>.

“Zarażona Italia”¹⁴ (Infected Italy), “Wielka smuta”¹⁵ (Great sadness), “Zarazy – plagi ludzkości”¹⁶ (Pestilence – Plagues of the Humankind), “Nowojorskie szpitale u kresu możliwości”¹⁷ (New York hospitals at the end of their tether), “Rekord zakażeń na 20-lecie władzy Putina”¹⁸ (Record numbers of infections mark Putin’s 20 years in power), “Dostajemy brawa na balkonach, a potem pogardę w sklepie wieczorem”¹⁹ (We get cheers from balconies and contempt in stores in the evening), “Opresja za zamkniętymi drzwiami”²⁰ (Oppression behind closed doors), “Stan duszności”²¹ (A state of suffocation), “Wirusowy stres test”²² (Virus stress test), “Mór spod piór”²³ (Feather-borne plague).

Drama-related messages in the press and on the internet were accompanied by questionnaires on the coronavirus. Their titles were related to emotions (e.g. the questionnaire available at onet.pl, titled: *Jakie emocje budzi koronawirus?*²⁴ (What emotions does the coronavirus evoke?), which could add to the feelings of threat and an overload of negative information.

In the same period, analogous content could be found in the German press. What is interesting, although some of them were dedicated to the German reader, they were also concerned with the Polish context, e.g.: “Der Gesundheitsminister der die falschen Masken Kaufte”²⁵ (The Minister of Health who bought wrong masks). However, the German press produced more positive, reassuring messages, underscoring the courage of the medical staff and regular citizens who tried to keep calm and live normally under

¹⁴ Michał GÓRSKI and Łukasz WÓJCIK, “Zarażona Italia,” *Polityka* 11 (2020): 92.

¹⁵ Marcin PIĄTEK, “Wielka smuta,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 68. The title is a reference to the time of *Smuta* (Troubles) in early 17-th century Russia.

¹⁶ Maciej ROSALAK, “Zarazy – plagi ludzkości,” *Do Rzeczy* 10 (2020): 42.

¹⁷ Maciej CZARNECKI, “Nowojorskie szpitale u kresu możliwości,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 73 (2020): 11.

¹⁸ Waław RADZIWINOWICZ, “Rekord zakażeń na 20-lecie władzy Putina,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 107 (2020): 8.

¹⁹ Maciej LATOS, “Dostajemy brawa na balkonach rano, a pogardę w sklepie wieczorem,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 90 (2020): 13.

²⁰ Joanna PODGÓRSKA, “Opresja za zamkniętymi drzwiami” (interview with Urszula Nowakowska, Head of Centrum Praw Kobiet), *Polityka* 14 (2020): 29.

²¹ Agnieszka SOWA and Paweł RESZKA, “Stan duszności,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 10.

²² Joanna SOLSKA, “Wirusowy stres test,” *Polityka* 11 (2020): 16.

²³ Jakub MEJER, “Mór spod piór,” *Polityka* 11 (2020): 76.

²⁴ “Jakie emocje budzi koronawirus?” *Kobieta*, *Onet*, accessed March 28, 2020, <http://www.kobieta.onet.pl/wiadomosci/jakie-emocje-budzi-koronawirus-ankieta/qelgffe>.

²⁵ Florian HASSEL, “Der Gesundheitsminister der die falschen Masken Kaufte,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 25, 2020, <http://sueddeutsche.de/politik/polen-gesundheitsminister-corona-masken-1.4926913>.

new circumstances, e.g. “Risikoforscher erklärt: Das können wir gegen die Angst vor dem Coronavirus tun”²⁶ (Risk researcher explains: this is what we can do against the fear of the coronavirus), “Es ist die Zeit, mehr zu verstehen und sich weniger zu fürchten”²⁷ (It is time to understand more and to fear less).

Tiredness from negative messages could be observed at the beginning of summer holidays in 2020, perhaps even a bit earlier. The end of May, June, July, was the time when the topic of the coronavirus no longer dominated whole issues of newspapers and journals. Other, non-COVID-19 topics (e.g. political, social, health-related, educational) finally had a chance to resurface. However, no quantitative balance could be found between the epidemic-related messages and other messages. The media were still churning out comments of specialists (doctors, nurses, paramedics, workers of sanitary-epidemiological station, workers of the National Health Fund and the Ministry of Health), celebrities (actors, singers, TV presenters, bloggers, etc.), or politicians, concerning threats related to the pandemic. The press became an arena for anonymous voices (e.g. inhabitants of a town, city, district; those kept in quarantine; those with limited access to health service; those who could not go on holidays; the unemployed, etc.) as long as they offered attractive comments on the existence dominated by the coronavirus. The common feature of all the above-mentioned elements is their emotional character, which arouses readers’ interest: a vivid expression of emotions, talking about emotions in a direct way. The comments’ value lay in their authenticity.

An interest in COVID-19 was observed again at the end of August 2020 and the beginning of the school year. Emotional messages informed about schools being unprepared to the new school year in the new reality. Articles were published, full of apprehension coming on the part of virus and epidemic experts, full of fear and anxiety on the part of parents, but also hope and joy of students at the thought of coming back to traditional forms of education, meeting classmates, doing some extracurricular activities.

²⁶ Michael SCHEPPE, “Risikoforscher erklärt: Das können wir gegen die Angst vor dem Coronavirus tun,” *Handelsblatt*, March 10, 2020. <https://handelsblatt.com/technik/medizin/gerd-gigeren-zer-im-interview-risikoforscher-erklart-das-koennen-wir-gegen-die-angst-vor-dem-coronavirus-tun/25624846.html>.

²⁷ Stefane MAECK, “Es ist die Zeit, mehr zu verstehen und sich weniger zu fürchten,” *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2020, <http://spiegel.de/psychologie/coronavirus-es-ist-die-zeit-mehr-zu-verstehen-und-sich-weniger-zu-fuerchten-a-d2cb59d2-ba05-4491-b39e-c29308051045>.

Emotional, stress-ridden rhetoric resurfaced in the Polish printed press in the middle of October 2020, with the emergence of the new statistical data on infections, deaths, poor organisation of hospitals, contact problems with doctors and sanitary-epidemiological stations, and a lack of perspectives in the months to come. Particular newspapers and weeklies started spreading catastrophic, dystopian descriptions of the reality in Poland, and in most European and non-European countries. A feeling of hopelessness and uncertainty was enhanced by obligatory information on new restrictions, bans, and orders. What is interesting, in the same period of time, across the western border of Poland, the German press was more reserved in spreading negative messages. The articles offered hope and reassurance to the public. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* stressed the fact that the coronavirus did not take such a heavy toll in autumn 2020 as it did in spring 2020 due to new medication, new batches of tests, medical staff dedicated to keep track of the infected, and ample hospital beds.

What really worried the journalists of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was the complacency of the German society, which in the long run could lead to new infections, and the epidemic situation in Poland.²⁸ Florian Hassel, a reporter specialising in the current affairs in the Eastern Europe, described Poland “a hidden hotspot” of the coronavirus in Europe. In his article titled “Heimlicher Hotspot”²⁹ he brought attention to the numbers of infections in Poland, which do not reflect reality. Writing about Poland, Hassel relied on the work of 19-year-old Michał Rogalski from Toruń and volunteers, who collected data on COVID-19 infections received from local sanitary-epidemiological stations until access to the data was restricted. This alarmed the German journalist. Hassel analysed COVID-19 test results in Poland and observed that, in line with the World Health Organisation guidelines, the pandemic is under control when less than 5% of the tests are positive. In Poland, at that time the figure was 45%, which indicated one of the highest indexes in the world, second only to Mexico. Apart from an analysis of a great probability of numerous cases which have not been diagnosed, the journalist described a dramatic situation in the Polish hospitals, i.e. no hospital beds available to COVID-19 patients and shortages of medical staff (an estimated shortage of 50,000–70,000 doctors and thousands of nurses). Such a comparison to Po-

²⁸ Bartosz DUDEK, “Niemiecka prasa o drugiej fali pandemii: ta jesień będzie inna od wiosny,” *DW*, October 9, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/pl/niemiecka-prasa-o-drugiej-fali-pandemii-ta-jesie%20%84-b%20%99dzie-inna-od-wiosny/a-55209754>.

²⁹ Florian HASSEL, “Heimlicher Hotspot,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 25, 2020, <http://sueddeutsche.de/politik/polen-heimlicher-hotspot-1.5127763?reduced=true>.

land could additionally result in a feeling of reassurance shared by the German readers, but could be alarming to the Polish readers. Florian Hassel showed some interest in the state of the Polish sanitary and medical staff when in June 2020 he presented, in his article titled “Der Gesundheitsminister der die falschen Masken Kaufte”,³⁰ an account of 130,000 face masks purchased for a million euros by the decision of the Minister of Health, Łukasz Szumowski. Later it turned out that the masks did not meet health standards. The German readers were also informed by Hassel about the transport of masks with fake certificates, which were then allowed in the country and used in the media by representatives of the Polish government. Despite these accounts it does not seem appropriate to regard *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as biased towards the Polish strategy of fighting the pandemic. Whenever suspicious steps were taken in Germany, Hassel also reported them in detail, e.g. the work of a team of journalists who, in January 2021, collected data on the vaccination policy adopted by the German government. The data proved to be so alarming that a report was issued describing the policy. According to the authors of “Österreich impet zögerlich, Dänemark rasant”,³¹ the policy was ill-suited and criticised by the public. The main objection was the slow pace and delayed introduction of the programme, which was launched only after Christmas. The German vaccination policy was contrasted with actions taken by other countries, e.g. Denmark and Austria, with the former being treated as the most effective.

The economic daily *Handelsblatt*, in its series of articles written during the first wave of the pandemic in Germany, devoted much space to emotions related to threat and all-pervasive fear.³² One of the texts uses the term “Coronashock” to describe the events of spring 2020. Due to its thematic specificity, i.e. economic profile, *Handelsblatt* focused on the economic consequences of lockdowns and working from home. In the article titled “Modelle erzeugen Illusion von Gewissheit”,³³ German investors were urged to be cautious and to take steps in order to steer clear of potential future economic

³⁰ HASSEL, “Der Gesundheitsminister.”

³¹ Florian HASSEL et al., “Österreich impet zögerlich, Dänemark rasant,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 6, 2021, http://sueddeutsche.de/politik/corona-impfungen-europa-1.5166518?reduced=t_rue.

³² See Gerd GIGERENZER, “Modelle erzeugen Illusion von Gewissheit,” *Handelsblatt*, May 18, 2020, 26–27; Michael SCHEPPE, “Risikoforscher erklärt: Das können wir gegen die Angst vor dem Coronavirus tun,” *Handelsblatt*, March 10, 2020, <http://handelsblatt.com/technik/medizin/gerd-gigerenzer-im-interview-risikoforscher-erklart-das-koennen-wir-gegen-die-angst-vor-dem-coronavirus-tun/25624846.html>.

³³ GIGERENZER, “Modelle erzeugen Illusion,” 26.

crises. The article touches upon verification of the investment counselling, growing accustomed to living in the times of constant uncertainty, differentiating between risk and uncertainty in the financial sector. *Handelsblatt* also took up the topic of business trips, so important from the perspective of business running and social relations, urging caution during travels, especially around Germany.

Another German text, published during the very early stages of the pandemic in Germany, is an interview conducted by *Frankfurter Rundschau* with a psychologist and risk expert, Gerd Gigerenzer.³⁴ The compositional dominant feature of the interview is a social reaction to the emotion of fear, together with its consequences. The conclusion, which could be drawn from the text, is Gigerenzer's words that in the time of a threat, people have a chance "to die out of fear of death." Apart from this dictum, the interview contains other vivid elements referring to the pandemic and describing people's reactions to fear. Gigerenzer, upon the request of Bascha Mika (the journalist conducting the interview) offers an evaluation of the German society and their behaviour, comparing the pandemic context to the American situation after September 11, 2001. After the WTC attacks, many Americans stopped using air transport, which resulted in 1,600 more fatalities reported in the road accidents within the next 12 months. Hence, avoiding one risk led to another. Gigerenzer claims it is quite similar with the coronavirus, i.e. self-isolated patients run a greater risk of developing a heart attack, appendicitis, digestive problems, stroke, cancer than catching the coronavirus itself. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, in other texts published at that time, recommended keeping cool heads and being patient, especially when it comes to the elderly. It reminded its readers that new opportunities might be just round the corner. Therefore, it recommended to wait the winter out.

Allgemeine Zeitung,³⁵ in its materials published during the autumn wave of the pandemic, also fell back on positive emotions and soothing rhetoric. It

³⁴ Bascha MIKA, "Coronavirus und die Statistik: Was die Zahlen sagen – und was nicht," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 13, 2020, <http://fr.de/politik/coronavirus-statistik-corona-zahlen-sagen-covid-19-13759061.html>.

³⁵ NSG, "Zwei neue Corona-Fälle in Mainz," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 8, 2020, http://allgemeine-zeitung.de/panorama/aus-aller-welt/zwei-neue-corona-falle-in-mainz_22226303; Paul LASSAY, "Laubenheimer Kita-Quarantäne geht weiter," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 8, 2020, http://allgemeine-zeitung.de/lokales/mainz/nachrichten-mainz/laubenheimer-kita-quarantane-geht-weiter_22227047; Alexandra WELSCH, "Corona und die Folgen für den Büromarkt in Südhessen," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 8, 2020, http://allgemeine-zeitung.de/wirtschaft-regional/corona-und-die-folgen-fur-den-buromarkt-in-sudhessen_2222245; Theresa BREINLICH, "Corona zum Trotz: Sing dich glücklich!" *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 11, 2020, http://allgemeine-zeitung.de/lokales/mainz/nachrichten-mainz/corona-zum-trotz-sing-dich-gluecklich_2222245.

urged its readers to learn how to live with the coronavirus and to remember that the situation is alleviated by a sufficient number of hospital beds and qualified staff. As a result, the journalists of the daily were against imposing drastic social restrictions, which they regarded unreasonable and irresponsible.

In a study on the German press articles, Bartosz Dudek³⁶ drew attention to *Heilbronner Stimme* and its analysis of the general attitudes to COVID-19 that could be found across the mainstream German press. *Heilbronner Stimme* observed that despite an increase in the number of infections the perception of the pandemic changed six months after its outbreak. The daily published a series of articles presenting differences that took place in the big cities. While the cities were deserted in spring, when the Germans worked from home and shops and restaurants were closed, in autumn 2020 people could be seen on the streets, on their way to work or shops, wearing masks, social distancing, and using disinfectants. In the midst of another pandemic-ridden autumn, the journalists devoted much space to the issue of vaccines,³⁷ the risks of being not vaccinated,³⁸ antigen tests conducted in schools for students' safety.³⁹ These articles were supposed to underscore the acquired experience in combatting the virus, a semblance of order being introduced in the social life, and a feeling of calmness in everyday life, something which could not be observed in the Polish press and social life. The topic raised by both the Polish and German media was an excessive accumulation of goods, social uncertainty and mood fluctuations experienced by Polish and German people during the first wave of the pandemic. *Der Spiegel*⁴⁰ addressed the issue of the Germans (similarly to Poles) stocking up on toilet paper, food and drinks; coping with fear and relying on the most effective forms of treatment.

zeitung.de/lokales/mainz/vg-nieder-dm/zornheim/corona-zum-trotz-sing-dich-gluecklich22239268; Vanessa KÖRBER, "Impf-Nachfrage im Kreis Bergstraße überraschend hoch," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, last modified October 14, 2020, http://allgemeine-zeitung.de/panorama/aus-aller-welt/impf-nachfrage-im-kreis-bergstrasse-uberraschend-hoch_22421587.

³⁶ DUDEK, "Niemiecka prasa."

³⁷ Valerie BLASS, "Impfbereitschaft steigt mit dem Vertrauen in die Regierung," *Heilbronner Stimme*, last modified September 23, 2021, <http://stimme.de/heilbronn/nachrichten/region/impfbereitschaft-steigt-mit-dem-vertrauen-in-die-regierung;art140897,4532998>.

³⁸ Carsten FRIESE, "Fast nur Ungeimpfte auf der Intensivstation," *Heilbronner Stimme*, last modified September 21, 2021, <http://stimme.de/heilbronn/nachrichten/region/fast-nur-ungeimpfte-auf-der-intensivstation;art140897,4532476>.

³⁹ Susanne SCHWARZBÜRGER, "Schnelltest sind ab sieben Jahren zugelassen," *Heilbronner Stimme*, last modified September 24, 2021, <http://stimme.de/heilbronn/nachrichten/region/schnelltests-sind-ab-sieben-jahren-zugelassen;art140897,4533377>.

⁴⁰ MAECK, "Es ist die Zeit."

In the Polish media context, it should be noted that not only the printed press but also internet media attempted to stimulate their addressees' emotions. The Onet⁴¹ portal encouraged its users to write personal accounts of coronavirus infections or accounts of the standpoint of those working in the health care and having everyday contact with the virus, and submit it to koronawirus@medonet.pl. These stories were supposed to be subjective and fraught with emotions, to describe individual experience and expose any inadequacies. Anonymity was guaranteed to the authors, who were also encouraged to rely on mechanisms of emotion-based manipulation via all possible means. Such actions should be regarded as inappropriate from the perspective of journalistic ethics.

2. LEXICAL MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN THE PRESS

One of the taboo topics in the contemporary media are diseases, not being physically attractive, highlighting human imperfections and weaknesses. According to Michał Gral, "today we can say that a disease is an antithesis of an ability and that is the reason it is a taboo topic. The promoted cultural model of a healthy, powerful, vigorous individual, who is not discouraged by life adversities, seems to be in contrast to a disease, weakness, disability."⁴² Such an approach to health-related issues did not help the media to promote material on the coronavirus. Especially that the information on COVID-19 became a dominant, if not the only one, topic in all sorts of the media.

Those working in the media sector were faced with a challenging task since they were expected not only to give information but also to create new concepts, explain the freshly created ones or those borrowed from medical science (e.g. articles were published delving into the name of the virus itself, which in February 2020 was dubbed "Chinese coronavirus",⁴³ initially there were attempts to undermine its aggressiveness, the virus was commonly

⁴¹ "Zasięg koronawirusa Covid-19. Raport na temat koronawirusa," *Medonet*, accessed March 28, 2020, www.medonet.pl/koronawirus/to-musisz-wiedziec,zasieg-koronawirusa-covid-19--mapa-artykul,54726942.html.

⁴² Michał GRALA, "Współczesne tabu w komunikacji," in *Teorie komunikacji i mediów*, vol. 7, *Od teorii do empirii*, ed. Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska and Marek Graszewicz (Wrocław: Wrocławskie Wydawnictwa Oświatowe, 2014), 70.

⁴³ Paweł WALEWSKI, "Epidemia strachu," *Polityka* 6 (2020): 58; Maria KRUCZKOWSKA, "Koronawirus bardziej śmiertelny niż SARS," *Gazeta Wyborcza* 33 (2020): 11.

compared to a regular flu, which changed in the course of time,⁴⁴ there were attempts to explain what medical statistics is,⁴⁵ what “quarantine” means,⁴⁶ how to treat SARS-CoV-2,⁴⁷ what are the details of scientists’ work on the vaccine), to explain avant-garde, incomprehensible phenomena (e.g. in the initial stages of the pandemic there were speculations about its course and duration,⁴⁸ there were accounts of a wedding ceremony during the lockdown,⁴⁹ hibernation of the world economy,⁵⁰ limited access to health care,⁵¹

⁴⁴ Agnieszka NIEWIŃSKA, “Zarażeni paniką,” *Do Rzeczy* 10 (2020): 38; Paulina PADZIK, “Koronawirus to ściema? Jest jakiś poziom absurdu, z którym nie warto dyskutować,” accessed May 25, 2020, <http://www.wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/koronawirus-teorie-spiskowe/snj9I36>; Artur DOMOSŁAWSKI, “Płaskoziemca w czasach pandemii,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 43; Violetta KRASNOWSKA, “Koronaprzekrety,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 34.

⁴⁵ Karol JAŁOCHOWSKI, “Po drugiej stronie krzywej,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 16; Martyna BUNDA, “Kronika cichych śmierci,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 10; Karol JAŁOCHOWSKI, “Jak słoń z kotem,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 22.

⁴⁶ Julian ĆWIELUCH, “Dystrakcją w pandemię,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 11; Jerzy BACZYŃSKI, “Narodowa kwarantanna,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 6.

⁴⁷ Miłosz WĘGLEWSKI, “Innowacje kontra pandemia,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 62; Jędrzej WINIECKI, „Powikłania,” *Polityka* 6 (2020): 44; Margit KOSSOBUDZKA, “Co się dzieje z chorymi na COVID-19?” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 107 (2020): 16; Dorota ROMANOWSKA, “Idziemy na wojnę z wirusami,” *Newsweek* 8 (2020): 76; Paweł WALEWSKI, “Blisko, coraz bliżej?,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 60.

⁴⁸ Margit KOSSOBUDZKA, “Dwa scenariusze epidemii z Chin,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 31 (2020): 18; WK, “Koronawirus w Polsce. Jadwiga Emilewicz dementuje fake newsy,” *Wiadomości, Onet*, March 12, 2020, <http://www.wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/koronawirus-w-polsce-zamknie-te-sklepy-jadwiga-emilewicz-dementuje/xvxwgv3>; Tomasz CZOIK ET AL., “Koronawirus zmienia plany,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 51 (2020): 9; Andrzej KUBLIK, “Koronawirus problemem dla motoryzacji,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 49 (2020): 12; Alina POSPISCHIL, “Na hasło ‘koronawirus’ popadamy w panikę,” *Gazeta Wyborcza – Tygodnik Lublin* 55 (2020): 8; Judyta WATOŁA, “Z koronawirusem mamy pozamiataane,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 55 (2020): 7; Łukasz OSIŃSKI, “Wirusolog z Belgii powiedział, jak długo potrwa pandemia korona wirusa,” *Kobieta, Onet*, March 22, 2020, <http://www.kobieta.onet.pl/wiadomosci/koronawirus-belgia-wirusolog-epidemia-potrwa-okolo-10-tygodni/npwb6ts>; Magda WAŻNA, “Kiedy zakończy się pandemia korona wirusa SARS-CoV-2? Sprawdzamy, co mówią naukowcy,” *Medonet*, accessed March 27, 2020, <http://www.medonet.pl/koronawirus/to-musisz-wiedziec,kiedy-zakonczy-sie-pandemia-koronawirusa-sars-cv-2-sprawdzamy>; Grzegorz LINDENBERG, “Co nas dopadło? Dwie epidemie w jednej,” accessed April 1, 2020, <http://www.wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/koronawirus-w-polsce-i-na-swiecie-co-nas-dopadlo>; Anita KARWOWSKA, “Włosi umierają, bo zareagowali za późno,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 49 (2020): 19; Robert STEFANICKI, “Koronawirus przeżył Japonię,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 49 (2020): 18.

⁴⁹ Elżbieta TURLEJ, “Już mi niosą maskę z welonem,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 26; Edyta GIETKA, “Już jej nieśli suknię z welonem,” *Polityka* 15 (2020): 32.

⁵⁰ Radosław OMACHEL, “Do pracy by się szło,” *Newsweek* 17 (2020): 63; Konrad SADURSKI, “O kredyt będzie trudniej,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 58.

⁵¹ Dorota ROMAŃSKA, “Onkologia w czasach zarazy. Paraliż,” *Newsweek* 17 (2020): 66; Judyta WATOŁA, “Wirus obezwładnia onkologię,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 73 (2020): 5.

thousands of planes being grounded, the so-called “silence in the air”,⁵² reasons for wearing masks,⁵³ information on where you can buy them,⁵⁴ why we should wash and disinfect hands,⁵⁵ what is lockdown and what its specificity is,⁵⁶ explanations of politicians’ recommendations to spend holidays in Poland,⁵⁷ problems with the availability of coronavirus tests, the waiting time for the test result,⁵⁸ or how to function in the new reality⁵⁹).

Journalists’ work, in this challenging, unprecedented time, was complicated and required specific skills. The press used lexical mechanisms of generating emotions through specific titles of articles, news sections and interviews, based on synonyms, antonyms, onomatopoeic expressions, acronyms, puns, idioms, prosaic elements, paraphrases of film titles, book titles, proverbs. Some of the examples—original both on the lexical and semantic level—are: “Mór spod piór”,⁶⁰ “Blisko coraz bliżej?”,⁶¹ “Sklepy pod specjalnym

⁵² Cezary KOWANDA, “Latem nie latam,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 36.

⁵³ PAW, “Maskowanie strachu,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 7.

⁵⁴ Bartosz T. WIELIŃSKI, “Koronawirus w Europie, czyli skąd wziąć maseczki,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 55 (2020): 11.

⁵⁵ Joanna CIEŚLA, “Szkola mycia rąk,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 15.

⁵⁶ See Joanna SOLSKA, “Bez znieczulenia,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 12; Katarzyna KACZOROWSKA, “Pandemia po polsku,” *Polityka* 12 (2020): 100; Ewa WANAT, “Babilon ucichł,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 40; Iza KLEMENTOWSKA, “Zamknięci na wyspie,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 46; Małgorzata ŚWIĘCHOWICZ, “Jesteśmy zadziwiająco karni,” *Newsweek* 17 (2020): 31; Aleksander HUDZIK, “Aktywista na balkonie,” *Newsweek* 17 (2020): 80; Tomasz ZALEWSKI, “Słuchać tylko wiewiórki,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 42; Martyna BUNDA, “Pierwsza taka Wielkanoc,” *Polityka* 15 (2020): 19; Julian ĆWIELUCH, “Obiekty zamknięte,” *Polityka* 15 (2020): 100; Aleksandra LUBAŃSKA-CZUBAK, “Moja bańka,” *Gazeta Wyborcza – Wysokie Obcasy* 15 (2020): 26.

⁵⁷ See Karolina WALCZOWSKA, “Pierwsze biuro podróży już upadło. Czy powinienem obawiać się o moją wycieczkę,” *Podróże, Onet*, April 3, 2020, <http://www.podroze.onet.pl/porady/koronawirus-w-polsce-biuro-podrozy-upadlo-co-z-moja-wycieczka/b64In0q>; Edyta BRYŁA, “Turyści boją się latać do Azji. Ucierpią też polskie firmy,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 25 (2020): 14.

⁵⁸ See Sylwia SALWACKA, “Kilka dni czekała na test na korona wirusa,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 51 (2020): 7; Piotr CIEŚLIŃSKI, “Jak się robi testy na koronawirusa?” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 55 (2020): 20; Renata GROCHAL, “Testujemy wszystkich, bo to działa,” *Newsweek* 19 (2020): 30; Joanna SOLSKA, “Wirusowy stres test,” *Polityka* 11 (2020): 16; Paweł WALEWSKI, “Oblane testy,” *Polityka* 15 (2020): 66.

⁵⁹ See Mariusz LODZIŃSKI and Artur GERNAND, “Obrady w cieniu korona wirusa,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 73 (2020): 13; Marcin KOŁODZIEJCZYK, “Nagła śmierć Schengen,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 86; Joanna CIEŚLA, “Zdalne dzieci,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 20; Joanna SOLSKA, “Sklepy pod specjalnym nadzorem,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 39; Ewa WILK, “Życie pod wirusem,” *Polityka* 15 (2020): 12; Joanna CIEŚLA, “Ciszej nad Bałtykiem,” *Polityka* 29 (2020): 20; Katarzyna KACZOROWSKA, “Anioły pod ścianą,” *Polityka* 29 (2020): 23.

⁶⁰ MEJER, “Mór spod piór,” 76.

⁶¹ WALEWSKI, “Blisko, coraz bliżej?” 60.

nadzorem”,⁶² “Koronaprzekręty”,⁶³ “Zdalne dzieci”,⁶⁴ “Patokampania”,⁶⁵ “Eurowirus”,⁶⁶ “Epidemiokracja”,⁶⁷ “Wirusowy stres test”,⁶⁸ “Epidemia strachu”,⁶⁹ “Bez znieczulenia”,⁷⁰ “Szkola mycia rąk”,⁷¹ “Zawirusowani”,⁷² “Kronika cichych śmierci”,⁷³ “Po drugiej stronie krzywej”,⁷⁴ “Firmy upadają stojąc”,⁷⁵ “Latem nie latam”,⁷⁶ “Lans makabre”,⁷⁷ “Zarażeni paniką”,⁷⁸ “Do pracy by się szło”,⁷⁹ “Już mi niosą maskę z welonem”,⁸⁰ “Ministerstwo oblewa testy”.⁸¹

Another mechanism of generating emotions in the readers are direct and intrusive descriptions of the family and social life of those well-known and those anonymous to the public. Consequently, the readers obtained material exposing the characters’ private lives. Journalists, wanting to present their materials as attractive and original (which was not an easy task when the reader was flooded with monothematic information), started to rely on surveillance techniques. In order to achieve a certain portrayal of the characters, journalists relied on prosaic linguistic elements and colloquial expressions

3. VISUAL MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN THE PRESS

Ziauddin Sardar, a cultural expert, claims that it is enough to equip an individual with a camera to bring about their surveillance tendencies.⁸² This

⁶² Joanna SOLSKA, “Sklepy pod specjalnym nadzorem,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 39.

⁶³ KRASNOWSKA, “Koronaprzekręty,” 34.

⁶⁴ Joanna CIEŚLA, “Zdalne dzieci,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 20.

⁶⁵ Rafał KALUKIN, “Patokampania,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 14.

⁶⁶ “Eurowirus,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 9.

⁶⁷ Jerzy BACZYŃSKI, “Epidemiokracja,” *Polityka* 14 (2020): 6.

⁶⁸ SOLSKA, “Wirusowy stres test,” 16.

⁶⁹ WALEWSKI, “Epidemia strachu,” 56.

⁷⁰ SOLSKA, “Bez znieczulenia,” 12.

⁷¹ CIEŚLA, “Szkola mycia rąk,” 15.

⁷² Inga MILESZKIEWICZ, “Zawirusowani,” *Polityka* 7 (2020): 44.

⁷³ BUNDA, “Kronika cichych śmierci,” 10.

⁷⁴ JAŁOCHOWSKI, “Po drugiej stronie krzywej,” 16.

⁷⁵ Juliusz ĆWIELUCH, “Firmy upadają stojąc,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 28.

⁷⁶ KOWANDA, “Latem nie latam,” 36.

⁷⁷ Marcin PIĄTEK, “Lans macabre,” *Polityka* 17 (2020): 64.

⁷⁸ NIEWIŃSKA, “Zarażeni paniką,” 38.

⁷⁹ OMACHEL, “Do pracy by się szło,” 63.

⁸⁰ TURLEJ, “Już mi niosą maskę z welonem,” 26.

⁸¹ Judyta WATOŁA, “Ministerstwo oblewa testy,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 90 (2020): 3.

⁸² Ziauddin SARDAR, “Era voyeur,” *Dialog* 2 (2001): 163.

seems to be confirmed by the scientific discourse, linked with experience, visual imagery, observation of the world and changes that take place in the world.⁸³ According to Kazimierz Michalewski, “the radio relies on linguistic and paralinguistic cues; television shows the face, the outfit, body language, and the way somebody speaks. The press focuses on the text, together with its graphic, emotional, iconic features, provided by the journalist.”⁸⁴ A photograph can determine the place of an article within the newspaper column.

The pandemic period is conducive to the emergence of attractive, naturalistic pictures which evoke emotions, depict the surrounding reality. Photo reporters, both professionals and amateurs, documented all forms of human activity, whether public or private. The photographs published in the press showed scenes of everyday life, the so-called “new normality” (e.g. people in masks doing shopping, walking, commuting, even women in maternity wards⁸⁵). They also documented dramatic scenes from hospitals, emergency departments, closed doors of primary health care centres. They documented photographs of patients who recovered but also of the dead, or anonymous coffins put in rows and carried away by lorries into the unknown. Photo reporters paid attention to elements intensifying feelings of terror, e.g. masks on the faces, protection gloves worn by shop assistants, hairdressers, couriers, etc. They photographed paramedics, doctors, nurses wearing uniforms and goggles. According to Wojciech Eichelberger, emotions of the highest intensity are evoked by watching people who are unaware of this fact because “we try to get to know who they really are.”⁸⁶ Photo reporters also paid attention to details such as the names visible on health care workers’ uniforms, bringing about reflections on their unification and anonymity.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, the press published photographs evoking not only negative emotions. Positive emotions were usually evoked by photographs, or computer print screens, presenting the interiors of houses belonging to politicians, actors, journalists, all dressed informally. Employers and employees, students and teachers were presented in a new,

⁸³ Jaromir VOLEK, “Niezamierzone skutki ‘komunikacyjnej ideologii’ w kontekście społeczeństwa informacyjnego,” in *Media masowe w demokratyzujących się systemach politycznych. W drodze do wolności słowa i mediów*, ed. Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006), 37.

⁸⁴ Kazimierz MICHAŁEWSKI, “Autoprezentacja i prezentacja w mediach,” in *Komunikowanie publiczne Zagadnienia wybrane*, ed. Barbara Kudra and Elwira Olejniczak (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2014), 74.

⁸⁵ Elżbieta TURLEJ, “Matki czasów pandemii. Życie trwa bo musi,” *Newsweek* 16 (2020): 21.

⁸⁶ Krzysztof BOCZEK, “Podglądanie, czyli co widać z ukrycia,” *Fokus* 6 (2005): 24.

intimate role. All this was done in line with a well-known mechanism, studied by Agnieszka Ogonowska,⁸⁷ and described by Katarzyna Jabłońska in the journal *Więź*. More than a decade ago, while analysing the situation of mass culture, Jabłońska paid attention to unlimited possibilities of the authors and addressees of the media. Her work contributes to a contemporary analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the blurring of the line between the private and public spheres of life.⁸⁸

The photographs published in the press showed that some public figures found their way in the new reality. Some of them jumped at the chance to decide on the set design, makeup, outfit. The background of many photographs and online conversations were paintings on the wall, bookshelves, display cabinets. Social status could be expressed by furnishings, attics, study rooms, tenement housing, a block of flats, etc. Erving Goffman introduced a term for such a creation: *facade*.⁸⁹ It is used to define the situation and its characters, it is a collective image, a set of stereotypical expectations, helping to understand the character's creation. The character's status, position, profession can be elements of the facade. Its other elements could be: outfit, sex, age, idiolect, appearance, mimicry, gestures, environment. Agnieszka Ogonowska describes the facade as "secondary privacy",⁹⁰ a media product created for the addressee's sake. "Secondary privacy" seems to create an air of artificial privacy, quite popular in the pandemic photos and online materials. Wojciech Jabłoński claims that some people have an original recipe to attract the media's attention, i.e. by drawing the attention to one's "curious personality",⁹¹ which is achieved by means of emotions accompanying shocking and friendly gestures, or an iconoclastic or empathic comment. Such a promotion of one's personality was described by Paulina Mucha, relying on Dariusz Galasiński's study, as "spasmodic communication".⁹² It seems that emotion-filled spasmodic communication is one of the

⁸⁷ Agnieszka OGONOWSKA, "Globalizacja. Sylwetki bohaterów ponowoczesności," *Kultura Popularna* 1 (2004): 20.

⁸⁸ Katarzyna JABŁOŃSKA, "Gra w eliminację," *Więź* 4 (2001): 5.

⁸⁹ Erving GOFFMAN, "Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego," in *Antropologia widowisk. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, ed. Leszek Kolankiewicz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo KR Warszawa, 2005), 114–25.

⁹⁰ Agnieszka OGONOWSKA, *Voyeurizm telewizyjny. Między ontologią telewizji a rzeczywistością telewidza* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogicznej w Krakowie, 2006).

⁹¹ Wojciech JABŁOŃSKI, "Propaganda zamiast PR," *Polityka* 44 (2008): 35.

⁹² See Paulina MUCHA, "Autopromocja w przekazie informacji o sobie," in *Komunikacja, tradycja i innowacje*, ed. Małgorzata Karwatowska and Adam Siwiec (Chełm: Wydawnictwo UMCS

most popular means of communication during the pandemic. It can be accessed through written word or through pictures.

4. MANIPULATION OF EMOTIONS IN THE PRESS AND AFFECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE MESSAGES

The process of manipulation of emotions in the press, as well as in other new and traditional forms of media, is characterised by the senders hiding their intentions. The substance for manipulation can be literary elements, or artistic means such as, hyperbole, similes, metaphors, comparisons, which replace the explicitly presented message. There are also formal elements involved, e.g. the order of the presented pieces of information, the space and place devoted to the news in a column of text, or a lack of or surplus of new content. Manipulation makes use of tools similar to those connected with persuasion, also found in the media. The senders sometimes rely on both of them, with the latter being pervasive mostly in educational, cautionary, and utilitarian materials. The senders do not seem to hide the persuasive character of the message, however they use manipulation techniques unbeknownst to the receivers. Hence, manipulation is of a negative value, and persuasion is the art of bringing others round to one's views. Various examples of manipulation techniques can be found in the printed media in the period of COVID-19. Texts were filled with emotions, which helped to shape the readers' opinions. Materials created a common enemy, the so-called scape goat (e.g. articles stigmatising those infected who did not obey the quarantine rules; articles condemning those who did not follow preventive measures for COVID-19; doctors of Primary Health Care working remotely; teachers not fulfilling their duty to teach online via educational platforms, etc). The messages creating a common enemy affected the emotions of the readers by evoking a feeling of dislike for particular people or professional groups. Similarly, the hero-creating messages evoked a feeling of liking (e.g. volunteers helping the elderly, preparing meals for the medical staff, walking the dogs for those infected or on quarantine, etc.). The perception of readers, stemming from their subjective interpretation of the text, was shaped by formal aspects, i.e. structure of the article, its layout. The structure of a text is the most implicit method of manipulating emotions of the

i Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Chełmie, 2013), 249; Dariusz GALASIŃSKI, *Chwalenie się jako perswazyjny akt mowy* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Instytut Języka Polskiego, 1992).

readers since they are not aware of the its potential influence. A reporter or an editor, in want of getting a subliminal message across, can repeat the same bits (just like a chorus), the same message by means of lexemes or phraseological units. Journalists may also resort to spreading disinformation (e.g. by manipulating statistics), delayed messages (presenting “uncomfortable” pieces of information on the far-sided columns) or forwarded messages (placing the news on the cover page, where it is exposed the most, next to the masthead); setting a news agenda of the day relative to a preferred pattern; subjective selection of guests and characters described; mixing soft news with hard news and using mechanism of media tabloidisation (e.g. voyeurism or media exhibitionism) in order to generate emotions in readers.

According to Jerzy Jastrzębski, “relevant—despite the advent of the press—is the controversial role of the public and its place in social communication, including, first and foremost, the impact that the media have on beliefs, attitudes, and real-life decisions ... of groups and individuals.”⁹³ In the axiological discourse, the receiver, on the one hand, is treated as subject to manipulation or marketing propaganda. On the other hand, they are treated as an author of popcultural, homogenous messages meeting the tabloid standards. Within the framework of such a discourse, the receiver seems to be a product of mass culture, getting an easy access to handpicked content, even though it may be processed contrary to the sender’s intentions. In the last century, the media drifted away from unidirectional content (from the sender to the receiver). It became interactive since the public got a platform to channel “their voice”. With time, it turned out that the expression of “the voice” is not fully independent as, e.g. the social media are controlled and used for marketing purposes, not refraining from violence. In the 1980s, Tannis MacBeth Williams and R. Corteen⁹⁴ pointed out that the media had a negative influence on children’s and teenagers’ behaviour. At the beginning of the 21st century, Jeffrey Johnson⁹⁵ confirmed the negative influence of some media content on the public. However, as noted by Jastrzębski,

the media are impervious to criticism, blaming the public for their sins, which they apparently serve, and masking, to a greater or lesser effect, their political

⁹³ Jerzy JASTRZĘBSKI, “Publiczność – sprawca czy ofiara?” *Rocznik Medioznawczy* 1 (2019): 112.

⁹⁴ Raymond CORTEEN and Tannis MACBETH WILLIAMS, “Television and reading skills,” in *The Impact of Television: A Natural Experiment in Three Communities*, ed. Tannis MacBeth Williams (London–New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, 1996).

⁹⁵ Jeffrey G. JOHNSON, “Television Viewing and Aggressive Behavior During Adolescence and Adulthood,” *Science* 295 (2002): 295.

and economic interests. Gradually the public loses trust to the media and pushes journalists to ever lower positions in the ranks of professional prestige, which, however, does not find reflection in the viewing or listening rates, or the number of clicks, even to the contrary—the number of dwellers and guests of digital worlds grows faster than the world’s population.⁹⁶

It seems that the public loses control of the media content and forms of its transmission. It is a problem similar to the one of drawing a line between the public and the private sphere. Jürgen Habermas describes the public sphere as “a network aimed at spreading information and points of view (i.e. opinions expressing approval or disapproval)”.⁹⁷ In the public sphere everyone should be able to express their voice, regardless of the communication competence, knowledge, or status. The media create and moderate the public sphere, they are mediators between and representatives of the users; they can manipulate but also educate. In this context, for the sake of modern media users, it is vital for them to develop a certain level of media competence and to set high professional standards that should be obligatory for those in charge of the media.

In the modern media-dominated world, the category of the users can have many meanings as it can denote an element of the public sphere or space, or it can denote the receivers of the media content, i.e. readers, listeners, viewers, internet users, all of them subject to affects. The so-called “affects” are different from emotions, even though, according to Brian Massumi, emotions can belong to affects. Affects are situational, subject to change, characterised by cyclical changes, while emotions are contextual, they can be named and interpreted. Affects are broader in scope and boundless, they are more challenging to be described. Theories of affects are attributed to Brian Massumi.⁹⁸ He demonstrates how management of affects can influence decision-making. It can be determined by fear, an expected threat or projection of a threat in the future (see press materials related to COVID-19, vaccinations or the lack thereof, bursting hospitals, inaccessibility of health care service, remote work and education, potential unemployment, financial problems, etc.). The system of an affective response to a stimulus embraces an individual’s subjective experience, together with their physiology and forms

⁹⁶ JASTRZĘBSKI, “Publiczność – sprawca czy ofiara?” 116.

⁹⁷ Jürgen HABERMAS, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law Democracy* (Cambridge: MA, 1996), 360.

⁹⁸ Brian MASSUMI, *Parables for the Virtual. Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham–London: Duke University Press, 2002), 15; MASUMI, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 48.

of expression.⁹⁹ As Justyna Tabaszewska notes: “it is not enough to project a threat. It must be embedded in the present and visions of the future, and it can be achieved most effectively by well-organised information warfare.”¹⁰⁰ Today’s media, not only tabloids, enjoy such manipulation strategies. According to Massumi and Tabaszewska, the media treat equally events that have happened, could have happened, or never happened—all of them can be “the media facts”. The creating and controlling of affects seems to be the future of media agenda, and can contribute to its popularity.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotions have become an inherent element of press content published during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland and in Germany. Journalists, news reporters went through various emotional states, which could be evidenced in the materials they produced. A feeling of uncertainty, fear, irritation at the imposed lockdown, distant learning and remote work was present in Poland since March 2020. Half a year later, feelings of terror were present in the face of growing statistical numbers of those infected and dead, overcrowded hospitals, etc. Luckily, a feeling of hope was evoked by some press materials, describing progress in the development work on a vaccine, new medications, information on those who recovered. Relief and joy were short-lived, appearing in the press between the middle of May to the middle of August 2020. Positive emotions were also a result of the “unfreezing” of the economy, lifting of the bans and isolation. In Germany, after the first wave of shock and uncertainty expressed by the press, there came a time when the press materials endeavoured to console, educate and boost morale of the readers.

Numerous press articles published in Poland during the most challenging time of the pandemic (when the infection and death rate was highest) presented everyday life as a threat and fight for survival. The readers had access to dramatic stories concerning their own towns, cities, country, but also international stories. The media, trying to gain in popularity, tried to show the most attractive and shocking news. In line with the principle described by

⁹⁹ Małgorzata FAJKOWSKA-STANIK and Magdalena MARSZAŁ-WIŚNIEWSKA, “Co to jest styl afektywny?” *Przełąd Psychologiczny* 47, no. 3 (2004): 257–73.

¹⁰⁰ Justyna TABASZEWSKA, “Przeszłe przyszłości. Afektywne fakty i historie alternatywne,” *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2017): 50. Cf. Leszek TYMIAKIN, “O triadzie komunikacyjnej: wartościowanie – emocje – ekspresja,” *Annales N – Educatio Nova* 2 (2017): 204–5.

Maria Braun-Gałkowska, i.e. that media reporters “do not present a ‘normal world’, where planes and buses reach their destination, parents take care of children, neighbours greet each other, but instead they present the news, i.e. events deviating from normality and catching attention, e.g. a plane crash, a bus falling off a slope, a father abusing a child, a neighbour murdering a neighbour.”¹⁰¹ A similar tendency was observed in the media coverage of the pandemic in spring 2020. During the pandemic we witnessed a dominance of pessimistic texts in Poland (not so much in Germany); primary interest in threats, risks, deaths, while the information on those who recovered or progress in the work on a vaccine appeared further in the text, not always supported with photographs.

This only shows and confirms that the representation of the pandemic in the press is conducive to manipulating the readers’ emotions. Some articles affected the potential behaviour of the readers (e.g. by pointing to a scape goat or a hero of a local community). As a result, the experience of the pandemic teaches us that we should not get too emotional when describing everyday, challenging tasks that the society and public service needs to face. The fundamental principle of journalism, i.e. objectivism and moderation, should be adhered to, despite difficulties.

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¹⁰¹ Maria BRAUN-GAŁKOWSKA and Iwona ULFIK-JAWORSKA, *Zabawa w zabijanie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Lubelskiej Gaudium 2002), 182.

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MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN THE POLISH AND GERMAN PRESS

Summary

The aim of the article is to try to show the mechanisms of generating emotions that appeared in press publications in Poland and in Germany in the period from March to November 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

The article refers to media studies and linguistics. It tries to show the mechanisms of generating emotions in the Polish press. It was noted that fear was the dominant emotion in the described period. The main channels for distributing emotions were text and photos, lexis and visualization.

By analysing numerous and diverse press articles in both Polish and German press, this study guarantees a broad and comprehensive perspective of research on the mechanisms of generating emotions in the press determined by the subject of the pandemic.

Keywords: mechanisms of generating emotions; press; pandemic; fear; lexical mechanisms of creating emotions; visual mechanisms of creating emotions.

MECHANIZMY GENEROWANIA EMOCJI W POLSKIEJ I NIEMIECKIEJ PRASIE

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest próba ukazania mechanizmów generowania emocji, jakie pojawiły się w publikacjach prasowych w Polsce i w Niemczech w okresie od marca do listopada 2020 r., w czasie pandemii koronawirusa.

Artykuł odnosi się do medioznawstwa i językoznawstwa. Zauważono, że dominującą emocją w opisywanym okresie był strach, a głównymi kanałami dystrybucji emocji były tekst i zdjęcia, leksyka i wizualizacja.

Niniejsze opracowanie, analizując liczne i różnorodne artykuły pochodzące zarówno z prasy polskiej, jak i niemieckiej, gwarantuje szeroką perspektywę badawczą.

Słowa kluczowe: mechanizmy generowania emocji; pandemia COVID-19; strach; leksykalne mechanizmy powstawania emocji; wizualne mechanizmy powstawania emocji.