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**MEDIA AS ARCHITECTS OF PUBLIC OPINION:
THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS**

**SURSELE MEDIA CA ARHITECȚI AI OPINIEI PUBLICE:
IMPACTUL LOR ASUPRA SOCIETĂȚII ȘI POLITICII**

**СМИ КАК АРХИТЕКТОРЫ ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО МНЕНИЯ:
ИХ ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ОБЩЕСТВО И ПОЛИТИКУ**

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ABSTRACT:

**MEDIA AS ARCHITECTS OF PUBLIC OPINION:
THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS**

The media are an indispensable component of the modern information environment, profoundly shaping our perceptions of the world as well as our opinions and attitudes. This paper examines the media's role as a critical tool in the processes of communication, public opinion formation, and political discourse. It provides a foundational theoretical framework for understanding the significance of the media in contemporary society, while exploring how media influence the public image of politicians within the political arena.

Keywords: media, media influence, public opinion, political discourse, public image of politicians.

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REZUMAT:

**SURSELE MEDIA CA ARHITECȚI AI OPINIEI PUBLICE:
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Mass-media este o componentă indispensabilă a mediului informațional modern, modelând profund percepțiile noastre despre lume, precum și opiniile și atitudinile noastre. Această lucrare examinează rolul mass-media ca instrument critic în procesele de comunicare, formarea opiniei publice și discursul politic. Acesta oferă un cadru teoretic fundamental pentru înțelegerea semnificației mass-media în

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societatea contemporană, în timp ce explorează modul în care media influențează imaginea publică a politicianilor în arena politică.

Cuvinte cheie: mass-media, influența mass-media, opinia publică, discursul politic, imaginea publică a politicianilor

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РЕЗЮМЕ:

**СМИ КАК АРХИТЕКТОРЫ ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО МНЕНИЯ:
ИХ ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ОБЩЕСТВО И ПОЛИТИКУ**

Средства массовой информации являются незаменимым компонентом современной информационной среды, глубоко формируя наше восприятие мира, а также наши мнения и отношения. В данной статье рассматривается роль СМИ как важнейшего инструмента в процессах коммуникации, формирования общественного мнения и политического дискурса. Он обеспечивает фундаментальную теоретическую основу для понимания значения средств массовой информации в современном обществе, а также исследует, как средства массовой информации влияют на общественный имидж политиков на политической арене.

Ключевые слова: СМИ, влияние СМИ, общественное мнение, политический дискурс, публичный имидж политиков.

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Introduction

In today's modern society, the media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political processes. Their capacity to deliver real-time information and create discourse on both national and global levels makes them a powerful tool in constructing how individuals perceive and interpret societal events. The media not only disseminate information but also actively shape public opinions, attitudes, and decisions, positioning themselves as integral players in the political process. Their influence is particularly evident in how they present politicians and political issues, directly impacting voters' perceptions and behaviors.

The aim of this article is to analyze the media's influence on the political sphere and broader society, focusing on identifying the mechanisms through which media shape public discourse. Special attention is given to how media narratives influence the understanding of political issues and figures, and how such influence may strengthen democratic processes or, conversely, contribute to their potential disintegration. Here, "disintegration" refers to the erosion of democratic processes and societal consensus, which are essential for the proper functioning of democracy.

The media have the power to reinforce democratic values, such as pluralism of opinions and informed decision-making, yet they can also undermine them. When misinformation is disseminated, polarizing narratives are propagated, or public discussions are manipulated, trust in institutions declines, society fragments, and the capacity for constructive dialogue is lost. This erosion of democratic foundations can have far-reaching consequences for political stability and societal cohesion. Therefore, this article seeks to identify these mechanisms and highlight the importance of critical media literacy and responsible media conduct in the democratic system.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of media on public opinion and politics has been extensively studied, with various authors contributing to the understanding of this complex issue from distinct perspectives. This article reviews selected works that are critical to comprehending the topic, drawing upon academic publications, conference papers, case studies, and expert articles to provide a broader contextual understanding.

One of the most cited scholars in this area is Robert M. Entman, whose work *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm* (1993) emphasizes the importance of framing in shaping public opinion. According to Entman, "framing" involves the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of reality by the media, influencing how events are perceived and interpreted by the public. His work serves as a foundational framework for understanding how media shape political communication.

Similarly, the article *The Framing of Politics as Strategy and Game: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings* (2011) by Aalberg, Strömbäck, and De Vreese examines the phenomenon of "strategic framing," where politics is portrayed as a competition or game. The authors highlight that this approach fosters public cynicism towards politics by prioritizing dramatic conflicts over substantive discussions. Their findings are instrumental in understanding how media coverage impacts trust in political institutions.

In Slovakia, Dana Petranová's book *Persuasion and Media* (2013) explores persuasive techniques employed by the media to influence audience behavior and opinions. Petranová underscores the significant role media play in shaping societal consensus, often underestimated in its magnitude. Her work sheds light on the psychological and communicative strategies underlying media manipulation.

The influence of media on families and society in the context of the information age is analyzed by Burgerová and Piskura in their article *Multimedia and Media in the Context of Families Living in the Information Society* (2021). They address the risks associated with digitalization and multimedia consumption, including dependence on information technologies, and raise questions about how media may disrupt traditional family values and relationships.

Rastislav Tóth's article *The Political Role of Mass Media* (2018) examines how media act as active participants in political systems. According to Tóth, mass media no longer merely mediate information but increasingly shape political agendas and voter behavior, illustrating the blurred lines between journalism and political activism.

Notable contributions also include Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (2006), which analyzes changes in the conditions of the public sphere critical to understanding media communication. Habermas argues that mass media play a crucial role in forming the public sphere and shaping political discourse, thereby influencing democratic decision-making.

Hallin and Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (2004) compares media systems and their impact on politics across different countries, showing how political and historical contexts shape media's role in public opinion and communication.

Noam Chomsky, in *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (1997), warns against the manipulative techniques used by mass media to control public opinion. Chomsky stresses that media often serve as instruments for disseminating ideologies and propaganda benefiting the powerful.

Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011) provides insights into the psychological mechanisms affecting how individuals process information and form opinions, which directly influence how media messages are received and impact political decisions.

The seminal work by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* (1955), investigates media's indirect impact on political behavior and the role of opinion leaders. The authors argue that media influence is mediated through opinion leaders, whose selection and emphasis of information significantly shape public opinion.

Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) asserts that media shape public opinion by constructing images of the world that audiences accept. Lippmann's work laid the groundwork for understanding mass communication and its impact on political decision-making.

While not all publications are included in this review, the authors highlighted here strive to unravel the complex and dynamic interactions between media, the public, and political processes. Their work reflects efforts to analyze both the nature of media influence and the mechanisms through which it impacts societal processes, values, and behavior. Common to their research is an effort to reveal the hidden connections between media strategies and political power, focusing on uncovering the manipulative techniques that shape individual and collective opinions and actions.

These contributions also raise the issue of media responsibility as conveyors of information and their impact on the quality of democratic processes. Works like those by Entman and Tóth demonstrate that media today are not merely neutral intermediaries but active creators of political and societal frameworks, influencing beyond the traditional boundaries of journalism. This underscores the importance of critical thinking and media literacy as essential skills for modern citizens, who are exposed to overwhelming information flows daily.

The current literature highlights the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach that combines theoretical insights from communication, sociology, psychology, and political science with practical recommendations for policymakers and journalists. Such an approach is essential to addressing the challenges posed by the digital age, including misinformation, media manipulation, and strategic framing. Ultimately, these studies emphasize that understanding media mechanisms is not merely an academic interest but a prerequisite for reinforcing democratic values and protecting societal discourse from distortion and polarization.

2 THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS ACCORDING TO PIPPA NORRIS

In her book *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Society*, author Pippa Norris explores the relationship between politics, media, and the public sphere in the context of post-industrial societies. Norris investigates how political communication has transformed due to digital technologies and new media, which today play a key role in the dissemination of information and the shaping of public discourse. She focuses on the dynamics that emerge between the media and political institutions, and how this relationship influences public opinion and citizen political participation. Norris argues that in post-industrial societies, where media and new technologies are increasingly central to political life, a so-called "virtuous circle" emerges between political communication and engaged citizenship. According to Norris, this cycle contributes to the fact that high-quality political communication encourages active and informed citizenship, which, in turn, enhances political culture and public debate. However, Norris does not only examine the positive aspects of this interaction. She also highlights the challenges posed by the misuse of media in the political context. The

sheer volume of information disseminated through various media can lead to the polarization of public discourse and influence citizens' political decision-making. The relationship between media and politics, therefore, can also become a source of tension and societal polarization. Norris analyzes how different types of media (traditional and digital) affect political participation and civic engagement. While traditional media can serve as tools for informing the public, digital technologies can create new platforms for civic engagement, but they also facilitate the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of public opinion. In her work, Norris illustrates that there exists a reciprocal cycle between media, politics, and the public that can either support democratic stability and increase political engagement or contribute to eroding trust in political institutions and create a polarized public. This complex relationship between media and politics is crucial for understanding the current challenges and opportunities faced by post-industrial societies (Norris, 2000).

3 Media as a pillar of the modern information environment

The current form of society is shaped by the digital and information environment, where media play a crucial role in the creation of the so-called information society. The development of media technologies, which began with the invention of the telegraph and film, shows how media tools have continuously evolved and significantly contributed to changing the way we perceive and interact with the world. In the context of modern technologies, such as smartphones, computers, and information-communication systems, media have become an inseparable part of everyday life. Technological progress, including advancements in virtual reality (such as the Sensorama device), not only demonstrates the speed of technological change but also its profound impact on society. This progress allows media to continuously expand their capacity for the transmission and distribution of information. Various forms of media, from smartphones to printers to multifunctional devices, enable more efficient integration and accessibility of information to a wide range of users. This increases the availability of information, which is perceived as one of the most valuable commodities in today's information society. Access to information affects not only individuals but also broader economic and social processes, contributing to the advancement of society as a whole (Burgerová – Piskura, 2021).

3.1 Habermas and the Transformation of the Public Sphere

This technological progress and media development not only change the way information is distributed but also shape the process of public discourse itself, a subject closely examined by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (2006). Habermas looks at the historical development of the public sphere, which was once a place where citizens discussed societal issues and formed political opinions. However, as Habermas points out, over time the public sphere has transformed, primarily due to the commercialization and politicization of the media. The traditional model of public discussion has been replaced by a system where media increasingly reflect the interests of political and economic elites, which limits citizens' opportunities for free and equal exchange of opinions. In this way, Habermas highlights that modern media, which should serve as tools for shaping public opinion, have increasingly become instruments for manipulating the public and controlling public discourse (Habermas, 2006).

3.2 Media and Public Discourse in the Context of Media Systems

This process described by Habermas can be better understood through the framework presented by Hallin and Mancini (2004) in *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Their findings identify three main models of media systems—liberal, democratic-corporatist, and polarized pluralist—that illustrate how media are not only tools for spreading

information but also active players in shaping public discourse and political processes. These models emphasize that media in different cultural and historical contexts affect how society interacts with information and how public opinion is formed. For example, the liberal model, typical of Anglo-Saxon countries, emphasizes the independence of media and their market orientation, which supports diversity of opinion. The democratic-corporatist model, common in Scandinavian countries, favors cooperation between public and private media and regulation to ensure balance. On the other hand, the polarized pluralist model, often found in Southern European countries, shows how media can be closely linked with political ideologies. Connecting these findings to the role of media as a pillar of the modern information environment emphasizes their adaptability across different societal systems. As intermediaries of information and creators of public discourse, media significantly influence not only communication but also the dynamics of social, economic, and political processes in an information society. This complex perspective helps to better understand the indispensable role of media in creating modern communication structures (Hallin – Mancini, 2004).

4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON SOCIETY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication has undergone significant development, which can be divided into three main stages: from oral and interactive expression, through written and printed forms, to the current electronic exchange of information. Communication tools have become an inseparable part of everyday life, influencing not only our behavior but also cultural perceptions and social structures. The term "media" encompasses a wide range of mass communication tools, such as the press, radio, television, and online platforms, all of which have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and organizing society. The system of these information channels, which integrates the activities of various means, has a profound effect on the thought and behavioral patterns of the population and is closely tied to the public interest. Media tools thus become a decisive factor in creating social discourses and responses to current socio-political events. Communication technologies can be divided into two main types: secondary tools, such as writing, mail, and the telephone, which allow for expanded communication between individuals, and tertiary channels, such as print and broadcasting, which serve to disseminate information on a mass scale and address wide groups of people. Modern forms of communication, which combine the characteristics of these two types, such as social platforms, increase accessibility to information and promote interaction between users and media (Volková, 2020).

A significant example from Slovak politics that illustrates the impact of social media on public opinion is Igor Matovič's political campaign and his OĽaNO movement before the 2020 parliamentary elections. Matovič relied heavily on the Facebook platform, where, through regular posts, videos, and live broadcasts, he communicated directly with voters, gaining popularity and directly addressing various social groups. Matovič used Facebook not only as an information channel but also as a tool for criticizing political opponents and presenting his own views and solutions. His online activity had a significant impact on public discourse and gained considerable attention, contributing to his political success. Through direct communication with voters on social networks, he managed to bypass traditional media, giving him greater control over his message and image. Matovič often communicated in an authentic and direct manner, which helped him connect with voters who felt ignored by traditional political elites.

This example clearly illustrates how social platforms allow politicians to gain direct contact with voters and create their own media space outside of traditional communication channels. They enable immediate reactions to current issues and the mobilization of support in real time. Igor Matovič's campaign on Facebook was one of the key factors that helped him win the 2020

elections, where the OLaNO movement received the most votes and subsequently formed a government.

Despite the rise of social media, traditional channels such as print, radio, and television continue to maintain their important role in shaping public opinion. These media adapt to new technologies and societal changes, while still playing a key role in disseminating reliable information and maintaining public dialogue. The media system, as a complex and dynamic whole that continuously adapts to technological innovations and social changes, has a fundamental impact on society's behavior and its cultural values.

5 SPOTLIGHT: HOW THE MEDIA SHAPE POLITICS

The mass media have become a key factor in political life, having a significant influence on decision-making within state institutions and shaping public opinion. Their ability to determine which issues are important plays a crucial role, as they decide which topics deserve attention. Without their media visibility, many problems and individuals could remain unnoticed. The mass media have the power to bring less popular topics to the forefront and present technical matters in a way that the broader public can understand. Furthermore, they can influence political events and draw attention to regional politicians, transforming them into significant figures on the national or international stage. Citizens often obtain information and opinions through various media, such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the internet, with politicians having limited direct access to the public. Mass media serve as a bridge between the political sphere and citizens, with the public having learned to trust the media more than political institutions. In this way, the media influence political processes, shape the values recognized in society, and determine the importance of individual political decisions. The media also have the power to create and strengthen political personalities. If the media ignore new politicians, these individuals have little chance of gaining wider recognition or success. On the other hand, if the media continuously expose certain politicians to the public, they can help them achieve high political positions with minimal effort. A prominent example is Václav Havel, who became a key figure in the revolutionary events in Czechoslovakia, thanks to his media presence. In Slovakia, the media supported regional politician Rudolf Schuster from Košice, helping him become the most prominent candidate in the 1999 presidential elections. In this way, the media influenced the political environment and reduced competition from other parties during the pre-election period, creating favorable conditions for this candidate (Tóth, 2018).

In conclusion, the mass media play a crucial role in political life and have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and the decision-making of state institutions. Their ability to set the agenda and bring less popular issues to the forefront allows them to influence political processes and help create political figures, as demonstrated by the examples of Václav Havel and Rudolf Schuster. In this way, the media can reduce competition between candidates and create favorable conditions for certain personalities. Therefore, it is essential for citizens to approach information critically and be aware of the potential manipulative aspects of the media in the political sphere.

6 MEDIA AND MANIPULATION: HOW THEY INFLUENCE OUR OPINIONS AND DECISIONS

Mass media play a pivotal role in society and politics, with their influence manifesting in several important areas. Primarily, they shape public opinion and influence citizens' views. Their communication is aimed at understanding the needs and concerns of viewers, thereby gaining their trust. In this way, they form the public's opinions on various political issues and events. Media organizations employ sophisticated persuasive methods to achieve long-term

influence over viewers without direct coercion. These approaches create an empathetic relationship with the audience, enabling them to effectively manipulate content and discourses relevant to the public. Today, the media strive to engage viewers in content creation, strengthening their sense of involvement and recognition. This interactivity enhances the relevance of the media and their impact on politics. Mass media also shape the image of the world, which may appear stable and realistic, yet can sometimes be artificially constructed. Modern commercial media seek to legitimize their existence and justify their approach to presenting reality, influencing the perception of important societal issues and events. Furthermore, the media can highlight political actors and issues, shifting them from marginal topics to the center of attention. This process can have a significant impact on political decision-making and competition. Overall, mass media play a key role in shaping political and social discourses, which has broad consequences for the functioning of democracy and public life (Petranová - Vrabec, 2013).

A specific example of media influence can be seen in the media coverage of anti-government protests in Slovakia in 2023. The protests, which expressed citizens' dissatisfaction with political decisions, became the subject of extensive media attention. The media used various persuasive techniques to create an empathetic connection between the public and the protesters, presenting the protests as a legitimate form of civil discontent through personal stories and emotionally charged content. Additionally, the media played a crucial role in shaping the public image of political actors who supported the protests. This media discourse moved political figures from peripheral positions to wider public awareness, influencing the political dynamics and public agenda. The interactivity of the media, especially through social networks, allowed the public to react to news and engage in political discussions, further enhancing the media's influence on shaping public opinion. This example shows how the media can not only inform but also shape and manipulate political discourses, influencing public decision-making.

Manipulation primarily occurs through selective information choices, withholding certain facts, or exaggerating others, altering context, and evoking specific emotional or cognitive effects. In the case of the media coverage of the 2023 anti-government protests in Slovakia, some media outlets may have favored a narrative that supported the protests, presenting only one side of the issue. Such behavior could lead to the polarization of society and reinforce biases against opposing viewpoints. Manipulative techniques, such as emotionally charged language, dramatization, or selective footage from the protests, can promote a one-sided understanding of the situation and create an image that aligns more with the media's agenda than with reality. Furthermore, through algorithms on social networks, these manipulative effects could be further amplified, as users received content tailored to their preferences, thus strengthening the so-called echo chamber effect, where they are only exposed to opinions that reinforce their existing beliefs. This aspect highlights the dual nature of media influence—while they have the potential to support democratic processes, they can also contribute to the distortion of public discourse and manipulate the public if their practices are unethical or aligned with specific political or economic interests (Kahneman, 2011).

This phenomenon of manipulative media influence closely relates to the concept introduced by Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* (1922). Lippmann developed the idea of the so-called pseudo-environment, which arises when the public does not perceive actual reality directly but through a media-constructed image of the world. Given individuals' limited capacity to process complex information about global events, the media act as a filtering and organizing mechanism that presents the public with a simplified version of reality. This constructed reality significantly influences the perception of political and societal issues, provoking specific emotional reactions and shaping societal views. The pseudo-environment becomes a tool of power, as selective event coverage and framing of issues often serve specific

interests, distorting public discourse and manipulating collective decision-making. An example of this is when the media, through dramatization or exaggeration of a particular event, create the impression of its absolute priority, even though, in a broader context, it might not be as significant. This process has profound consequences for democratic processes, as the media not only reflect but also actively co-create social reality (Lippmann, 1922).

The media not only inform but often play an active role in shaping and manipulating public opinion. Noam Chomsky, in his publication *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (1997), explains how mass media function as tools of propaganda. According to Chomsky, the media often serve to "manufacture consent," meaning they promote dominant narratives that legitimize the decisions of political and economic elites. This process includes selective reporting, event framing, and manipulating the public through sophisticated communication techniques. Chomsky warns about the risk of citizen passivity in democracies, where the media create the illusion of free choice and objective information, yet in reality, they simplify or distort reality to suit the interests of powerful institutions. Emotionally charged news, dramatization, or fact selection can lead to the polarization of society and suppress critical thinking. This manipulative influence can significantly disrupt democratic discourse by reinforcing only those perspectives that align with elite interests. These findings underscore that the media not only reflect societal reality but actively construct it. Therefore, it is essential for citizens to approach media content critically in order to effectively engage in democratic processes (Chomsky, 1997).

6.1 The Influence of Media on Opinions and Decisions: Research by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld

The research by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld in *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* explores how mass media and interpersonal communication influence political opinions and decisions. The authors emphasize the role of opinion leaders who have a decisive influence on spreading media information among the public. This process creates a two-step communication model, where media first influence leaders, who then impact the wider public. Katz and Lazarsfeld show that media do not influence individuals directly, but through personal interactions where opinion leaders filter and interpret information. This mechanism allows for the manipulation of public opinion, as the views and stances of leaders can shape how media messages are perceived and used in decision-making. The research suggests that opinion leaders play a key role in shaping public opinion, which can be a powerful tool of manipulation, especially in a political context where mass media influence voter decisions and political stances (Katz - Lazarsfeld, 1955).

7 FRAMING IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: POWER, DISCOURSE, AND THE INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION

Framing in political news plays a fundamental role in how politics is presented and perceived. These frames are designed to focus attention on specific aspects of reality while leaving other aspects hidden, which can provoke various reactions from readers. Today, politicians are forced to compete with journalists for control over the framing of news, which has a significant impact on political power. Frames in newspaper articles reflect the power and identity of those who seek to dominate the media discourse. In many cases, the stories may align at one level of framing but diverge at other levels, meaning that they may share a unified perspective on certain issues, while differing in interpretations or suggested solutions. This framing process is particularly important in political discourse because it determines which issues and perspectives dominate the media space and which are suppressed. Such frames can influence public understanding of specific political events and reactions by creating different interpretations based on the selection and presentation of information. To better understand this

mechanism, one could look at the example from the period before the Iraq War, where U.S. media often framed the debate over Iraq policy in only two possibilities: war or sanctions. Other, more moderate alternatives, such as negotiations, were marginalized or completely ignored in the public discussion. This framing process significantly influenced the public discourse because the wider public was exposed only to a limited selection of options presented by the media. Criticism that did not fit into the framework of war or sanctions was ignored, severely limiting the breadth of political debate. This example shows how media can shape public opinion by preventing the development of broader or alternative discourses. Framing thus creates a power dynamic that not only determines what is the subject of public discourse but also shapes how the public perceives these issues and what political decisions are considered acceptable (Entman, 1993).

In his book *Mass Communication Theory*, McQuail (2010) argues that the media are not just a tool for informing the public but also a powerful instrument that can shape public opinion in alignment with political and economic interests. According to McQuail, the media influence which topics and perspectives enter public discourse, which in turn has a decisive impact on political processes and societal values. He emphasizes that the media can be used to support dominant ideologies that reflect the power structures of society, often to the benefit of a particular elite. This influence can be used to manipulate public discourse and influence political decisions, thereby strengthening the power of those who control the media (McQuail, 2010).

8 POLITICS IN THE MEDIA: THE GAME OF POWER AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The concept of framing politics plays a crucial role in understanding how the media and politicians depict political events. This approach focuses on the power dynamics that develop between politicians and the media, emphasizing who gains the advantage and who suffers a loss. It concentrates on political campaigns and the tactics applied within them, which leads to politics being presented as a competition or game, diverting attention away from the main political issues and problems that should be the focus of discussion. Several factors contribute to the popularity of this approach. Various studies suggest that the media often prefer to depict politics as a strategic game, which can evoke feelings of distrust and cynicism towards the political system among citizens. Journalists strive to expose the tactics and strategies used by politicians to maintain their independence and objectivity. Today, political campaigns are increasingly complex, and journalists feel obliged to analyze the strategies employed. Although framing politics as a strategic game can provide valuable insights, it also has negative consequences. It can distract attention from real political issues and lead to a decrease in political engagement among citizens. Many experts argue that this approach reduces the amount of political information available to the public. On the other hand, there are opinions suggesting that focusing on the strategic aspects of politics can increase public interest in political events and stimulate political discussions. Overall, the way the media frames political events is significant because it can profoundly influence how citizens understand and engage in the political process (Aalberg et al., 2011).

Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008) in their study on the influence of the media on political agenda-setting show that the relationship between media coverage and political decision-making is cyclical. This means that the media not only influence the political agenda, but political decisions can also determine what the media will cover. In this way, there is mutual reinforcement between the media and political actors. According to their research, media content often predetermines which topics become public issues, while political decisions can adjust how these topics are presented in the media. This process strengthens the influence of the media on public discourse and increases their ability to shape public perception of important

political and social issues. Their research further shows that this cyclical process is not a one-time event but occurs in a dynamic relationship between politics and the media, where both sides continuously influence and shape the public agenda. This can lead to greater public interest in political issues but also to selected preferences that do not reflect the full spectrum of political problems, with some topics receiving more attention than others. These findings indicate that the media have a strong influence on political decision-making and on which issues become important in the eyes of the public (Vliegenthart - Walgrave, 2008).

Conclusion

Based on the research into the influence of the media on society and politics, we have arrived at several important conclusions. Today, the digital and informational environment plays a key role in shaping our lives, with the media becoming an integral part of daily communication and interaction. The historical development of media technologies demonstrates how our modes of communication have evolved — from oral expression to print and, eventually, to today's online platforms.

We have found that access to information is currently one of the most valuable commodities, affecting not only individuals but also economic processes and societal progress. New forms of communication, such as social media, have radically transformed how we share and receive information, directly impacting public opinion and political processes. Mass media have the power to influence the formation of public opinion and political decision-making. Their ability to determine which issues are important is crucial because it influences how citizens perceive political events. Our observations suggest that the media act as intermediaries between the political sphere and the public, with citizens increasingly trusting the media more than political institutions.

We are also aware of the risks of media manipulation, which can distort our perceptions and narrow the discourse to certain topics. The framing applied by the media in presenting political events can deeply impact public understanding and evaluation of those events. This process demonstrates how the media can amplify certain politicians and issues while others remain unnoticed.

In conclusion, we can state that the media play a critical role in the functioning of democracy and the shaping of public life. Our views on the role of the media in politics should be informed and critical so that we can better understand the complexity of the media environment and its impact on our decision-making and behavior in society. It is important to be aware of these mechanisms and critically assess the content we consume. Ultimately, we should support media outlets that focus on providing quality, objective, and factual reporting, as this will contribute to improving democratic dialogue and citizen engagement in the political process.

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