Political Preferences

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INTRODUCTION

We give readers the fourth volume of „Political Preferences", an interdisciplinary journal devoted to the study of voting behavior issues, especially political determinants of identification. Magazine publishers are the Institute of Political Science and Journalism at the University of Silesia and the Center for Innovation, Technology Transfer and Development Foundation of the University of Silesia. Patronage of the project holds Polish Political Science Association and the Society for Academic Initiatives. The research community centered around „Political Preferences" was initiated by the Section at the Polish Electoral Studies Political Science Association and is actively involved in international research projects devoted to electoral behavior.

Journal in his intention promote empirical research in the plane of electoral behavior. Multidimensional and interdisciplinary research in political circumstances of individuals and their motivation to participate actively in political life is important for the development of civil society, one of the important dimensions of the electoral participation. Magazine publishers are particularly keen on cooperation with researchers of different disciplines who take an empirical analysis of the problem of political preferences: political science, psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and others. The degree of involvement of citizens and ultimately the decisions made in the electoral process is subject to many levels, giving you the opportunity to take the identification and analysis of the correlation existing between them.

This issue of „Political Preferences," in contrast to the previous, is a report of empirical research, but devoted to the diversity of issues, the common denominator is the study of reality social, political and economic, affecting voting behavior. This is another step in the development of writing, involving not only the extension of the existing formula, but also its internationalization. The international dimension „Political Preferences" has been achieved not only by initiating the release number in the English language, but also by expanding the group of authors and reviewers who write about the people

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COORDINATES OF INTERESTS OF MEDIA, POLITICAL SUBJECTS AND RECIPIENTS

Abstract:

The study primarily deals with the influence of media on perception of political subject agendas by the media audience. It will concentrate on the strategy of political subjects whose utmost objective is to provoke the specific effect – to draw attention of media and recipients and to force them to pay attention to their agendas. It underlines the practices of political subjects in gaining influence on media as well as on the public by offering their own agendas. It also deals with the role and procedures of media in interpreting political scandals and creating atmosphere in the framework of receiving the events by the target audience.

Key words:
media, political subjects, political agenda, political programs, media filters.

Introduction

There are no doubts that the notion "democracy" is generally understood mainly as the method of obtaining votes of voters who confer mandates to decide on public matters to political parties. In a democratic country it should be normal and binding for decision-making to adopt a social consensus on the basis of a discussion [Kapr 1991: 63]. R. Scurton underlines that the notion "democracy" means mainly and literally the government carried out by the majority of a nation or a certain community. From this point of view, democracy cannot be substituted by the will of a certain group – a class or interested parties. Also for this reason, the western world characterizes the democratic states as the states in which it is possible to assign each decision to the will of people in a certain way. However, democracy can have its limitations and risks,

as well. According to R. Scurton, these limitations and risks lie in the first place in the contrast between the interests of people and the interests of politicians. "Democratically elected government can promote such a political line during its electoral period which is in the obvious contrast with the interests of people" [Scurton 1989: 21-22].

Hence, in the centre of attention there are issues of the public interest in confrontation with the private interest, as well as the increasing social and wealth inequalities within the social stratification of a society and the resulting advantaged position of financial elites in the battle for power. Furthermore, there are topics related to the absence of political power control, deformation of democratic postulates by the role of money, topics resulting from the high level of corruption and political clientelism and the influence of propagandistic machinery by means of electoral campaigns and mass media and new media on the thinking and decision-making of voters. The aim of this study is to underline the influence of media on the perception of political subject agendas, on the system of media filter functioning, on the principles of creation of political programs, political agendas and on the practices of interpretation of events by journalists.

Media and agendas of political subjects

The research of M. E. Mc Combs and D. L. Shaw confirmed assumptions existing up to that day concerning the capacity of media to form the attitudes of recipients. On the basis of empiric research it was proved that mass media put forward the agenda in a political campaign in a way that they intentionally influence the attitudes of voters to the issues raised by them. Media have the capacity to determine the preferential framework of topics, i.e. to decide which issues, in what form and in what responses and evaluations are more important and which are less important [McCombs, Shaw 1972]. Journalists have knowledge of media grammar and they know how to influence criteria according to which the recipients judge representatives of political parties. They have knowledge of the procedures of topic processing – coding of messages by means of choice and interpretation of an event in such a way so that it would have a desired response from the audience. They draw recipients' attention to a certain phenomenon or event by providing sufficient space to it and in such a way they confirm its social relevance and veracity. The prerequisite for projecting of individual types of media effects is also the capacity of journalists to create coded messages within certain social and cultural context.

The role of media in political decision-making of voters is assessed by the laic public and professional public quite unilaterally and clearly. This fact is

highlighted by T. Meyer and L. Hichman according to whom the assessment of media in a political course of events has a fatalistic character because they are considered to have a great power. Media are considered as hegemonic subjects that establish a new social order – media democracy under the guardianship of mediacracy [Meyer, Hichman 2002] The important factor of interference of media in public policy sphere is in particular the phenomenon of commercialization of a media sphere and related interconnections with dominant economic and political forces and their interests not only in a given state, but also in a global context [Jirák, Köpplová 2009: 352]. From this aspect, it is obvious that media can be considered as subjects whose significant characteristics is their own economic interest and in this way they create the forefield of relationship with political subjects [McNair 2007: 6]. This aspect equally demonstrates the pragmatism of interconnections between media and political subjects.

According to J. Habermas the public sphere found itself under the guardianship of the state and purely economic interests. In such conditions a new and corporate model of power relations was created in which the influence of the public sphere starts to be permanently limited. Media have been given a new role – they serve for manipulation of a public opinion. Politics starts to be perceived by passive consumers as a special kind of spectacle offering a construct of conventional and conformal ideas [Habermas 1989].

Such a situation creates an ideal environment for promoting efforts of politicians to create a favourable image about their thinking, attitudes and acts among the general public. According to B. McNair ambitions presented by media, however, lead inevitably to restraining rationality of political programs and to reinforcing the attitude oriented on wishes and on creating the ideal image about political actors among the public by means of media. [McNair 2004: 132]. It is obvious that media are important means for achieving long-term, short-term and operative strategic plans serving for disseminating agendas of political subjects. B. McNiar underlines, on the basis of examining political course of events, the importance of the relationship between media and political course of events in which actors are political organizations – political parties, politicians, pressure groups, lobby groups and government. In his opinion, it is them who have existential interest in influencing attitudes and moods of population by means of media [Mc Nair 2007: 6].

In promoting their agendas the political subjects also use their factual or potential power vis-à-vis media subjects regardless whether it is formal lobbying, informal lobbying, power pressure or the use of legislative instruments. In this context, G. Burton and J. Jirák underlined motivation of politicians and proven and routine behaviour of media in providing information about the political course of events. In their opinion, politicians need to appear in media in

order to enter in the awareness of the general public; they need to present their opinions and thus to secure their prestige and credibility. Media take this ambition of politicians as a challenge – they compile the list of politicians who are suitable adepts to be appealed by media because they have communication competences. They are able to speak in public in front of microphones, cameras, dictation machines, etc; they can react promptly; they are always available. The logical consequence of this is the personalization of such politics which is in favour of well-known faces, so-called respondents able to draw attention or to communicate in an original way. On the contrary, there are also the situations of favouring those politicians who, thanks to their incapacity to express themselves, to formulate their ideas and to behave professionally, amuse spectators and at the same time they make themselves ridiculous. Media tend to appeal and use well-known politicians but they have also "the tendency to give space to one party or to one way of thinking (politicians can use this and take revenge on them)" [Burton, Jirák 2001: 134-136].

Media filters and creating of political programs

Despite the wide range of attempts for a critical review of so-called concept of hegemony of E. S. Herman and N. Chomsky (McCombs, Cook, Patterson, Turow, Demers, Shaw, Carey, Louw, Edelstein etc.) it seems that their initial theses reflect, to a great extent and in many illustrating examples, the practices of media power and political power in current liberal democracies. In the well-known study *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) they concentrate mainly on the communication practices in the USA which are determined by five principal filters – ownership of media, advertising, a choice of sources, a negative feedback and a way of promoting the dominant ideology.

They believe that the filter of ownership is the result of the fact that the mainstream media are excessively controlled by solvent individuals or corporations. This is the reason why the media owned by them raise the agenda serving for their interest or interests of the social elite. The factor of advertising is determined by the existential dependence on the paying subjects. Commercial media have strategically significant objective – to sell advertising time/surface to potential advertisers or advertising clients. To achieve this objective, they have to convince advertisers about high viewership, listenership or readership. Their only ambition is to appeal as big set of potential recipients of media contents as possible. From the economic point of view, the filter of advertising confirms the significance of important advertisers who have power to influence a media agenda to the great extent. The power of the filter of advertisers lies in the fact that they have a competence and the right to choose a medium

from which they will buy advertising time or pages. Ultimately, they determine which medium will survive the competition and which one not, depending on expressed loyalty to their interests. The filter of a negative feedback is very closely interconnected with the filter of advertising. For existential reasons, editorial offices are forced to take into account advertisers' interests. In order to survive, they have to select between recipients –those who constitute for example reader, viewer or listener bases and those who are their business partners having power to make pressure on the management of editorial offices to provide information about them in their interests, i.e. in an expected or desired way.

The filter of the choice of sources is determined by the dependence of media on information sources. Editorial offices of media depend mainly on those sources that provide them with information on regular basis, are trustworthy and their obtaining is comfortable, non-demanding and cheap. Journalists obtain information at briefings of representatives of execution power, political parties, etc., together with supporting materials (leaflets, information bulletins, communiqué, photos, opinions of various politicians, etc.), which contributes decisively to an overall impression given by published news (positive, negative or neutral connotations). In this way, press departments of various institutions (including political ones) influence production of news and eliminate alternative information sources because they are demanding for searching and addressing and they are costly, as well. Thus, media and dominant institutions providing information enter in the relationship of mutual dependence but equally also in the symbiosis or pragmatic dependence and cooperation. The filter of the choice of sources is closely related to the filter of dominant ideology. It is determined by political system and its ideological postulates which result and are anchored in basic cultural elements (cultural universals, remarked the author). Dominant ideology is present in construction of various interpretations of social and cultural reality – it has an influence on vision, description, analysis, perception and evaluation of various social, economic and political processes.

It results from the above-mentioned that the choice and selection of the core media agenda does not clearly lies in free decision-making of editorial office teams and their management but there are several significant factors (media filters) which influence the choice of appropriate topics to be published. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the selection of topics is influenced, for example, by philosophy and the opinion of media (e.g. left-wing/conservative/ liberal newspapers, etc.), social values, cultural influences and so on. This fact is confirmed by a wide range of studies and research works published up to now. (see Burton, Jirák, Ramonet, Višňovský, etc.) Equally, it is evident that the choice of topics in media is to the great extent influenced by marketing strategy of promotion of political subject agendas supported and confirmed by

their factual power and advantages resulted from such power. In construction of political agenda of crucial political parties the above-mentioned filters are taken into consideration and are also subject to calculation in various ways. For creation of a political agenda it is also necessary to create such a political program which would be closely related to interests of target groups of both potential and established voters. The program reflects problems which voters have to face in their everyday lives and it offers such solutions that would persuade them to participate in elections and to cast their votes in favour of a relevant party. Creation of a program should motivate a voter therefore it offers a solution for biting questions, such as crisis, unemployment, inflation, real poverty, high criminality or terrorism.

Political agenda and creating of events by journalists

The current practice of political parties proves that political actors use various marketing strategies and marketing instruments, such as lobbying, economic connections, legislation, etc., in order to create and promote desired publicity by means of media. In this context, J. Jirák and B. Köpplová say that media enter in the political course of events and form it in a readable manner. They influence the public opinion and the attitudes of the public to political topics by means of the agenda constructed for media and voters – recipients. For this reason, there is no surprise that political subjects try to influence behaviour of media in their favour, especially the choice and the way of presentation of the agenda which is favourable to them. They also benefit from the mental self-confidence of media professionals who are mostly very well-aware of their influence – they consider themselves the influential force in forming political opinions because they have the possibility to interfere to the political course of events. "The aim of this can be to promote the political decision with which the editor, the advertiser or related interested groups sympathize (so-called media lobbying), or to make pressure so that the political development takes the direction wanted by people in media (so-called media activism)" [Jirák, Köpplová 2009: 349]. Political subjects know how to profit from typical characteristics of the behaviour of media creators by the application of various communication practices and tricks. They acquired and improved tactics how to get their agenda into news, how to form and precise their media agenda including its presentation at press conferences, briefings, interviews and transmitted discussion programs [Blumler, Kavanagh 1999].

The art of promotion of political party agendas among the general public is, except for marketing strategies and reinforcing of connections between political subjects and media, also creation of professionally produced stories in various genres and interpretations forms. The purpose of the stories have the common denominator – to draw attention of media and recipients, to scandalize rivals and to present own qualities, such as attitudes of principle, unshakeable morality, values, respect of law, etc. Masterfulness of representatives of political parties is to construe, offer and promote a story charged with emotions or a scandal which will draw attention of media. At the briefings they interpret such stories on the basis of a given plot, depending on the situation – angrily, pathetically, pitiably, amusingly, etc. According to J. Ftorek, a professional political marketer is a person who will learn to use and work with the journalists' desire for a complex and attractive story and "will adopt an important instrument for efficient mediation of information of interest, regardless his own cultural, political or economic status" [Ftorek 2010: 74-75].

One example of the above-mentioned practices were the actions of political parties trying to address media and citizens before last parliamentary elections (March 2012) in Slovakia when there were various scandals published in media. The most scandalous was the scandal known as "Gorilla" in the framework of which the information about connections between the representatives of relevant parliamentary parties and the powerful financial group Penta came to light. Discussions about state clientelism, interconnection between interests of political parties and financial groups and about corruption of political parties started. The interesting fact was that the information was in major focus of media after the dispute between government parties and the parliament de facto passed a vote of no-confidence in the government, which led to the fall of the government coalition. Another interesting fact was the transfer of information. The information was published by the journalist who is the former husband of a state secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family who is the member of a political party (SAS) which caused the crisis and the fall of the government. Even more interesting was the fact that the information allegedly leaked from Slovak Information Service (SIS). SIS monitored the meetings of politicians with the Penta representatives in the conspirative flat. After the "Gorilla" scandal there were some other scandals as the revenge on the political party which was, according to published opinions of several analysts, the author of the "Gorilla" scandal. The scandal concerning one of the top representatives of that party (of the former minister of defence) appeared, showing the abuse of public official powers, such as interception of journalists and politicians by the counter-intelligence service, so-called the "Sasanka" scandal, etc.

It came to light that journalists got fascinating and scandalous stories quite simply thanks to the information strategies of political subjects – from so--called confidential sources through briefings of political actors to recycling of published information by the media chain system. Journalists made effort to

submit information in the most attractive way possible and to offer it (to announce it as "loudly" and "impressively" as possible in various ways) to their target and potential groups of readers, listeners or spectators. They were obtaining fascinating stories one by one and they made effort to draw attention – by a plot, dramatization, a conflict, dynamic composition, scandalizing of people, situations, a context or by mysterious circumstances, conspirators or corruption background, etc. They wanted to attract attention by stories, which corresponded typologically to social reality, by narration about concrete problems. Such trends and principles of creation of current journalism are the significant factors of building relations between political and media environments which strategists and marketers of real politics are aware of and which they use creatively.

J. Ftorek considers a journalist as a legitimate protector of public interests. In the guise of providing information to the general public, he gasps for "scalps" of often plotted negative figures (e.g. of an unpopular politician, marked the author), which saturates the desire of the public for justice or revenge. Scandalizing well-known personalities is the guarantee of higher sales of a periodical or broadcaster's transmission time. On the other hand, "scandalizing" and the conflict represent for many recipients of media content the alternative possibility to ease their own tensions and experience of remedy for injustice suffered which may not necessarily be related to the scandal in question. This is the social valve, a scandal or a conflict not representing just a suitable detonator, but also a new and interesting element in everyday routine" [Ftorek 2010: 73]. Recipients build their own defence mechanisms of their own psychics against frustrating situations, they ventilate accumulated emotional energy; they temporarily escape from everyday problems; they damp the sensations of boredom caused by the everyday routine [Rubin 1994: 8]. From this point of view, the relationship between media and political subjects, which is determined by pragmatism, is extended and concluded by another element – recipients' needs.

Conclusion

Nowadays, we can speak about creating a new corporation model of power which starts to lead to the permanent limitation of public sphere influence. Media play a new role – they serve for influencing the public opinion; recipients start to perceive politics as a particular kind of a spectacle full of scandals and emotional stories and at the same time a theatre offering a construct of conventional and conformal ideas.

On the basis of the above-mentioned facts we can agree with N. Chomsky who says that the main role of professionals, so-called strategists in the field of propaganda, is to evoke agreement of the public with a war, defence of

unemployment, official policy, state doctrine, etc. Propaganda services are used by government and interested political and economic groups in totalitarian communist regimes as well as in pluralistic democracies. According to Chomsky the existence of propaganda is legitimized by the fact that rationality is a very limited capacity and just a very small group of people has it. Those who have the capacity to assess phenomena and facts create illusions and emotionally powerful but simplified fictions in order to show orientation to "disoriented chumps", so that the elite dictates the way of thinking to the "herd" and implants opinions and beliefs according to its own schemes. [Chomsky 2001: 68-69]. Such an attitude of the elite to the "herd" is not surprising given the absence of critical thinking in European and American civilizations. Also for this reason D. Petranová reminds the need of critical thinking of recipients because it has "irreplaceable and essential importance" as regards the further development of the society" [Matúš, Ďurková 2010, eds. In: Petranová, 2010: 160] In this context, also J. Višňovský underlines the need to review the relations between the society and media, emphasizing the importance of decoding of "social communication as interaction by means of coded verbal and non-verbal symbols" [Višňovský 2009: 72].

It comes to light that successful political subjects have the elite and conveniences to influence the behaviour of media on the basis of their needs. The evidence of this is the professional approach to communication strategy creation including creation of fascinating stories and their successful transfer using the existence of media filters. In the process of the communication of a political agenda the mental capacities of voters – recipients of media contents and messages – are taken into account. The relaxation need of recipients who desire tension elimination, emotional experience and redress for various injuries, traumas, etc. with which they are confronted in everyday social and cultural reality is taken into account. Recipients want to release their "social valve" and political scandals and conflicts offered by media mean a suitable stimulus for activating their defence mechanisms of mental hygiene. Scandalizing agenda of political parties is convenient for media because it is the guarantee of higher sales of a periodical or broadcasters' transmission time. Thus, specific needs and interests of all interested parties close the imaginary circle of the coordinates of mutual relations between political subjects, media and recipients.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MARKETING CONDITIONS OF ELECTORAL ACTIVITY OF WOMEN

A woman is like a tea bag,
you can not tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water

(Nancy Reagan)

Abstract:

The purpose of the article was to show the problem of female electoral activity in Poland. This subject fits into a current debate on the participation of women in political systems and its limitations. There are many obstacles that prevent women from political participation and their influence is still rather symbolic then real. The source of this situation is also historical and social. Moreover, young democracies are at greater risk of "marketing pathology" because their institutional mechanisms are not built on the foundations of civil society. The perception of politics differs among men and women, but this is mainly due to exogenous factors. Political marketing as a set of tools in the same range can affect men and women, although the differences appear at the level of self-creation of image, choice of strategy and the style of ruling after winning an election.

Key words:

women electoral activity, political marketing, Polish political system, stereotypes, psychological conditions of electoral activity, political participation

Electoral activity of women is a subject that fits into a current debate on the participation of women in political systems and its limitations. Much attention has been paid to create mechanisms which are to help women enter the political arena, while some are also trying to find solutions in the system which would allow the power of women to be not only symbolic but also real. Political activity