

Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 11, Issue 1

Published by the Athens Institute

URL: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajmmc> Email:

journals@atiner.gr

e-ISSN: 2407-9480 DOI: 10.30958/ajmmc

January 2025

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ISSN NUMBER: 2407-9480 - DOI: 10.30958/ajmmc
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Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications

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The current issue is the first of the eleventh volume of the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications (AJMMC)*, published by the [Mass Media & Communication Unit](#) of Athens Institute.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
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The [Mass Media & Communication Unit](#) of Athens Institute organizes its **24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media, 12-15 May 2025, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of Communications, Mass Media and other related disciplines. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-MED.doc>).

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- **Dr. John Pavlik**, Head, [Mass Media and Communication Research Unit](#), Athens Institute & Professor, Rutgers University, USA.

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- Submission of Paper: **14 April 2025**

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War Propaganda and Correspondents: Updating UN Covenant and Media Ethics Principles

*By Festus Eribo**

This study is an examination of war propaganda and correspondents in concomitance with the 1948 Resolution 217A of the UN Covenant prohibiting war propaganda under the rubric of media ethics and the applicable principles and guidelines. The thematic internal contradictions of war propaganda and the intentional or unintentional disregard for ethical news analysis, coverage, reportage, and objectivity are examined. The United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits war propaganda. This qualitative study calls for the continuation of compelling scholarship to advance human rights to live in peace and constructive social change through serious ethical application and consideration in the coverage and reportage of war. Four of the objectives of this study are to (i) promote an update of the 1948 Resolution 217A of the UN Covenant prohibiting war propaganda; (ii) re-emphasize the necessity for media ethics in belligerent and non-aggressive theaters; (iii) address some of the internal conflicts in media ethics' principles of universality; and (iv) contribute to the literature on war propaganda, human rights to live in peace, and media ethics. The study is significant because there is the need for a dispassionate, objective and scholarly examination of the phenomenon at a time of crises across the globe.

Keywords: *War propaganda, War correspondent, UN Covenant, Human Rights, Media Ethics*

Introduction

This study is a qualitative examination of war propaganda, human rights, and the auditorium under the rubric of ethical principles and guidelines as we approach the end of the first quarter of the 21st century. The objectives are to expand and elucidate on the application and rationalization of the philosophical premises of the dominant ethical paradigms. Specifically, the study addresses some of the challenges to human rights and the use of media ethics' principles of universality in the promotion of peace. There is an urgent need to re-examine the necessity for media ethics in belligerent and non-belligerent theaters and recognize the continuation of compelling scholarship to advance human rights to live in peace and constructive social change through reasoned ethical application and consideration in the coverage and reportage of war.

The thematic internal contradictions of war propaganda and the intentional or unintentional disregard for ethical news analysis, coverage, reportage and objectivity are examined. The United Nations' international Covenant on civil and political

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rights prohibits war propaganda. This qualitative study calls for compliance with UN's Covenant against war propaganda in order to advance human rights to live in peace.

Three of the objectives of this study are to (i) re-emphasize the necessity for media ethics in belligerent and non-aggressive theaters; (ii) address some of the challenges in bridging the lacuna between media ethics principles of universality and the UN declaration of universal human rights; and (iii) contribute to the literature on war propaganda, human rights to live in peace, and media ethics. The study is significant because there is the need for a dispassionate, objective and scholarly examination of the phenomenon at a time of crises across the globe.

The scholarship on war propaganda has largely focused on post-factum political cum geopolitical analyses in conflict zones. There is the need for more studies on the unethical nature of war propaganda and the auditorium to deter degradation of society and promote human rights in the 21st century. This study will contribute to existing literature on war propaganda and global auditorium with ethical exigency. The study calls for accountability and responsibility of political leaders in the prosecution of war by joining the combatants in the theater of war rather than staying in the rear while their citizens are deprived of the right to life.

War Propaganda

There is the assumption and realization that some of the basic media ethics principles and guidelines in war time elude some correspondents in war theaters. Although the critical scholarship on how media ethics can engender the promotion of human rights and social change is limited, the issue of war propaganda is addressed in the first optional protocol of 1976 and the second optional protocol of 1989 of the United Nations. Following the protocol, the international Covenant on civil and political rights prohibits war propaganda, arbitrary deprivation of life and other violations of human rights (UN a). This Covenant is under the canopy of United Nations' universal declaration of human rights in Resolution 217A of the General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948. The resolution consists of 30 Articles recognizing human rights and freedom for all citizens of our planet. In summary, it states that everyone has the right to life, peace, dignity and equality (UN b). The 1989 Covenant went further, as noted above, to prohibit war propaganda.

Subsequently, fingers are frequently pointed at war propaganda as a culprit in the dynamics of coverage and reportage of war by both sides of the combatants as well as media users and correspondents in the auditorium. In war, the theater is grotesque and in most cases a killing field with indiscriminate victims, fatalities and casualties. The morbidity is monstrous. The situation is abnormal. Almost everything disintegrates in a war zone while the reporting in such a macabre circumstance is complex, difficult and full of challenges. The assignment is dangerous, frightening and frustrating as morbidity rises. The journalist could die at any moment during the war he or she is covering. Therefore, the challenges in the theater of war may lead to subjective reporting.

In the carnage wrought by World War II alone, about 70 to 85 million people perished. The number included 50 to 56 military and civilian fatalities, 26.6 million citizens of the former USSR, 20 million Chinese, six million Jews, about 5.8 million Polish citizens, 5.6 million Germans and 3.1 million Japanese. The Soviet Union and China accounted for about 50 percent of the people who perished in the war (Wikipedia, 2023). Other nationalities were affected by the contagious ill wind of war.

The catastrophe exemplified in the casualty figures is not limited to human toll. It leaves one in a quandary about the type of society that does this type of destruction and killing of fellow humans and denying them their basic human rights to live. The monstrosity is tantamount to human sacrifice to no earthly being. Yet the reporter must deliver the professional duty the world has come to expect from journalists on whom falls the onus of accountability, objectivity, responsibility, and the guiding pillars of ethical demands.

War must be taken seriously. It is unproductive, primitive and punitive. In fact, a civilized society should avoid war. In the search for a better civilization, global human rights and social change, the 21st century should not be a mirror image of the negativity of the 20th century's misadventures in senseless killings or human sacrifice in two World Wars and other regional wars.

The pressure on the journalist at the war front is towering not only because of the macabre nature of the assignment but also the manipulative machinery of the authorities behind the war. Cull (1995) points out in his publication on selling war that British propaganda employed different strategies to compel the United States to rescue Britain from the onslaught of the Germans during the Second World War. Using intellectual and practical tactics, Britain sought the cooperation of Isaiah Berlin, an Oxford philosopher, Cecil Beaton, a prominent photographer, Edward R. Murrow, an American media icon, leading Hollywood film makers and others to support the British propaganda plan to turn American isolationism to belligerence. It is significant to point out that the attack on Pearl Harbor led to the final call to arms in the United States, not necessarily the British war propaganda directed at co-opting America.

Earlier, Badsey (2014) notes in his publication on propaganda, media and war politics that propaganda plays an important part in war politics. Some nations are adept in war propaganda based on their experience in numerous violent conflicts around the world. Thus, they negotiate relations with the media using coercion when the agreement with the media fails. In some cases, a more coercive and direct approach is used to compel media compliance with the government. Under coercive conditions, war propaganda is beyond the control of the media and practitioners. The natural instinct for survival compels the journalist to comply with the belligerent authorities.

The values, principles and primordial necessities of life are a manifestation of the dictates of the environment in which the diverse people around the globe found themselves. The world has always been faced with a common fate but human values and principles have been evolutionary and, sometimes, cataclysmic, cooperative and modulatory for the benefit of the few or the whole society (Eribo, 2020).

The destruction in World War II alone is a warning that a similar global war will lead to such a cataclysm that only the unlucky people will survive to live among billions of decomposing bodies or incinerated former humans. The use of killer drones with lawnmower engines and some less devastating weapons will be regarded as weapons of the middle ages, an anachronism, should the world be plunged into another global war that may lead to conflagration. Thus, it is incumbent on all journalists covering war zones that their ultimate concerns should be the survival of everyone on the planet, the human race (Ellul, 1965). All ethical principles must be observed to discourage combatants from gloating over killing advantages over their antagonists and perceived enemies. Journalists should therefore avoid war propaganda and save lives because saving lives is an indispensable part of human rights which demand the right to live in peace. Although there are legal provisions in international law against war propaganda, the fundamental ethical choices made by the journalist demonstrate the quality of the reporter in such stressful condition (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Kamalipour and Snow, 2004; Kearney, 2007).

War propaganda could be counterproductive. In the following scenario, a belligerent country A tells the media crew that it is winning a war in which it decimated 100,000 tanks in the army of belligerent country B. The truth is that country B sent a total of 20,000 tanks to war and the imaginary extra 80,000 tanks are mere fantasy manufactured by the propagandists in country A. The news when reported by the media crew is a morale booster for country A. But the people in the auditorium thinking that country A is winning the war may be reticent or reenergized in supporting country A. Contrarily, the fake battlefield victory and scenario may garner more support for country B. It is a double-edged sword. In reporting the above scenario, a war correspondent is more likely to be drawn into the propaganda machinery of combatants, thereby violating the basic ethical principles of objectivity and truthfulness in addition to the international law against war propaganda.

A priori Opprobrium of War Propaganda

Emphasis should be placed on a priori coverage and reportage of war vis-à-vis post-factum documentation and reports of the ravages of war. It costs less human toll and resources to prevent a war than to engage in a war. This calls for investment in peace with the concomitant human rights. There should be reports of events to avoid all wars and project human rights to live in peace and pursue self-fulfillment. War and the violation of human rights can be avoided under rational conditions. The vision of the United Nations in 1948 could be maintained based on the realization that billions of dollars spent to prosecute a war could be spent on avoiding any war. The United States Institute of Peace established in 1984 and funded by Congress works strategically to promote peace and prevent future violence across the globe. A noteworthy activity of the institute is the training and mentoring program with an emphasis on the prevention of violent conflicts in both fragile and stable countries. It also engages in de-escalation of conflicts in various

field operations worldwide. For example, the institute's operations include the extension of peace-building education into the classrooms of the young generation on whose shoulders lies the future of a peaceful world (*USIP*). The field program within the United States engages K-12 schools with the tools for the promotion and understanding of peace and conflict resolution. Similar programs exist in China, Russia, and other countries. These programs are examples of a priori projects to promote peace rather than a post-factum approach to war and peace. Given the continuity of belligerence around the world, there should be an intensification of education on conflict resolution and war deterrence at a very young age.

Beyond the a priori peacebuilding strategies of the United States Institute of Peace, there are non-profit organizations and foundations such as the non-violence project foundation, supporting peace initiatives worldwide. The Society for Nonprofits publishes calls for grant applications from individuals and groups seeking funds for research on the examination and prevention of violent conflicts (*Society for Nonprofits*). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also supports research and events on the promotion of peace. Its preamble to the 1945 constitution stating: "Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that defenses of peace must be constructed" is instructive (*UNESCO*). American University in Washington, D. C. has established the department of peace, human rights and cultural relations seeking to eliminate genocide and war violence and promote world peace. Similar educational peace programs exist in Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, Russia, China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, Tsinghua University in Beijing, Fudan University in Shanghai, Duke, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale and other universities in the United States have peacebuilding academic programs. Peace thinkers and scholars should engage in frequent and visible international collaborations. Additional resources for pre-emptive action against war, such as a world peace bank should be introduced and funded. All institutions need more funding to accomplish their lofty objectives. So far, the Nobel Peace Prize is the crown jewel for the recognition of peace advocates around the world. There is the possibility that if there is no war, there will be no war propaganda. This appears to be a tall order in a world that regularly invokes war in time and space.

In addition to the genuine and theoretical efforts by the United Nations and other well-meaning organizations and individuals worldwide to prohibit and discourage wars and war propaganda, it is practically possible to require presidents and prime ministers to lead war efforts right at the war front. Those responsible for the *casus belli* should be right in front of the armed forces at war. This proviso should be a necessary but insufficient condition to lead a nation or community to war. This conditionality for leadership will test the bravery of those who send men and women to selflessly, in many cases, fight and die for causes beyond their comprehension and control. There should be no excuse for those who fight proxy wars or constitute gangs to denigrate other nations and nationalities. There are covert or overt instigators of war. They should all report at the war front for a test of bravery. An updated UN Covenant should include the call to action.

President Idriss Déby Itno of Chad led his country from 1990 until April 2021 when he went to the war front and took over the command of the armed forces fighting against the rebels. He was killed on the war front after ruling his country for 30 years (*BBC*). In this case, his deputy could have been required by local law or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to replace him at the war front. Will he go to the war front? How many of the current leaders who send their citizens to war will lead the war from the front? Even strong man Muammar Gaddafi of Libya was on the run and found hiding in a drainage pipe while taking cover from the overpowering gunfire from Misrata rebel militia. He was captured and killed after ruling his country for 42 years from 1969 to 2011 (Campbell, 2013).

Current and future leaders should solemnly swear on pre-inauguration day or inauguration day or post-inauguration that they will personally lead any war against their country or any war their country has to fight. They might stop fighting wars and proscribe war propaganda. Some politicians may resign from their offices under the proviso to lead a war in person as a requirement in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The author calls for the introduction of this proviso in the UN Covenant.

Media Ethics Compass

Eribo (2020) points out that contemporary social construct cannot survive without an ethical compass for the trust and truism required in human communication and societal cohesion. Unethical media practices affect the individual, community, culture, institutional affiliation, human rights, and, indeed, the human race. Subsequently, media workers, observers, users, and critics are, unavoidably, saddled with the social responsibility of ethical communication infrastructure, substructure, and superstructure. It is incumbent on everyone in mainstream and social media to imbibe the edifice of media ethics as the bedrock of constructive communication in cyberspace, terrestrial reality and time. To abandon the appeal and remarkableness of media ethics in gathering, processing and disseminating news and information with concomitant feedback is tantamount to runaway contradiction, degeneration, and dissipation. Thus, there is the necessity to provide an ethical compass in the navigation of contemporary society. At this time, groping in the dark is not an option because of the devastating consequences of abuse of fundamental human rights to live in peace.

Specifically, we are witnessing the abuse of the media, technological innovation, and the workforce while traversing the advent of new possibilities in human, synthetic, and mediated communication. Journalism, as a profession, suffers when individuals choose to violate and sacrifice societal norms and values at the revolting pit of human fallibility. Realistically, there is no reasonable excuse for unethical practices in human endeavors, including communication in the march of civilization and social change. No virtuous society will “exchange good moral values for decadence, deceit, and indignity without remorse” (Eribo, 2020, p. xi).

There is no single definition of ethics and its application to complex and real-life situations such as war coverage and reportage. Barnes (2020) points out that

ethics is about doing the right thing and that doing what is right is not always clear in both simple and complex situations. Communication scholars seem to agree on one word in their major contributions to media ethics over the years. That one word is truth (Christians, 2019; Lerner, 1972; McIntyre, 2023; Moorcraft, 2016; Mowlana, 1989, Ward, 2018). In war coverage and reportage, truth is one of the first casualties of war, not necessarily the first casualty of war. In many cases, journalists, media listeners, readers, and viewers or spectators are the arbiters of the truth. Lying is unethical. The negativity of lying in the media is costly and illegal. People think and make ethical decisions based on their understanding of the facts and truth.

Humans are thinking beings. Thinking is a biological endowment. It is like the air we breathe. The quality of thought may vary but the thinking process is innate. In the Discourse on Method of 1637, René Descartes, a French mathematician and philosopher, stated, “I think, therefore, I am” translated from Latin: “Cogito, ergo sum” (*Britannica*). Our current knowledge dictates that inanimate objects do not think but they are affected by human actions, thinking, and the machinery of war. Thinking may be based on intuition, experience, observation, environment, desire, senses, etc. Critical thinking is the ability to objectively examine the realities of life and our imagination. Critical thinking is a prime factor in building on existing ecosystems, images, science, technology, and thought, in the universe and multiverse. We are thinking critically when we examine life in all its ramifications and add our understanding of the situation in agreement or disagreement with the existing essential or non-essential elements. The ability to think beyond what is in plain sight is often predicated by the questions: what is next? Is there an alternative way to a better solution? Is the present situation satisfactory? Why is it satisfactory or unsatisfactory? Journalists in war theaters understand the need for critical thinking despite the abnormality around them.

The introduction of new communication technologies and emerging software programs such as artificial intelligence (AI), chatbot, chat generative pre-trained transformer (ChatGPT), second life, virtual reality, and other digital tools and machine learning should be recognized as another level of human capability. The synthetic contents generated in cyberspace are capable of turning into synthetic war provocateurs. We are at the embryonic stage of the Internet which has the potential for more negative or positive outcomes, depending on bad or good actors. These technologies may have the incognito potential to launch war propaganda and other violations of global human rights. The current UN Resolution 217A of the General Assembly on the declaration of human rights and the UN Covenant prohibiting war propaganda should be updated and extended to artificial intelligence.

Christians et al. (2020) provided ethical guidelines on moral reasoning. The authors highlighted Aristotle’s Mean on moral virtue as “middle state determined by practical wisdom” (p. 22). Aristotle’s Mean was complemented by Confucius Golden Mean on temperance, a much older philosophical principle from China in the fifth century BC. The authors pointed out that Immanuel Kant’s Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals (1785) and the Critique of Practical Reason (1788) are important resources for ethical decision-making regarding Deontological ethics. In

addition, they pointed out the unconditional duties of Islam's Divine commands for "justice, human dignity, and truth" p.27. Other guidelines focused on Mill's principle of utility for seeking "the greatest happiness for the aggregate whole, Rawls's veil of ignorance stipulating that "justice emerges when negotiating without social differentiations; the Judeo-Christian person as ends, meaning "love your neighbor as yourself and Noddings' relational ethics on how "The 'One-Caring' attends to the 'cared-for' in thought and deeds" p.34.

There are challenges to Christians et al. and their guidelines. Meyers (2016) and Cortes (2020) do not fully subscribe to the original guidelines, arguing against the absolutism and universality of the guidelines. However, there is agreement that the guidelines are relevant and fundamental. They are important guideposts for any journalist seeking ethical principles for quick decision-making in volatile crises or other situations. A simplified ethical stipulation for journalists can be found in the four guidelines from the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). The SPJ code of ethics calls on journalists to seek the truth and publish it; minimize harm; be accountable; and act independently. Whereas Buttry (2020) acknowledges the clarity of the code, he called for an update stating that 21st-century journalism requires 21st-century code. Meanwhile, the ethical guidelines for social media are still in flux as the Internet remains a free-for-all jungle for ethical and unethical content creators. It should be noted that individuals can be held accountable for what they post on the Internet. War propaganda is prohibited in cyberspace and the media landscape.

Conclusion

It has taken some restraints to avoid naming some conflict zones in this study. This is deliberate. Similarly, specific references to recent wars and conflicts have been deliberately avoided since this study is not a catalog of such events. The lessons of the calamity of World War II are sufficient to deter wars but people continue to repeat history in many regions of the world. The focus of this study includes war propaganda, a priori opprobrium of war, and the fundamentals of media ethics in the promotion of human rights and social change even as nations continue to go to war and trigger media coverage and reportage.

The ethical guidelines cited in this study are dynamic and subject to additional ethical principles as the global society continues to adapt to the new communication and information technologies. The development of artificial intelligence and machine learning indicates the possibility of new challenges to the rights of the people in our global auditorium.

This study is an epistemological examination of war propaganda under the rubric of ethical principles and guidelines as we close on the first quarter of the 21st century. The study raises significant possibilities on how to mitigate the rush to war and violation of the UN Covenant against war propaganda. If prime ministers and presidents responsible for the casus belli of internal and international wars are required by the updated UN Covenant to fight in the wars they have started, there may be fewer wars since they are not invincible. However, reporting at the war

front should be a test of bravery for all leaders, instigators of war, and war propagandists.

There is a dearth of literature on the interplay of war propaganda and human rights and the role of media ethics in communication scholarship. This study calls for a significant increase in the literature on ethical considerations in the coverage and reportage of war. It is astonishing and frustrating to note that human rights have eluded the global community even after the Second World War and other major violent crises. However, the struggle against human rights violations must continue on all fronts until it is successful.

Although the qualitative study in this paper is necessary and sufficient, there are limitations in the study. The limitations are associated with the lack of critical data. There is room for quantitative methods in future studies. The examination should include empirical and statistical cum quantitative analyses of variables to demonstrate the significance and replicability of the study.

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Embodied Critical Learning through Performance Teaching

By *Margareta Melin**

*A critical mode of being is not only written into the Swedish law of university education as a learning outcome for all students, but also vital for Media and Communication students approach to their studies and their future lives as media producers. Taking on this challenge, I created an experiment 15 years ago, which I term performance teaching. It was a way to force students out of their uncritical absorption of course-content only focusing on exams, into a critical mode of thinking and doing. At first this performance teaching entailed lecturing in totally different lifestyle outfits every day, with the aid of colleagues and the city theatre. The following 13 years, however, only the first day of term was used for the performance and the experiment turned into a permanent teaching method, tied in with theories of critique of sources and media critique. This is the case that will theoretically discuss in this article. I will argue for didactically designing learning processes that tackles the issues embodied critical thinking and doing. My main argument is that by acknowledging that we, as lecturers and students, are physical beings and that learning should take place through one's entire body, learning processes can be didactically designed to better learning processes. The aim of the article is showing how performance teaching can create a positive base for critical learning, thinking, and doing media, and theoretically analysing and discussing this. Theoretically, the concepts I use are mainly based on bell hooks' works on feminist critical pedagogy. I also lean on Bourdieu's (2001) concept hexis and habitus, and Larsson and Fagrell's (2010) *The Conception of Performed Body*. I'm furthermore inspired by Selander and Kress' (2010) book on didactic design and Toke Gissel's (2016) work on *Media Didactics*, which ties my research to my subject Media and Communication studies. Methodologically the case study is based on student questionnaires and interviews. The result shows that students yearn the familiar, they want what they believe a university education and a "proper university lecturer" should be. When taken out of their pre-understandings of this and when the course didactics are consciously designed to foster criticality, they start to think and do critically. The performance lecture is but a small starting point in achieving this, but its effects seem to last students' entire bachelor program (and possibly beyond). The article does not argue for a performance lecture as such, as it could be a hard act hard to follow, but that university lectures should aim for what bell hooks terms practical wisdom. Furthermore, we need to bring embodied learning into the classroom, and we must acknowledge that fostering critical thinking and critical doing is key to any university education.*

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Introduction

In today's world of troll-factories, fake-news, and social media algorithms and of course AI it is more than ever important for media educators to include critical thinking and doing into syllabi. However, the past decades I, as a university lecturer, have experienced more and more students being less and less critically aware, not only of media content. Although the media reality was different twenty years ago, the need for enticing critical thinking and doing in students was equally important. Aiming to force students out of their uncritical absorption of course-content only focusing on exams, into a critical mode of thinking and doing, I worked out a kind of performance teaching, which started as an experiment for first semester media and communication students at Malmö University, Sweden. The experiment entailed performing lecturers in totally different lifestyle outfits every day, with the aid of colleagues and the city theatre. What started as an experiment and a way to challenge myself as well as my students, has (albeit slimmed down to one day) become an integral and important part of enticing new students into a critical mode of being.

With 15 years hindsight it is time to critically analyse this and to draw conclusions which could help colleagues tackling lack of criticality which is vital to approach in today's (media) society. I place my analysis within Media- and literacy education (MLE), which has been challenged from critical pedagogy to focus more on enabling future media producers and citizens to navigate (and change) the culture and technology of the current media-scape. Thus, critical approaches to MLE are necessary, both within content, context, and creation of media. How this should be done is, however not clear. This article aims to address this through a discussion of the importance of and challenges to critical thinking-and-doing.

The design of the article is fairly traditional. After a background description of the performance teaching, the main part of the article is a theoretical analysis and discussion of this. First, however the introduction will provide the necessary bits to enable the reader to put together the jigsaw puzzle of my arguments: aim, theoretical concepts and method used.

Aim of the Paper

In this paper I will show one way of didactically designing learning processes that tackles the issues embodied critical thinking and doing. *My main argument* is that by acknowledging that we, as lecturers and students, are physical beings and that learning should take place through one's entire body, learning processes can be didactically designed to better learning processes. The general goal I have with this is to educate democratic, ethical critical, competent and creative media workers.

This paper aims at showing how performance-teaching can create a positive base for critical learning, thinking, and doing media, and theoretically discussing this. I will show and discuss how I performed intersectional criticality over a period of 15 years, and what responses this performance got.

Main Concepts and their Theoretical Base

In this article several theoretical concepts are used, and I will briefly describe and discuss them here.

Critical Pedagogy

When discussing critical pedagogy, my framework is based mainly on bell hooks (2000; 2010) critical feminist pedagogy. Her theoretical base is critical theory and feminist thoughts, and through that she points to that knowledge and education (and thereby academia) is always political. Particularly interesting is her work on democratic theories from a feminist class-perspective (that which today would be termed feminist intersectionality cf. Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016). In one of her first books *Feminist theories from margin to centre* she focusses on the importance of education for liberation, particularly for black women. The importance of education is further explored in *Feminism for everybody*:

If we do not work to create a mass-based movement which offers feminist education to everyone, females and males, feminist theory and practice will always be undermined by the negative information produced in most mainstream media (hooks 2014: 24).

When exclaiming that education is seen as a practice of freedom, strongly inspired by Paulo Freire (1970), she argues for a feminist pedagogic praxis. We need to learn how to reflect and act in the world in order to change it. For this we need “engaged pedagogy”, participation from teachers as well as students to create an interactive learning process.

Critical thinking and Critical doing

Dissecting critical thinking Brookfield (2012) argues that there are four parts to critical thinking that we as university lecturers must be aware of: First, we *hunt assumptions*, which means that we deliberately try to discover what assumptions influence the way we think and act. Secondly, we *check assumptions* i.e., we assess whether or not our assumptions are valid and reliable guides for action. Thirdly, we *see things deliberately from different viewpoints*, e.g., we try to understand our assumptions from our different roles or other’s perspectives. Fourthly, we *take informed actions*, i.e., based on our assessments of our assumptions we make decisions. This taking-apart of what critical thinking is can be helpful in creating a didactic to increase students critical-way of being. Brookfields latter point, to take informed actions, is to me not only thinking, but also doing.

Again, I lean on hooks (2000; 2010; 2014) who argues that critical thinking needs to be *done* “outside the box”, trying to challenge (societal) norms, as to create more innovative and engaged learning. However, this must always be thought and done through a self-reflexive and responsible way. hooks highlights the importance of addressing issues of race, gender, class, and other forms of oppression within the educational context. She argues that a truly transformative pedagogy must be intersectional and inclusive, acknowledging the diverse experiences and identities of students. By critically examining power dynamics and engaging with issues of privilege and marginalization, educators can help students develop a critical

consciousness and become active participants in dismantling oppressive structures (hooks 2000). Thus, to create deep learning with propensity for change, learning should always start with *doing* and *practice*. The end-result, according to hooks, is “practical wisdom” (hooks 2000; 2010; 2014), which, I argue, is similar to Nussbaum’s ethical consciousness and possibly Aristotle’s *Sophia* (Nussbaum, 1990). Fostering critical thinking and critical doing is thus key to any university education.

Media Didactic

I place my research in the field of Media- and Communication Studies (in which I teach) and thus the term *Media Didactics* has been invaluable. Didactics is here what to teach, why, to whom, how. I am particularly inspired by Toke Gissel’s (2016) work, where he states that media students must not only learn *about* media, but media must be learnt *in* and *through* media, i.e. learning about media whilst doing media.

When deciding *what* didactic to use, Selander and Kress’ (2010) book on didactic design is useful. They state that university lecturers should approach didactics as a designer creating a course with the students in different stages, like in a design-process. They also state that in order to create deep learning the learning process should be multimodal and that the entire body should be used in this process.

Although writing about the necessity of that hand and head, and indeed the entire body, should be used in multimodal approaches to learning it is interesting to *not* read about the body in Gissel’s (2016) and Selander and Kress’ (2010) books. This is not strange. The body is namely almost non-existent in theories of teaching and learning, particularly that of higher education (Larsson & Fagrell 2010).

Embodied teaching

We are our bodies. Our bodies are we. Everything that is I is shown in and through my body. Judith Butler (2006) argues famously that our gender cannot be, unless we perform it, act it. My gender is therefore shown in and through my body and the way it (I) acts. Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu (2001) argues that we embody our habitus, i.e., what our social situation and inheritance has made us. That habitus is embodied means that we show – unconsciously – who we are through our body and by routine behaviour. Hexis is embodied habitus. Class, geography, sexuality, gender, ethnicity – the list is endless of what we show through our body, our hexis, and everything we decorate it with, like cloths, tattoos, jewellery, hairstyles.

Lifestyles has been an important concept in sociology and cultural studies, where taste is and self-identity is manifested through lifestyles, e.g., clothing, hairstyles, media use, music-taste (Featherstone et al 1991; Giddens 1991; Davis 1992; McRobbie 1999). Tying this to Media and Communication Studies, Barnard (1996) argues that fashion must not just be seen as “lifestyles”, but a medium and as communication for who we are and want to be. Hence, Barnard is closer to Bourdieu’s concept of hexis, as the showcase of habitus. Hexis is more than lifestyles, it is not just who we want to be, not just what we add to our body, but it is also who we intrinsically *are*.

It is therefore surprising how little space the body has in pedagogy and didactics, at least in tertiary education. As opposed to in schools (here I speak about the Swedish school-law LGR), the body is not mentioned in learning outcomes of (most)

university courses (obviously except for medicine, odontology, sports science and similar subjects) (Larsson & Fagrell 2010). In their interesting book *Conceptions of the body* (or *Performed body* – the title carries a double meaning in Swedish) Larsson and Fagrell argue for a conscious embodied teaching practice:

A teacher of today must not only possess good subject knowledge but must also continuously be prepared to over and over again concour respect and appreciation through their personal approach, an approach that is coloured by current discourses and attitudes about how a good teacher should be (Larsson & Fagrell, 2010:94, my translation).

They furthermore argue that it is important to bring the body into education as pupils (and students) need to be aware of how the body is influenced in today's risk-society by societal and cultural processes, not the least through the media. They show that the body is what executes the demands of advertisements (cf. Larsson & Fagrell, 2010).

My performance teaching will obviously not do all of the above, but is inspired by it, and together with other parts of the didactic design works to create a ground for the fostering of students' criticality. The term *Performance teaching* is my own. It is more than embodied teaching. It is embodied feminist critical pedagogy, and an *act of feminist critical pedagogy*. The act and acting are important and students are invited into the act as an interactive audience to feel, think, intervene, judge, make decisions. Thus, they learn through the acting act, the performance.

Method

The empirical base of the paper is questionnaires with students made over years, i.e., at the end of each course where the performance-teaching took place. In 2008 interviews were made with all students in the course, and 2023 a selection of 2nd and 3rd year student plus alumni were interviewed. The latter interviewees were self-chosen as a response to a question that was asked on the program Facebook site.

As is common when analysing interviews the method of analysis used was thematic textual analysis, which means that deep knowledge of the text is achieved through thorough reading (cf Kvale & Brinkman 2014). During this reading several themes were found. Thereafter another round of reading was done with the aid of these themes, i.e. the texts were divided into themes, and then were theoretically analysed. The "texts" in this case refers both to the transcribed interviews and to the answers of the questionnaires. The latter consisted of a few fill-in questions, asking about Margareta's age, marital status, ethnicity et cetera, but most of the questions were open-ended with analysable texts.

Performance Teaching over 15 years

The way the performance teaching was carried out varied over the years will be briefly describe as a background to the analysis.

Frustration and Experimental Acting

The performance teaching was borne out of frustration. I experienced that students got less and less critical over the years and more and more instrumental. “Which books do we *need* to buy?” “What pages do we *have to* read for the examination?” “Exactly what pages do we need to read for tomorrow’s lecture?” were frequent questions. For the first year, first course *Cultural Industry* I decided to try an experiment that I had thought of for some time. I dressed in very different lifestyles and decided to carry on until one of the students questioned what I was doing. The course lasted five weeks and every day I wore very different outfits, with the help of all colleagues in the department. Most of my colleagues were involved and supported the experiment with interest. I wore for example gym-clothes, a ballgown, paint-stained dungarees, a punky outfit, a biker-outfit, dressed like an old woman and as a man. In figure one there are some of the 20 outfits I wore. I carried on teaching in the same way as I would normally do, and the only thing that differed was the outfits.

Figure 1. *Different Styles 2007*



At the end of the course not a single student had asked what *why* or even showed signs they had noticed my different outfits. Consequently, I decided to spend a three-hour lecture on discussing the experiment. The very last day wore a traditional Swedish folk costume. I gave all the students a questionnaire where they were asked to fill in what books, films, newspapers, and music they thought I liked, what was my “real” lifestyle, my marriage status, sexuality, family constellation, class background, where and how I lived, and to describe what my living-room looked like. They were also asked to say what they thought the experiment was about, what they thought it had meant for their learning of the cultural industry, and their attitude towards it.

With a Little help from the Theatre

Based on student responses I decided to repeat the performances the following year. I decided, however, both to step up and scale down the performance and only do it the first five days but add quality. Again, I had the support of my colleagues, but I also got help from the Malmö Theatre with make-up, wigs, clothing, and acting coaching. On the first lecture I acted an older, strict professor and as a contrast, the following day I wore baggy army pants, a hoody and a Palestine shawl and acted more as a sloppy student. The third day I dressed as, what in Sweden is term a “culture lady”, being calm, cool, speaking about what cultural activities to see and do in

Malmö. On the fourth I enacted a rather giggly, whimsical happy-go-lucky colourful blond girl. Finally, the fifth day I wore a hijab and a niqab. I removed the niqab after students asking me to repeat sentences as she could not *see* what I said. At the end of the lecture, I took off the hijab and underneath wore a kilt and a black t-shirt and long red hair, which students thought was the “real Margareta”. At the end of the class, after the debriefing (see below), I ended by removing the red-haired wig and saying that the students should never take anything at face value, always remain critical. And then I started the de-briefing.

Figure 2. *Different Styles 2008*



10 Minutes of Provocative Performance

Figure 3. *Professor Signe*



The third year, I decided to only do the performance on the very first part of the very first lecture (on the first course on the first semester), as the performances were very tiring for myself: it takes courage, time and energy to carry out this kind of performance lecture. I also decided to choose a character that provoked the students, but only a little, and not the characters that got the most positive or negative responses.

I thus chose “Professor Signe” (the name I gave her in honour of a professor I had at school). Professor Signe is grey-haired women of certain age, dressed in old-fashioned tweed skirt-suit, a silk scarf, old women’s shoes and beige socks to the knees. She was very strict and took no nonsense. Students being late were challenged, as were those wearing a cap, or students talking during the lecture. She used a walker as she seemed physically disabled, and she was not comfortable at all with new technology (like power-point). The power-point took a while to start up, and she got more and more agitated. The power-point slides were all in English (albeit a Swedish class), packed full of text and of typologies of poor quality. Professor Signe read with very poor English from the slides, and with her back to the students. In short, she did all the pedagogic mistakes possible. Meanwhile, Professor Signe got “very hot” and removes, scarf, and jacket. At this point, she stated that “she is still hot”, change slide to stop-mark and exclaimed that enough is enough, whereby she let the skirt drop, removed her shoes and half-socks. However, a black dress was worn underneath the tweed suit. She looked at each of the students (who by now realise that it was a performance) and removed the grey-haired wig and the make-up (pale skin and lots of wrinkles). This part took 5-10 minutes depending on students’ responses. During these performances it was indeed very important to keep track of student’s reactions to stop the performance if needed, in case any student got too agitated. However, that never happened.

During the second part of the performance, I let the students dress me. Standing barefoot with a simple black dress on, I placed several items of clothing on a table, and let them choose the shoes, scarf, jacket, jumper, jewellery, make-up et cetera that I would wear, whilst all the time asking why- and what-questions. Through those I explained and discussed the performance and connected it to the course, which the past ten years has been *The Changing Media-Scape*, where critical thinking and doing and visual methodology has been the core of the pedagogic design (Lindskog & Melin, 2023). Then the de-briefing started.

Debriefing

After the first year’s experimental style changing, I realised that for the effectiveness of the pedagogic idea, a de-briefing is vital. Students need to ask, to feel, to think, and to do, as a response to what they experienced. Also, the pedagogic design behind the performance is important to discuss.

The second year, when I performed five days, I held a 3-hour workshop where students, again, filled in a substantial questionnaire. I furthermore held a lecture about critical thinking and critique of sources and tied this to the course and to their assessment. I also interviewed all students in groups of five. This was done to reiterate and strengthen the message behind the pedagogic design.

The thirteen following years, I spent one hours after the performance of “Professor Signe” asking about feelings, thoughts, attitudes. Together we discussed the purpose of the performance and of the importance of critical thinking and doing. Although this seemed to have been enough for years, the past two years, however, students have asked for more information and more discussion. Possibly, the current situation with fake news and AI has prompted this. This year the performance took

place during a 3-hour lecture on critical thinking, critical doing and media critique. As I have not received the questionnaire responses from this years' students an analysis of this will have to wait.

That a kind of de-briefing and pedagogic discussion is needed shows other performance teaching I have done over the years, as I have several times been asked to give this kind performance lecture, e.g., in conferences, as part of a university wide education, to give speeches to other organisations. What I have learnt from painful experience is that it never works without a context. I cannot go into a lecture hall and just start to change cloths, because it becomes a cloth-changing session. I need to contextualise it and spend time explaining the pedagogy and involve the audience. Furthermore, the audience cannot be too big, as I need to keep eye-contact to check that no one feels too bad (provoked is good, panicking is bad) about the situation.

Theoretically analysing the Performance Teaching

The first year's teaching was born out of frustration and a wish to make students more critical. The second year was grounded in experience and the results of students' questionnaires. With further experiences, questionnaires and interviews over the years I could theoretically explore the performance teaching, and indeed deliberately and consciously carry it out on theoretical ground and with a clear pedagogic and didactic purpose. That I want to discuss here.

Embodied teaching

Through my performance teaching I have indeed become conscious myself of my body and the way it influences students, and through the performance try to make students aware of hexis, not the least their own. Butlers performed gender and Bourdieus habitus and hexis are important concepts in the first course, and thus my performance teaching the first lecture becomes an excellent didactic base for discussions of these concepts during the course. Students embodied pre-understandings and stereotypes are also continuously worked with and discussed, as are how these have become embodied. One didactic example is that the students are asked to sit like a "proper girl", and then like bloke. This simple exercise makes it abundantly clear to all male students how uncomfortable sitting like a proper girl is, and how physically comfortable, but mentally *uncomfortable* sitting like a bloke is to most female students. The assessment students do is also about hexis and performed gender, and focus on students' own selfies in social media, and how *the body* is at risk in our current risk society (Lindskog & Melin 2023).

It is, however, not strange that most lectures are not aware of how their body influence students. It is not in the university discourse to talk of bodies (Larsson & Fagrell 2010). Bourdieu (2001) argues, however, that we are partly aware of our hexis and indeed use it to create identity. I am sure all us lectures have chosen certain clothing because it is a "teaching day" and possibly other cloths when it is only a sitting-in-the-office research day. Most of us, as Larsson and Fagrell show, are however not aware how much the students both judge us and are affected by us.

A Proper Lecturer

After the first years' performance it was made abundantly clear to me that that students always react to *who* and *how* the lecturer is. Students do not necessarily talk to us, the lecturers about it, but they discuss it amongst themselves. Over the years, only *one* person asked *me* why I was doing the performance, and that was the second year in 2008. When afterwards asking the students, they told me that they discussed the performance amongst each other, but also about how all lectures were and looked like.

Only three students have been openly negative towards the performance teaching. The first year two students reacted negatively through the questionnaires they filled in:

I really don't see the point of the exercise. It was too much like playschool for my liking (male student, 2007, my translation).

I was really frustrated about all the changes because I did not know what Margareta I was writing the paper [examination] for. In the end I chose the Margareta that was dressed like a man in a suit, because that was the most trustworthy (female student, 2007, my translation).

In 2022 one student reacted in the course assessment to the lifestyles that I had previously done:

To dress like a black-faced muslim is not suitable (student assessment 2022, my translation).

These reactions are all interesting. The first one is the kind of attitudes I had expected and was prepared for. What has surprised me is that not more students have expressed this. Regarding the third quotation, that a student reacted to what I did 16 years earlier, I believe can be explained by a general increased sensibility amongst students regarding race, ethnicity, and LBGTQI+ issues. The second quotation is tied to trustworthiness of the university lecturer and to what kind of lecturer they find trustworthy, and "a proper lecture".

Figure 4. *A Proper University Lecturer*



So, what is a proper, trustworthy lecturer? For 20 years I have let my students, in every course I do, make drawings of the important concepts of the particular course I teach. Male and female are always there, as is university lecturer (Melin 2012; 2015). When doing this exercise with first year students, regardless of subject, the same pattern emerges and has remained the same over these 20 years. Almost all students (my guess is 98%) see the university lecturer as a man. A trustworthy, rational, objective, knowledgeable man with glasses and a beard. And this is so even though a woman university lecturer, standing in front of them, just asked them to draw the concept. In 2008 I showed the students images of different lecturers clad differently and with the head removed from the photograph. *All* students replied that what they thought of were men were more trustworthy and more like *a proper lecturer* (figure 4). The outfits they preferred was casual suits with a shirt but no tie, and a shirt and chinos in the summer. This view has been confirmed every single year in the de-briefing discussions and in the drawing exercises (Melin 2012; 2015) I have had with my students. From this perspective, the female student choosing to write her paper to the trustworthy “male” Margareta is understandable.

Figure 5. “*Professor Signe*” 2008



The second year in 2008, when de-briefed, students also filled in what they thought of each style I wore. When checking for age and gender it was clear that women and those really young students preferred the older grey-haired stricter style (figure 5):

- Strict, somewhat severe. A typical teacher stereotype (female student).
- Strict and decisive teacher. Imposing and distanced (female student).
- The style the first days felt strict and gave a boring impression. I had not expected that, but I felt respect for her (female student).
- A bit severe and very proper. East German? (male student).

The style male students preferred was the blond happy-go-lucky girly type (figure 6).

This Margareta is funnier and more relaxed (male student).
 I felt absolutely the best with this one. More female, girly, sexual appeal, which made feel good (male student).
 Relaxed, very kind, interested, happy, bubbly (male student).
 Strange. Mid-life crisis? Nursery school teacher-vibes. Wanted to be cool and hip (female student).

Figure 6. “Blond and Happy” 2008



Female students reacted very negative to attempts to dress “mutton as lamb” and were particularly negative towards the different coloured converse sneakers I wore, as “only young and really cool people wear shoes like that” (female student).

Figure 7. “Severe and Arty” 2008



The character most students had expected as a university lecturer in Media and Communication was this this (figure 7):

Academic but not as strict as the first older style, but more bohemian. This is when I really started to like the changes in style and thought it was exciting (male student).
 Looked like a language teacher, who likes to go to the theatre (male student).
 Artist from Österlen [an arty Swedish district]. Charming, warm, funny (female student).
 Creative, but more awe-inspiring, informative, artistic, interesting to discuss issues with (male student).
 Strict, harder, competent and extremely self-assured (female student).

Figure 8. *“Palestinian Student” 2008*

The character that the student in 2022 reacted against as racist when hearing about my previous performance teaching was perceived negatively by students in 2008, but of totally different reasons. It was not what the 2022-student called a “black-face” they reacted to, but the general style of the character (figure 8).

I did not understand it was Margareta. I thought it was a fishy type that walked about. Why sunglasses indoors? (female student).

Before I realised it was Margareta I thought what a fishy person, what is she doing here. But when I realised [it was Margareta] then she just became a bit bohemian, odd person in my view (female student).

What kind of buffoon is that? My first thought was that it was a suicide bomber (male student).

There were many more comments like these, and during the de-briefing students said they reacted the strongest against the sunglasses (indoors) and the Palestine shawl, as they wanted to see the eyes and that they perceived that any kind of ideological symbols were forbidden for university lecturers. Also, the niqab was perceived negatively for both these reasons. Interestingly, the hijab was not perceived negatively, but as a rather natural piece of clothing in multi-cultural Malmö. However, students did not expect a university lecturer to dress in hijab and thought that a lecturer in hijab would have religious perspectives in the course. These thoughts on religion were, however, not directed against “Professor Signe” despite her having a large crucifix in a chain around her neck. Religious influence was apparently perceived as only connected to Islam.

Figure 9. *Improper Folk-costume 2007-2008*

If the most proper university lecturer is a man clad in casual suit and shirt, the worst of the worst, the most improper style (as stated by *all* classes over the years) is a lecturer dressed in folk costume. When asked, students give vague remarks that “it is just *wrong*” or “it is the wrong place for a folk-costume”. They could not fathom a lecturer in folk-costume, but they could understand that some lecturers might show their ideology. Throughout the years, a university lecturer showing ideology is what the students reacted the strongest against. It was seen as highly improper.

This must be understood as more than a (dis)likeness for a certain lifestyle, and indeed more than that fashion is a medium communicating lifestyles (cf Barnard 1996). It might be applicable when only looking at the style, the clothing and jewellery, but the performance *itself* and where it took place must also be considered. As Bourdieu (1988; 19939) hexis is tied to habitus and thus one’s social position in society. A university lecturer has through her place in the academic field, achieved a certain status. With that comes expectations, and consequently students’ beliefs of what the university should carry: *The* impartial, neutral, objective *Truth* and that the lecturer is the impartial, neutral, objective and distant carrier of this (cf Bourdieu 1988; Larsson & Fagrell 2010). For this, I argue, an antidote is needed.

Critical doing and critical thinking

The antidote I sought for students’ uncriticality in 2007 was my first experimental attempt at performance teaching and their responses showed me I was on the right path. In a group interview from 2007 some students discussed what they had learnt:

I loved it. the whole experience made me question the way I see school and see knowledge. And it was fun and exiting (female student 2007).

The pedagogy is good. One puts the finger on important questions like identity and class (male student 2007).

I was a bit confused and thought at first that she must have a huge wardrobe. The whole experiment open up ones’ eyes. One doesn’t want to be a person that puts people in boxes. But... (female student 2007)

I don’t really agree. I think it could be interesting to place people in boxes. During the 1800s there were clear class-markers that showed where you belong. Today it is not the same at all (male student 2007).

But that is the whole point. The experiment showed that I *do* have stereotypes, and I *do* make judgements like what’s his name Bordeaux [sic] sais. I have started being critical to my own views (female student 2007)

That’s right, me too (male student 2007).

They show that they have reflected on their own pre-understandings and that they connect this to societal structures, which to hooks (2010) argues is necessary in order to change the world. This is why it is so important for students to learn critical thinking. According to Brookfield (2012) it is law-bound as societies need critical citizens that can make informed decisions and act accordingly (cf. Brookfield 2012). This is reflected in the Swedish university law (1992:1434) that states that all BA-students must develop ability to make independent and critical judgments. In a subject like Media and Communication Studies, developing criticality, particularly media

critique is vital for students to learn. They are after all going to be working in the media industry, producing content. Having a critical approach to their sources and competitors are a vital part of being a media producer. Göran Svensson (2015) does a thorough study of criticality and critical practices and focuses on the importance of media critique. Like Svensson, I argue that criticality, an inherent critical approach, is important for students to develop.

To Pierre Bourdieu criticality is embedded in his entire field theory. Our tastes entail criticality, being critical towards everyone that is not like “us”. He has famously stated that taste not only signifies, but signifies the signifier, i.e., our judgments and critique and the distinctions we make, say more the one making the judgments than about the object of it. This is at the core of my performance teaching. With it I try to make students understand that they (all of us) always make judgments, that stereotyping is a necessity for our brain, that they come into the classroom full of pre-understandings (cf Melin 2012; 2015). According to the response received, I have succeed.

The experience was unique and not at all what I thought would happen [starting university], but I think now that it was necessary in order to break the stereotypical [view of] university. I also think it was an eye-opener (1st semester student 2022).

Yes, you absolutely have to do the Signe thing for next years’s students as well. It really taught me a lot about the way I think about things, and about objectivity, that it does not exist (female 3rd year student 2021).

Every time I have written an assignment I have thought about Aunt Signe. She is kind of with me and whisper to remain critical to what I read (male 3rd year student 2021).

This kind of criticality is necessary in institutions like academia, journalism and the media (Svensson, 2015). To me, however, thinking critically is not enough, with criticality should also come critical *doing*. Particularly bell hooks’s theories in her book *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* is inspiring for this. Like hooks I have tried to develop a framework for empowering students through transformative learning processes. Education should be a tool for social justice and liberation. Thus, when I myself state that I want to educate democratic, ethical critical competent and creative media workers, my inspiration comes from hooks.

To do so, hooks stresses, the significance of creating a democratic and inclusive classroom environment, where students are actively involved in the learning process, where their experiences and voices are valued, and where they can participate in the co-creation of knowledge. This participatory approach fosters a sense of community and empowers students to become critical thinkers and agents of change (hooks 2010). Starting from student’s own experiences and taking them seriously is important, and from hooks I have drawn to let students’ feelings, thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes become visible in the classroom. Thus, to understand the ever-changing media-scape and give to students tools to change this in the future, I designed a didactic where the starting point is their own feelings, thoughts, pre-understandings, and of course their own social media use. Through the performance-teaching, the drawings of their pre-understandings of key concepts, and the analysis of their own social media use they will not only learn about hexis and performed gender, but also critically reflect on it. That is, thinking critically. But what about doing critically?

The performance teaching will not do all of this, but it will, together with other parts of the course's didactic design become a ground for students' realisation that thinking and doing critically are important. By performing the first hour of the first course of the first semester of the BA course, I set the ground for a different pedagogic and didactic design. Students, as evident from all the response I have had over the years, appreciate that learning can be done differently from how they are used to or what they expect. Learning can be playful and political at the same time. Never objective. The performance teaching is followed up with a group-based assessment where student must *do* criticality, by making an intersectional analysis (critical thinking) of their own social media selfies, and then make norm-critical images based on their analysis (critical doing) (Lindskog & Melin 2023). Their first experience of the university (the performance teaching) is, hence, tied to an embodied and visual learning design, where students not only learn, but learn to live, to paraphrase John Dewey.

Conclusion

In this paper I have aimed at showing a way enticing students' critical thinking and doing through performance-teaching and attempted to create understanding of the theoretical basis for this. Theoretically, the paper draws on feminist and critical pedagogy, particularly bell hooks' works. I also draw on Bourdieu's field theory, Selander and Kress' work on didactic design that ought to be multimodal, and Toke Gissel's definition on media didactics.

The result of the paper shows that students yearn the familiar, a "proper university lecturer", but when taken out of their pre-understandings of what university education and university professors are, they start to think and do critically. Interviews with students show that the effects of the performance-teaching last their entire bachelor program (and beyond?).

From a lecturer's perspective, the performance is an act hard to follow, as it is risky (cf Biesta 2013), takes courage and takes time. The latter is a rare commodity for us lecturers. Albeit not following my act of performance teaching there are other learnings to be made. I argue with hooks (2000; 2010) that we need "engaged pedagogy" from teachers to involve students to create an engaged, interactive learning process. I also argue with Larsson and Fagrell (2010) that the body must take up more space in the classroom and in teaching. We as university lecturers should acknowledge that we and our students are physical beings, and that learning should take place through one's entire body. That way learning processes can be deliberately didactically designed to better learning processes. For media students, achieving criticality, a critical mode that is reflected in critical doing, is vital for them as future media workers. Media didactics should therefore entail multimodality with a conscious focus on the body's learning potential, of critical thinking and doing, and all this from an intersectional perspective. Perhaps then what hooks terms practical wisdom can be achieved.

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Podcasts in Bulgaria: An Alternative, Parallel or Flexible Approach to Changing the Media Ecosystem

*By Ivanka Mavrodieva**

Podcasts in Bulgaria have flourished and solidified their presence in the second and third decades of the 21st century across various dimensions. Firstly, they serve as alternative sources of expert information. Secondly, they offer a parallel platform for disseminating information alongside traditional media genres and formats. Thirdly, they contribute to the development of a flexible media market, accommodating both public and private media entities, as well as individual, corporate, institutional, or organizational channels. This analysis focuses on podcasts in Bulgaria spanning from 2021 to 2023, produced and distributed by diverse media outlets, individuals, and organizations. The hypothesis posits that podcasts function as both media and businesses, serving as communication channels and a model that blends information dissemination with shared experiences. They represent a product resulting from media, digital, and communicative literacy. The methodology employed adopts an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing media, genre, and discourse analysis. The conclusions drawn are based on a comprehensive study, although not claiming to be exhaustive. It is assumed that podcasts in Bulgaria offer a versatile means of positioning themselves alongside traditional media, thereby contributing to the creative industry and the media market simultaneously.

Keywords: *podcast, media market, media ecosystem, media genre, creative industry, media content.*

Introduction

In Bulgaria, podcasts have emerged as a significant phenomenon in both media and the virtual sphere during the second and third decades of the 21st century. Simultaneously, podcasting represents a distinct activity within the creative industry, contributing to notable shifts in the realms of creation, production, distribution, and funding. Podcasts are no longer solely the domain of journalists and media outlets; they are also produced by individuals, businesses, cultural and educational institutions, NGOs, and more. Podcasts serve to inform audiences about a wide array of subjects, offering news, commentary on societal trends, and interpretations of topics relevant to specific interest groups.

In recent years, podcasts in Bulgaria have turned into a significant communication channel for disseminating expert and alternative information. The creators and participants of these podcasts share success stories in business, the arts, media, public relations, and education, often framing these narratives through the lens of personal experience, lessons learned, and values acquired. While the participants

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are active creators of media content, not all claim a high level of professional expertise from a media perspective; however, they are actively engaged in societal processes.

The diversity of podcast topics is striking, encompassing everything from economics and international affairs to artificial intelligence, personal development, sports, psychology, arts, and personal narratives. Moreover, podcasts often facilitate mutual support and shared experiences among listeners. This study focuses on delineating the characteristics of podcasts from 2021 to 2023, examining their media format, genre diversity, and discursive elements. It explores how modern digital marketing techniques are employed to create and disseminate podcast episodes, catering to virtual audiences. While not aiming to provide an exhaustive analysis, this article seeks to shed light on key features of podcasts in Bulgaria within the realms of media and business. And it will therefore delineate shifts in discourse.

Literature Review

The theoretical review delves into subfields derived from the specifics of the study: podcasts and the media ecosystem. Initially, an overview of podcasts is presented.

The term “podcasting” was first mentioned by Ben Hammersley in the British daily newspaper *The Guardian* in February 2004 (Hammersley, 2004). Etymologically, the term “podcast” is a composite word, combining “pod” (referring to a portable media player such as an iPod, an Apple product) and “broadcasting”. Over the two decades of development from 2004 to 2024, podcasting has undergone significant evolution. New content has been integrated into it in response to changing practices, leading to an expansion in the scope of the term.

Erin McKean defines podcast in *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (NOAD) as “...a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player” (McKean, 2005). This definition succinctly captures the process of creating, distributing, and listening to podcasts.

Tiziano Bonini offers the following definition: “Podcasting is a technology used to distribute, receive and listen, on-demand, to sound content produced by traditional editors such as radio, publishing houses, journalists and educational institutions (schools, professional training centers) as well as content created by independent radio producers, artists, and radio amateurs” (Bonini, 2015: 21). The author now expands the definition to encompass not only the creation but also the production and distribution of content through podcasts, considering their evolution across various levels.

Podcasts are studied by Andrew J. Bottomley; he compares them to the medium of radio and brings them to the level of a new medium in the article “Podcasting: A decade in the life of a “new” audio medium” (Bottomley, 2015: 164-169). Andrew J. Bottomley, in his dissertation, employs the term “internet radio”, recognizing the pivotal role of the global web in shaping the evolution of the media ecosystem (Bottomley, 2016).

Lionel Felix and Damien Stolarz broaden the research scope by examining podcasts in video format and draw comparisons to video blogging. They have even

authored a Hands-On Guide to Video Blogging and Podcasting: Emerging Media Tools for Business Communication (Felix, Stolarz, 2016).

David Nieborg and Thomas Poell conducted a study on studied podcasts and published their results in the article “The platformization of cultural production: theorizing the contingent cultural commodity”; the authors talk not only about platformization concerning the use of online platforms for the distribution of podcasts, but also about their role in the development of the cultural industry “the penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems, fundamentally affecting the operations of the cultural industries” (Nieborg, Poell, 2018: 4275-4292).

In the context of culture, digitalization, and audio content, Dario Llinares, Neil Fox, and Richard Berry analyze podcasting, evaluating it as part of the “New Aural Cultures and Digital Media” (Llinares, Fox, Berry, 2018).

John L. Sullivan delves into the various facets of podcasting, focusing on its technological, software, and business dimensions. He investigates the role of digital platforms in podcasting and explains their influence on its structure, content, and management within the context of business and industry. Sullivan explores the transformative impact of platforms on podcasting, analyzing how the three primary functions of media-related platform services - storage, discovery, and consumption - not only affect producers but also shape the audience’s experience. Through his research, the author draws conclusions regarding audience consumption patterns, clarifying some of the structural characteristics of platforms that contribute to industry consolidation (Sullivan, 2019: 1-7).

In the realm of technology and law, Linn Johnson and S. Grayden conducted research on podcasts and concluded that they are “distinguished from other forms of digital audio-video content”, and must seek answers to important questions related to “intellectual property and copyright, podcast preservation, podcast location, and podcast standards” (Johnson, Grayden, 2006: 205).

Jonathan Sterne, Jeremy Morris, Michael Brendan Baker, and Ariana Moscote Freire analyze the intricacies of podcasts, categorizing them into three groups: A. Podcast creation and uploading process, B. Ensuring the podcast's discoverability online (which is typically automated), C. Downloading and listening to the podcast. They also delve into explaining the distinctions between Podcasting and Broadcasting, examining the shifts in radio operations, and draw the following conclusions: “Podcasting is not an alternative to broadcasting, but a realization of broadcasting that ought to exist alongside and compete with other models. If broadcasting were a more generally available term, then perhaps we could begin to speak of our own broadcasts without sounding grandiose or pretentious”; “The point is not endless celebrations of individuality in computer culture”. and “At its best, it has certainly already contributed to the weird diversity of audio out there in the world.” (Sterne et al., 2008).

The review reveals that podcasts are analyzed from various perspectives, including their creation, integration into the media ecosystem, software and platforms used, their role in business and industry, changes in audio content, and their impact on culture, particularly media culture. Rather than being categorically viewed as a mere extension of radio shows or segments, podcasts are recognized as a distinct form of digital audio content creation and distribution. This has expanded to include video and

even multimodal content. While traditional radio maintains its place within the media ecosystem, podcasts created by non-journalists contribute to shifting attitudes, perceptions, and expectations among virtual audiences who engage with this content.

There have been analyses of celebrity podcasts spanning from 2003 to 2023, employing various study methods. Jasmyn Connell and Christopher Moore present findings from their examination of the online persona associated with the Australian satirical comedy podcast *Ja'miezing*, created, directed, performed, and produced by comedian Chris Lilly. Their study explores the five dimensions of the persona - public, mediated, performative, collective, and value - integrating insights from podcast research to gain deeper insights into the distinctive characteristics and practices of digitally and virtually represented personas within podcasts (Connell, Moore, 2003: 1-21).

Kaliym A. Islam conducted research on podcasts in the context of employee training in business and discovered that organizations can utilize podcasting to enhance workplace performance (Islam, 2007).

Lewis Edward Mackenzi analyzes a selection of 952 scholarly podcasts spanning from 2004 to 2018 within the context of global production. He compares them with other types of podcasts and draws conclusions that scholarly podcasts are predominantly audio-based, with less video content. Mackenzi's findings suggest that podcasts contribute significantly to academic communication in virtual environments and to university education, fostering the advancement of open science by providing accessible resources for education and self-learning (Mackenzi, 2019: 1-19).

Maria Rae examines podcasts from a distinct perspective by selecting some of the most popular ones and seeking intersections between them: "Podcasts and political listening and more specifically what is the role of sound, voice and intimacy in the Joe Rogan Experience"; the author also explores the role of sound, voice and intimacy: podcasting's potential to challenge mainstream media (Rae, 2023: 180-189).

After observation, a conclusion can be drawn that podcasts represent a significant phenomenon within the media ecosystem. They are actively reshaping it and exerting influence on society while becoming integral to popular culture. Podcasts offer continual opportunities for cultivating digital literacy, fostering creativity and entrepreneurship. Moreover, they contribute to elevating the visibility of individuals who value communication as a means of self-positioning, empathy expression, and facilitating the exchange of experiences and knowledge, as well as giving and receiving advice.

In the current article, the author provides descriptive definitions without claiming exhaustiveness. These definitions are crafted for the purpose of this publication.

A podcast is defined as a versatile media genre and communication channel, continuously evolving and updating, and exhibiting diverse formats, some of which are non-homogeneous:

- Audio or video content presented as a product and stored in a file published on platforms.
- An audio or video file featuring dialogue, interviews, conversations, performances, or a blend of informational elements with reports and surveys.

- An audio or video file showcasing monologues, sharing opinions, dispensing expert advice or recommendations within specific fields.
- Audio or video content aimed at sharing professional and personal experiences, presenting diverse perspectives or opinions, and representing various community positions.
- Audio and video content designed to be available online, intriguing and influencing audiences' attitudes in a non-intrusive manner and attracting them to subscribe or follow based on interest.
- An audio or video file containing important or useful information presented in an engaging and accessible manner, often blending technical terminology with colloquial language.
- An audio or video file produced using digital tools, software, and applications, published on relevant platforms, and accessible for online listening or viewing, or downloaded to personal devices like computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc.
- An audio or video file meant to be listened to or watched once or repeatedly by virtual audiences.

Podcasters, whether journalists, media outlets, individuals, businesses, institutions, or NGOs, create audio or video content published as a file or product (generated by software in a compressed format) on platforms enabling web distribution. A podcaster may work alone or as part of a team comprising professionals, experts, or volunteers engaged in the entire podcast creation process, from conception to distribution. In this context, creativity and entrepreneurship are key components of the podcaster's professional profile.

From a practical standpoint, **podcasting** is a complex activity involving knowledge and experience from various domains: media literacy, scriptwriting, technology, content processing, digital marketing, business management, and more. It's important to differentiate between podcasting and other forms of online content creation like blogging, vlogging, or social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, which may serve as distribution channels for finished podcast products.

The review of publications also derives the concept of a **media ecosystem**.

Richard Holliman analyzes the development of a dynamic digital media ecosystem, shifting from traditional communication to a landscape characterized by conversation and confrontation. "Developments in digital technologies relate closely to emerging social practices. In turn, these are influencing, and are influenced by, the political economy of professional media and user-generated content, and the introduction of political and institutional governance and policies" (Holliman, 2011: 1).

Ethan Zuckerman examines the media ecosystem and summarizes: "The complex relationships between user-generated social media and professionally created news media are best understood as a complex media ecosystem with its own emergent behaviours that only become visible when studied from a perspective broader than considering a single medium in isolation" (Zuckerman, 2021: 1495).

Kate Starbird investigates the alternative media ecosystem through the lens of Twitter and the results of the analysis conclude that "...the emerging alternative media ecosystem and provide insights into how websites that promote conspiracy theories

and pseudo-science may function to conduct underlying political agendas” (Starbird, 2017: 230).

Schäfer and James Painter, use the concept of climate journalism and analyze its role in a changing media ecosystem. Their study assesses the production of news related to climate change worldwide and demonstrates that the roles available to climate journalists have diversified, transitioning from “gatekeeping” to “curating” roles (Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

Antonio Lopez in his book “The Media Ecosystem. What Ecology Can Teach Us about Responsible. Media Practice” (2012) provides an interpretation of the state of media in the present and outlines potential opportunities for its development in the future; he combines options for combining achievements from two different fields: media studies and ecology; the author introduces the concept of “organic media practitioners” and concludes that it is important to be aware of the impact of the media on the environment, as well as to be aware of the interdependence of the media and the economy on a global scale, and the interconnection between the media and culture (Lopez, 2012).

The term **media ecosystem** has a distinct manifestation in theory and practice. Over time, there has been a persistent effort in researching and validating the media ecosystem at a scientific level, achieved through conceptualization and the enrichment of research methods. Recognizing the valuable contributions of scholars and aligning with their perspectives, it can be assumed that the media ecosystem possesses a complex nature. It is not static in terms of quantity but evolves in response to various phenomena and processes within the media, including digitalization, technological advancements, software development, changes in the media market, enhancement of professional skills, legal regulations, codes of ethics, and more. Technological advancements play a significant role in reshaping the media ecosystem and its management, thereby fostering new forms of creativity. Consequently, media ecosystems are dynamic and necessitate analysis not only within geographical dimensions but also across the vast landscape of the internet, encompassing online media, blogs, social networks, podcasts, virtual forums, and echo chambers.

Materials and Methods

The analysis focuses on podcasts in Bulgaria from January 2021 to December 2023, created and implemented by various entities such as media outlets, journalists, business organizations, cultural and educational institutions, etc. However, the study does not delve into the podcast audiences and their funding. Instead, it primarily relies on data regarding online listenership and viewership, as well as any available feedback or evaluations.

Fifty podcasts, established before or during this period, were carefully selected. This selection process involved a combination of researcher observations and secondary analysis of information obtained from websites disclosing podcast details or related charts.

The hypothesis posits that podcasts function not only as a medium but also as a business and a communication channel, serving as a model that combines information

dissemination with the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and news. This multifaceted role is seen as a product of media, digital, and communication literacy.

Methodologically, an interdisciplinary approach is employed, encompassing media, genre, and discourse analysis. *The media analysis* aims to understand the podcasting ecosystem, including its emergence, development, funding, distribution, platforms, software, creativity, and business elements. *The genre analysis* seeks to categorize podcasts based on various criteria, such as audio or video format, monologue or dialogue, new formats, performances, and hybrid variants. *The discourse analysis* involves examining podcast names, messages, logos, slogans, rhetorical techniques, presentation styles, promotional expressions, web writing peculiarities, linguistic features, and positioning strategies for personal branding or knowledge promotion.

This section of the article provides a concise overview of the three types of analysis employed in an interdisciplinary study of podcasts in Bulgaria. To ensure clarity and transparency, each type of analysis is introduced in the section preceding the main study.

The website <https://podcastalot.com/> provides a platform for checking podcasts, fostering transparency, credibility, and virtual community creation. As of March 2024, the database contains 653 podcasts and 35,217 episodes. The number of active podcasts was 370 in 2021, 324 in 2022, and 248 in 2023, with a corresponding episode counts of 8,970, 8,465, and 6,037, respectively.

Various attempts have been made to rank podcasts, including models based on viewership or listenership, as seen on websites like <https://topcast.bg/?p=693> and <https://kakovonauchih.com/spisak-s-balgarski-podkasti/>. Personal ratings for podcasts can also be found on websites like <https://thriftsheep.com/2020/11/13/liubimi-podkasti/>.

The selection of 50 podcasts, presented in Table 1 (see Appendix), is based on predefined research objectives, covering criteria such as name, subject matter, podcasters, hosts, production, audio or video content, and funding sources (e.g., projects, outsourcing, crowdfunding).

Results

Results of Media Analysis

Media analysis is inherently complex, as it seeks to identify the creators and distributors of podcasts as a media product, along with their thematic orientation, production methods, and funding mechanisms. The analysis also examines emerging phenomena such as crowdfunding, outsourcing, promotion, digital marketing, and advertising, as well as the processes of brand building and reputation management. From a media perspective, these elements are explored in relation to the specificity of the podcast format, the media market, and the broader media ecosystem.

There are limited analyses of podcasts in Bulgaria, with notable contributions from scholars such as Genika Grigorova on podcasts and music in Bulgaria (Grigorova, 2019: 290-318), Stella Angova on theoretical aspects of podcasts

(Angova, 2020), Desislava Antova on media podcasts (Antova, 2021: 178-198), Ilia Valkov and his team's analysis of academic podcasts in Bulgaria and across Europe (Vakov, Minev, Lozanova, 2021: 52-79), Ivanka Mavrodieva's examination of podcast features in Bulgaria (Mavrodieva, 2021: 7-18), and Justine Toms' publication of a book on podcasts (Toms, 2022).

Media analyses primarily focus on studying the emergence and development chronology of podcasts in Bulgaria, exploring aspects such as funding, distribution, platforms, software, post-production, creativity, business elements, and their contributions to media evolution, identifying phenomena and trends.

Podcasting in Bulgaria commenced in the second decade of the 21st century, with a surge observed between 2014 and 2017. Despite some podcasts ceasing operations, new ones continue to emerge, resulting in approximately 250 active podcasts as of 2024. Several factors influence podcasting, including growing interest among journalists and professionals from various fields, advancements in technology accessibility and digital literacy, and the evolution of platforms and social networks. Moreover, increasing audience interest, particularly among virtual audiences, contributes to the sharing of expertise, narratives, and personal stories.

Podcasting integrates seamlessly into Bulgaria's media ecosystem, with a flexible approach allowing podcasts to coexist with public and private media or function independently as individual, corporate, institutional, or organizational media channels.

Podcasters can be categorized based on their backgrounds and roles. The first group comprises journalists employed in mainstream media outlets such as Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), and Bulgarian National Television (BNT), and private media like Darik Radio, bTV, Bloomberg TV Bulgaria, Investor.bg, Capital newspaper, and Manager magazine. These podcasts cover diverse topics and formats, characterized by high professional standards.

The second group includes former journalists who now engage in part-time roles or freelance work, hosting podcasts such as Freedom of Speech, Boulevard Bulgaria, No Filter, MindCast, and Limitless.

The third group consists of individuals from the arts sector, including singers, actors, writers, and poets, hosting podcasts like PodcI (ПодкА3) and The Career Show Podcast.

The fourth group is comprised of business professionals and executives, offering expert insights on podcasts like The Superman, Cold Shower for Managers, Women Speak Leadership, and content from educational institutions like Klet Publishing House and Znam.be – a Private Education Center.

The fifth group encompasses individuals with innovative and creative thinking, contributing to podcasts like Quiet, the Film Begins.

The sixth group consists of NGOs focused on science, sustainability, and success, such as Science.bg.

The seventh group includes psychologists hosting podcasts like Antonina Kardasheva and Madeleine Algafari.

There is an interesting example of publishing a book based on podcasts - "Cold Shower for Managers" by Plamen Pavlov.

Podcast topics span a wide range, including politics, economics, finance, business management, arts, sports, education, and science. Businesses have shown

increasing interest in podcasting, particularly in areas like economics, IT, digitalization, finance, and crisis management.

While cultural and artistic aspects are primarily presented by celebrities sharing personal stories, sports podcasts feature experienced sports journalists discussing current developments in sports. Educational institutions, albeit less proactive, are also producing podcasts, with notable contributions from private universities, NGOs, and educational centers like Science.bg.

Information regarding the funding and production of podcasts in Bulgaria was gathered through various sites, platforms, and social networks. The analysis of available funding information for podcasts revealed the following trends: only a few podcast creators disclose funding details, typically when they receive funding from programs or projects. For instance, the National Culture Fund supports the podcast “The Internet Speaks”, particularly its sub-branded series “The Artist Speaks” hosted by Margarita Dorovska (<https://www.govoriatist.at/>). Similarly, the book podcast episode 207, featuring Justine Toms, is supported by the National Forum of the Global Libraries Foundation - Bulgaria.

Additional funding methods such as crowdfunding, are emerging but are not yet widely adopted in Bulgaria. One such avenue is Patreon, where some podcasts offer opportunities for listener support. For example, “The Artist Speaks” podcast allows listeners to make monthly donations of BGN 5 (<https://bit.ly/hristopatreon>). Some podcasts, like Polifem Podcast and Katerina Vassileva, utilize digital marketing and advertising techniques, including microtargeting ([https://thecreators.bg/polifem - podkast-katerina-vasileva/](https://thecreators.bg/polifem-podkast-katerina-vasileva/)).

Moreover, “The Artist Speaks” podcast employs additional funding and attention-grabbing tactics, such as selling or purchasing unique collectible cards and offering membership to Discord Women Speak Leadership servers. These strategies serve as innovative forms of digital marketing, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among listeners. Collaboration and teamwork are also evident in these endeavors.

Crowdfunding in Bulgaria is still in its nascent stages, with Patreon being the preferred model for podcasts like “The Artist Speaks”, “Limitless”, “Karbovsky”, and others. Hristo Georgiev, for instance, utilizes Patreon for his Creative Life podcast (<https://bit.ly/hristopatreon>) with successful donation-raising attempts. Another podcast, 2x200, also utilizes Patreon for donations (<https://bit.ly/hristopatreon>).

Furthermore, sponsors play a role in funding established podcasts, often acknowledged during the podcast itself. Payment methods for donations typically include bank transfers, platform payments, PayPal, and Revolut. The production aspect of podcasting emphasizes clarity and transparency, with media outlets and companies indicating their involvement even when co-funding or supporting projects.

Comedy Club podcast stands out as an example of a comedy show developed spontaneously by its participants. Moreover, podcasts can be created by professionals from various fields, contributing to their heterogeneity across multiple levels including host and participant numbers, funding sources, production methods, and format variations such as audio, video, or duration and performance.

The podcasts analyzed exhibit heterogeneity in both content and topics, ranging from narratives of personal and business successes, challenges, and achievements, to

discussions of awards and recognition, negative developments in Bulgarian political life, and skepticism towards European integration. This heterogeneity is also evident in the diverse assessments and opinions expressed, resulting in a polyphonic media discourse across the podcasts. This is a noteworthy phenomenon, as it highlights the lack of uniformity in messaging, positioning podcasts as distinct, and at times, alternative communication channels.

However, there is insufficient evidence from the analysis to conclusively determine that podcasters are actively engaged in digital citizenship. Participants in these podcasts often present different, and occasionally alternative, perspectives. The production, recording, and distribution of podcasts occur within a competitive media environment, necessitating a combination of digital, media, communication, technological, business, and financial competencies. Podcasts integrate, in a heterogeneous manner, elements of the creative industry with entrepreneurial skills, corporate responsibility, charity, volunteering, and outsourcing.

Results of Genre Analysis

Christopher Drew presents the results of genre analysis in an article focused on educational podcasts (Drew, 2017: 201-211). Building on the methods presented, a comprehensive methodology was developed to identify the genre features of podcasts. These features include the introduction of episode topics, the announcement of issues, the presentation of participants, the inclusion of advertising content, and the structuring of episode conclusions. Additionally, the methodology examines key themes, scripted segments, the use of stories—particularly personal narratives—arguments, narrative flow, transitions, musical elements, visuals, promotional texts on platforms, and the use of slogans and appeals on social networks.

The duration of podcasts typically ranges from 15 to 60 minutes, with some episodes extending to 90 or 120 minutes, and exceptionally, as seen in *Comedy Club*, reaching up to 3 hours. Kitodar Todorov's live stream broadcasts also stretch to 2 hours. Broadcast frequency varies, occurring weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly. There is a drive for consistency in publishing schedules to meet user expectations and adapt to the nuances of the media ecosystem, particularly within the complex realm of podcasting, encompassing creation, distribution, and advertising.

Regarding the number of presenters and participants, certain trends emerge. The majority of podcasts are hosted by a single individual, such as *Superman* (Georgi Nenov), with rare exceptions featuring two presenters, such as *The Internet Speaks* (Vlado and Elenko), *2x200* (Tsvetomir Tsanov and Orlin Milchev), *Boulevard Bulgaria* (Asen and Sabina Grigorovi), or even three or more, as seen in *Comedy Podcast* (Vasil Nojarov, Nikola Todoroski, Ivan Kirkov). Similarly, the number of participants is typically limited to one, occasionally two. This pattern likely stems from the organizational structure of recordings, topic preparation processes, script development, storyboarding, and other factors.

In terms of format, podcasts are categorized into dialogue or monologue, predominantly featuring interview-style dialogues. *Ratio*, for instance, incorporates presentations and lectures on scientific topics, while others adopt performance or skit formats, exemplified by Kitodar Todorov's *Podcl. Comedy Club* stands out with its

inclusion of stand-up comedians and artists. Notably, Violeta Ashikova's podcast, Euronet – The Z Generation (Gen Z), adopts a professional approach, integrating interviews, reports, and commentaries.

Observations on audio or video file content reveal nearly equal distribution between the two formats. Technological advancements and platform versatility enable the publication and dissemination of both audio and video content. Popular platforms for podcast distribution include Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Pocket Casts, while YouTube remains the preferred video-sharing platform. Despite the potential, social networks such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn are underutilized for podcast circulation, although Facebook is gradually gaining traction. Distribution via mobile apps like Castbox, Overcast, and iTunes is also on the rise.

Many podcasts maintain their own websites, particularly those produced by media outlets. Thumbnails are prevalent among podcasts, enhancing recognition and attracting online engagement. Visuals are synchronized with content, often featuring the participants' faces, reflecting creativity and professionalism in digital content creation and management.

External organizations evaluate podcasts as parallel media products, recognizing their diverse roles. For example, in 2021, the Bulgarian Society for Public Relations lauded Katya Vassileva's podcast from the Bulgarian National Radio for its utility during the pandemic and beyond. Chart websites further signify the establishment of podcasts as a parallel form within Bulgaria's media ecosystem.

The results of the genre analysis reveal several key features of podcast introductions and content presentation. Introductions are typically concise, focusing directly on the topic, with a preference for straightforward disclosure. Participant introductions are handled in one of three ways: first, the podcaster may present important facts from the participant's biography; second, the presenter may allow the participant to introduce themselves; and third, a combination of both approaches, where the podcaster provides an introduction followed by the participant's additions.

Closing remarks in podcasts vary in style, often resembling aphorisms or concise statements, and sometimes taking the form of messages or appeals, particularly when discussing current topics such as art, career, psychology, or personal development. Transitions between topics within the dialogue are casual and swift, with minimal return to previous topics unless for the purpose of clarification or addition.

A defining feature of the podcast genre is the integration and validation of personal stories, which are often presented as successes or failures, experiences, or testimonials. Another characteristic is the combination of personal stories with arguments drawn from professional experience, frequently accompanied by advice and recommendations. A third feature is the use of narrative; however, there are still limited successes in developing complex plots, particularly when presenting historical or current events in fields such as art, public relations, or business.

Musical elements are appropriately employed at the beginning and end of episodes, and occasionally between segments, with transitions handled elegantly. Advertising slogans are notably brief and encourage audiences to watch or listen to podcasts on various platforms or social networks. Another confirmed specific element is the use of text on platforms to present and promote podcasts. These texts are often paired with timelines or podcast logos and typically include a summary of the

podcast's content, along with an introduction of the participant or key questions addressed during the episode.

The voice of the podcaster or host in audio and video podcasts, particularly when they have a background in journalism or public speaking, plays a crucial role in establishing a favorable and relaxed atmosphere during the dialogue. The analysis indicates that podcasters typically avoid creating genre-level hybrids by mixing natural voices in recordings with artificial voices or voice-overs. In Bulgaria, the podcast genre, whether in its dialogic or monologue formats, is characterised at the non-verbal and paralinguistic levels by a moderate tempo, clear articulation, frequent pauses, melodious phrasing, and radiophonic quality.

A distinctive feature of podcasts is their functionality as cross-media formats, demonstrating considerable flexibility and adaptability in their content updates to align with the preferences of listeners and viewers. Maintaining and enhancing audience engagement necessitates dynamic adjustments at the genre level, particularly in the style of dialogue within podcasts. This dialogue is increasingly characterized by a more elegant, casual, and positive tone, while simultaneously embracing polyphony.

Results of Discourse Analysis

The methodology employed in this study utilizes an adapted version of the critical discourse analysis (CDA) model developed by Teun A. van Dijk (Dijk, 2015: 466-485). This analysis primarily focuses on the key propositions articulated by van Dijk, specifically the relationship between discourse, domination/power, and dissent, and how these elements are manifested through text and speech (Dijk, 2015: 467). Additionally, the study adopts van Dijk's conceptualization of CDA as a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to connect discourse and action with knowledge and society (Dijk, 2015: 467). The methodology also considers the work of Rafli Akram Kurniansyah and Rachmi Kurnia Siregar, specifically their publication "Critical Discourse Analysis on the Podcast 'Putusan MK: Palu Hakim Patah Berkeping'", which, although it operates within a different political and social context, offers relevant insights (Kurniansyah, Siregar, 2023: 316-322).

The critical discourse analysis in this article is conducted along two main strands. The first strand aims to elucidate the communication strategies employed in discussions related to contemporary events across national, regional, and global contexts. This includes the sharing of personal and professional experiences, business achievements, and advice on prosperity, well-being, personal growth, and spiritual development. The second strand focuses on examining the methods used to promote personal experience and establish authority in media discourse, particularly through narratives, personal stories, and examples that combine personal experience with argumentative language, especially within the context of podcasts. The table presents the distribution of podcast types and topics. Discourse analysis indicates that in podcasts focused on political topics in Bulgaria, the region, and globally, experts and politicians (Freedom of Speech, Politically Incorrect, Translation on air, Boulevard Bulgaria, Darik Café) often present viewpoints that diverge from those found in traditional media. A critical tone is evident at the linguistic level, with participants combining technical terminology with ideological language, semi-formal expressions,

and the use of idiomatic expressions, phrases, and metaphors rich in expressive content. In podcasts centered on science and education (Sceince.bg, Practical Ecology, You and Science, For Teachers), participants demonstrate respect for both scientific traditions and innovations, while simultaneously presenting knowledge in accessible language that avoids communication barriers. Cultural and artistic podcasts (The Artist Speaks, Pop Culture, Quiet, the Film Begins) tend to feature casual dialogue, with a prevalence of personal stories, examples, and informal language. Podcasts on personal development, success, public relations, and psychology (How to Grow up?, Emotional Intelligence. Recipe for Development, Authenticity, MindCast, Limitless, Success without Limits) frequently incorporate personal narratives and deliver recommendations in an articulate and refined manner. In sports podcasts, the discourse is characterized by concise speech, short sentences, and a focus on facts such as dates, names, achievements, and competitions. Polythematic podcasts (The Internet Speaks, Comedy Club Sofia, 257, The Superman), on the other hand, display heterogeneity in language, subtopics, transitions between topics, and the inclusion of examples and arguments drawn from various fields. Podcasts serve various purposes, including sharing personal experiences, disseminating business knowledge, cultivating personal branding, offering self-help guidance, raising awareness of political, cultural, and artistic events, and supporting education or self-education (Cold Shower for Managers, One Thing in Mind, The My Wallet).

The results of the discourse analysis indicate that dialogues or interviews in podcasts typically follow either pre-prepared questions and scripts or a semi-structured format, with complete improvisation being rare. In most cases, participants receive either scripts or at least conversational guidelines. A characteristic feature of podcast discourse is that the host not only asks brief questions but also expects detailed responses from the guest. The podcaster prepares thoroughly on the topics and engages in both prepared and spontaneous reflections without dominating the conversation or adopting a didactic tone. The communicative roles remain that of the leader and guest, yet there is no significant distancing between them. Occasionally, the dialogue is interrupted for calls to action directed at listeners and viewers, such as requests for support, subscriptions, or sign-ups, but these interruptions do not drastically disrupt the conversation. Such appeals and addresses to the audience typically occur at the end of the podcast.

A distinctive feature of podcast discourse in Bulgaria is the often semi-formal nature of the conversation, where polite forms of address (such as using “you” formally) and titles are rarely used. Instead, participants frequently use personal names, and sometimes surnames, particularly in podcasts involving cinema, literature, media, or sports professionals. This shift alters the media discourse from formal to semi-formal, and from strictly academic to emotionally enriched or connotative, as seen in discussions on business, finance, management, and women in business (Women Speak Leadership, Voice of Capital, Investor, Bloomberg). Figurative language, including comparisons and metaphors, is also a component of podcast discourse; however, complex symbols or allegories are avoided to prevent communicative barriers, especially for virtual audiences, as seen in podcasts about literature. Humor is present in the media discourse of podcasts but is free from vulgarities or low-register language, as exemplified by the podcast “Kitodar” and “To

To.” Jokes and anecdotes are also part of the media discourse, with some being in dialect, but generally, the podcasts adhere to standard Bulgarian language norms.

Another aspect of the discourse analysis is that podcasters model behaviors and present social norms within society. Although indirectly, they influence the formation of public opinion to a certain extent, but not significantly. The critical stance of podcasters, as revealed in the analysis, represents various societal groups but does not necessarily establish lasting virtual communities. Indirectly, podcasts contribute to the development of media literacy and digital media culture within a dynamic media ecosystem, without dismissing other media forms but rather comparing them on professional criteria. Consequently, podcasts subtly influence and transform public discourse by introducing important topics presented by experts in an informal and unscripted manner, rather than through official or commissioned content. This process enriches societal discourse on various levels.

Discussion

The podcast remains a prominent media genre, often created by journalists employed across various media platforms such as television, radio, online newspapers, and magazines. However, podcasts are also produced by journalists who operate independently of specific media outlets, establishing their own virtual platforms or media channels. Additionally, specialists and experts from diverse fields contribute to podcast production, aiming to inform, share news and knowledge, convey personal experiences, offer advice, and provide recommendations. This diverse range of contributors fosters a reevaluation of paradigms and an analysis of dynamics within both the media ecosystem and the business landscape, ushering in flexible organizational schemes within the labor market, human resource management, and the evaluation of human capital, particularly within the media sector.

Discussions surrounding podcasts often touch upon issues such as copyrights, journalistic standards, technological and technical norms, and methods of podcast dissemination. This underscores the need for interdisciplinary research spanning the realms of media, business, law, management, human resources, and marketing. Future research endeavors may delve into technical, ethical, and communicative aspects of podcasting, analyzing various platforms for publishing, archiving, storing, and distributing podcast content in both audio and video formats. Moreover, podcasting has the potential to evolve into a creative industry, influencing social and cultural landscapes as an integral part of media culture.

Conclusions

The hypothesis that podcasts function not only as a media platform but also as a business and a specific communication channel has been largely confirmed. In Bulgaria, podcasts contribute to establishing a model that combines information sharing and experience sharing, resulting in a product that reflects media, digital, and communication literacy. Furthermore, podcasts have been found to contribute to a

paradigm shift in business, integrating crowdfunding, outsourcing, freelancing, volunteering, philanthropy, digital marketing, and micro-targeting of web visitors - listeners and viewers, among other strategies.

The analysis provides grounds to conclude the heterogeneity and diversity of podcasts in Bulgaria based on various criteria such as podcasters, topics, episode duration, script organization (dialogue or monologue), and publication format (audio or video files). It was observed that the total number of podcasts did not experience exponential growth from 2021 to 2023; by 2023, there were approximately 250 podcasts with about 6000 episodes.

From the analysis of information available on podcast websites, platforms, and social networks, it was noted that only a few podcasts disclose funding results, which typically come from project sponsorship, national and international institutions, donations, advertising, online crowdfunding (e.g., Patreon), and volunteering. Financial income specifics were not established as part of the survey. Additionally, podcasts are produced by both media entities and individuals across various fields. These two production methods are not seen as antagonistic; instead, they are reshaping the media ecosystem, outlining elements of a creative industry. Flexible organizational schemes for podcast production and the involvement of individuals in creation, processing, and distribution are being developed. Podcasters are predominantly freelancers and self-starters, with organizations less frequently involved in podcast creation and production. Few podcasts are created and produced by business organizations, academics, and cultural institutions.

Consequently, podcasts play a crucial role in the media ecosystem, rapidly evolving in production and distribution. There is evident self-regulation and competition among podcasters as well as against traditional media outlets.

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Appendix

Table 1. Podcasts in Bulgaria: Titles, Podcasters, Types, Funding

topics - spheres	title - name	podcasters creators producers editors	audio video content	funding donation support
policy	Karbovski, Freedom of Speech	Martin Karbovski	video	donations sponsors
	Politically Incorrect	Peter Volgin	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
	To To	ToTo musician artist	video	donations
	Translation on air	Poli Paunova	audio	Free Europe Radio
	Restart Europe	Bulgarian National Radio	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
	Boulevard Bulgaria	Asen and Sabina Grigorovi	audio	self-financing projects donation
	Darik Podcast – Darik Cafe	Journalists and media team	audio	Darik Radio
	Euronet – Generation Z	Violeta Ashikova	audio	Bulgarian National Radio – Euronet
economics finance business management	The Voice of Capital	Capital Newspaper	audio	Capital Newspaper
	Investor	Team and Asparuh Iliev	audio	Investor.bg
	Bloomberg	Ivaylo Lakov	audio	1. Bloomberg TV Bulgaria
	One Thing in Mind	Economic.bg	audio	Economic.bg
	Women Speak Leadership	Aneta Savova	audio	Impact Solutions
	My Wallet	Journalists Team	audio	Manager Magazine and Ludi Ars
	Cold Shower for Managers	Plamen Petrov	video	Equinox & Partners
culture and arts	Pop Culture	Bulgarian National Radio	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
	The Artist Speaks	Margarita Dorovska	audio	crowdfunding donations
	PodcI (ПодкА3)	Kitodar Todorov and Angelina Hadgidimitrova	video	self-financing donations company
	2&200 podcast	Tsvetomir Tsanov and Orlin Milchev	video	crowdfunding digital marketing
	Quiet, the Film Begins	Webcaffe Media	audio	Webcaffe Media
	Art Detective	Simona Krasteva	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
	No Filter with Patrashkova	Kristina Patrashkova	video	subscription donation
science	Sceince.bg (Hayka.br)	Petar Teodosiev	video	donation projects
	You and Science (a podcast about objects)	Diana Uzunova	audio	donation projects
	Practical Ecology	Daniel Kostov	audio	donation projects

	The Orator of the 21st Century	Scientists, journalists, PR experts	audio	Institute of Rhetoric and Communications
	Ratio podcast	Team and scientists	video	Donations volunteers
education	About the Important Things	Klet and team	video	Publishing House
	Radio and TV Center	Students and Justin Toms	video	New Bulgarian University
	For Teachers	Team	video	Know.be (Znam.be, Знам.бе) SMS
psychology	Emotional Intelligence. Recipe for Development	Antonina Kardasheva and Diana Uzunova	audio	self-financing company
	How to Grow up?	Madlen Algafari	audio	self-financing company
	Authenticity	Georgi Yordanov	video	project crowdfunding
philosophy religion astrology esotericism	Truth.bg (Истинага.бг)	Theodor Nikolov	video	self-financing
	Limitless	Eli Alexandrova and Zhivko Krastev	video	self-financing donation
image, PR, celebrities personal development experience sharing	MindCast (MindКаст)	Nely Hadjiyska	video	self-financing donation
	The Ultimate Podcast	Iva Ekimova	audio	self-financing
	2. The Career Show Podcast	Alexander Kadiev	video	self-financing
	Success without Limits	Chrissy Noeva	audio	self-financing
sport	Podcast about Sport	Sports journalists	video	bTV
	Darik Radio Sports Show	Sports journalists	audio	Darik Radio
	Kick Strike – Tennis Podcast	Lili Goleminova Lubomir Todorov	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
polythematic	The Internet Speaks	Vlado and Elenko	audio	projects crowdfunding
	The Superman	Georgi Nenov	video	sponsors
	Comedy Club Sofia	Vasil Nozarov, Nikola Todoroski, Niki Bankov and Ivan Kirkov, Nikolaos Tsitiridis, Hristo Radoev, Christian Terziev	video	Comedy Club Sofia and Club Sofia
	The Comedy Club Channel	Ivan Kirkov	video	project crowdfunding
	Polifem – Creators	Katerina Vassileva	video	project crowdfunding

	The Book Podcast	Milena Nikolova	video	Foundation Global Libraries
	257 Podcast	Katya Vassileva	audio	Bulgarian National Radio
	Clash Cast	Slavy Panayotov	video	The Clashers

Nigerian Audience Views on Mainstream Media and Moulding of Public Opinion in the 21st Century

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The mass media have been long known to shape and mould public opinion in every human society. However, with the influence of web 2.0 technologies that have hugely affected journalism practice in the 21st century, this study investigated the extent at which mainstream media still mould public opinion in Nigeria. The paper was anchored on agenda-setting and media dependency theories as it investigated mass media's ability to mould the views of people on issues of public concern. Survey research design was used where multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selection of the samples, whereas the Australian Calculator was used to draw a sample size of (371), the questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The results revealed that, though social media and blogs have influenced public communication generally, the mainstream media still mould public opinion in Nigeria. This was revealed as respondents disclosed that in taking decisions, they believe and use more information obtained from mainstream media than information gotten from blogs and social media sites.

Keywords: *Information, journalism, mass media, masses, social media*

Introduction

There is a belief that mass media are the major public institutions that galvanise, refine, evaluate, and to a large extent define the opinions expressed by the people in every human society. It is through the media that the leaders and the masses get to know the public opinion and the slant of it in every nation at any given point in time. This is often chiefly achieved through “the agenda-setting prowess of the media,” (Osisanwo, 2022, p. 76). Being a profession that assembles, dissects and presents the divergent views of the people on any issue, journalism has been instrumental to shaping what is known as public opinion. Sometimes, in the process of performing their agenda-setting roles, journalists through the mass media stimulate the people to air their opinion on certain issues of public interest. They do not only provide the audience with the platforms for expression of views and counter views on any matter but they (the media) exert influence on what could stand as the opinion of the people. The mass media could twist and even

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thwart the aggregate opinions held in any society. That is the reason Bernard Cohen cited in Ohaja (2005) noted that the mass media may not always succeed in telling people what to think, but they could be succinctly successful in telling people what to think about. So, in Cohen's view, the mass media contribute subtly in guiding the psyche of the members of the public towards many things they can consider worthwhile to reflect.

Public opinion could be expressed on variegated matters bordering on multi-dimensional areas of human endeavours. That is captured in the submission that, all matters pertaining to people, "their welfare in political, religious, technological, socio-economical and other ways form the fulcrum of the mass media's regular reporting," (Edogor, 2018). Thus, from its inception, journalism has its thrust on coverage of anything in all walks of life. The coverage is not circumscribed to a particular area. The import is that as much as the ethics and legal requirements permit, journalism is expected to concentrate on human beings and what affects them regardless of their gender, race, tribe, religion, age, social, economic, or political status. The mass media could scrutinise and streamline the opinions of the people expressed in any or combination of those divergent areas. That is made possible as the media were the only or at least the cardinal social institution that play a significant role in moulding the views expressed by the people. In fact, "ever since the advent of the mass media, it has been assumed that journalists had a strong influence on the formation of public opinion," (Petersen, 2019).

Prior to the twenty first century, whenever one mentioned the term 'mass media,' the picture of magazine, newspaper, radio and television would easily come to mind. Before now, public opinion is seen as the views of the members of the public expressed through the outlined means of social communication. Also, those who are behind the production of the mass media contents are always known as their identities are not hidden at all. That time, journalism practice and those into the profession had an incontestable definition even in the views of non-journalists. However, with passage of time especially within the twenty first century, the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has altered series of things pertaining to journalism and mass media generally. The innovations brought by the ICTs did not only influence the processes of assembling messages or opinions for interpersonal and mass communication, they also influenced the media used in both of them (Edogor, 2008). That is evident in the observation that, "the traditional lines between media are disappearing. The internet has eroded the distinctions among media, thus merging them up into one," Oyero (2007, p.169).

With the availability of ICT devices and applications like blog sites and social media sites in the twenty first century, everyone could participate in the processes of assembling and delivering messages, information, ideas, etc., meant for public consumption. This inform the submission that, "we live in an age where media are seemingly ubiquitous and impactful, with mobile media, Internet connectivity, drones and video surveillance often bringing nonstop news and information to a public with an oftentimes thirsty appetite for news," (Pavlik, 2023, p. 223). Thus, individuals and non-human sources who were not hitherto used in the production of the contents of communication intended for public consumption can now gather

messages and deliver to a mass audience using the alternative media provided by the ICTs. The European Society of Professional Journalists (2004, p. 1) cited in Aja (2011) observes that the news and information from the mainstream media are being increasingly circumvented by mass media audience who use alternative media platforms as sources of getting messages. The popularity of the alternative media platforms has made it expedient that the extent the mainstream media could still determine or shape public opinion in the twenty first century has to be examined. That forms part of the matters this paper has attempted to provide empirical solutions to.

Statement of the Problem

In every democracy, the opinions of the people are considered essential to each branch of the government. This is essentially because the people ideally engineer the emergence as well as hold the power to dethrone or make any government to lose legitimacy in democracy. Thus, the legitimacy of every democratic government is dependent on the people's acceptance of the government and their policies. Public opinion could largely show when the people support the government or not. That is the reason every reasonable government strives to ascertain the position of the public opinion with regard to their administration or their policies. Also, governments make concerted efforts to ensure that their policies are endorsed by greater number of people in different strata of society. Through the instrumentality of public opinion among other ways, people's support to government policies and programmes could be measured and seen for relevant actions or reasons.

The mainstream media x-ray the government and showcase governmental agenda, plans policies and programmes to the people and elicit their responses towards any policy initiated by the government. These roles count for the premium value which many societies place on the mass media as the watchdog that watch over and relay the actions and the activities of the government to the masses. Perhaps, such watchdog role of the mass media could be clearly seen in Chapter II, Section 22, of *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended*, which states that, "the mass media shall at all times be free to...uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people." This provision by extension includes bringing the yearnings of the masses to the government which has the duty to cater for the collective interest of the people.

The foregoing shows that the Nigerian constitution places a sacred responsibility on the mass media as an institution known hitherto to be the radio, television, magazine or newspaper. However, in the twenty first century where there is a reportedly subtle usurpation of the works of the mainstream media by the users of alternative media sources (blogs and social media sites), the rate at which the mass media monitor the opinion of the masses and report to the government needs to be scrutinised. There are no empirical studies known to the researchers that have examined the ability of the mass media towards galvanization of public opinion in the twenty first century in Nigeria. Thus, this study investigated the

extent at which the people view the mainstream media in moulding public opinion in the present age where bloggers and social media users or influencers have provided alternative platforms for galvanization of public opinion.

Objectives of the study: The following objectives guided this study (1) To ascertain the extent at which members of the public accept the mainstream media as an institution that moulds public opinion in the twenty first century. (2) To find out if there are alternative means which the members of the public understand as other sources that mould public opinion in the twenty first century. (3) To determine whether members of the public believe that the Nigerian Government respected public opinion in the last eight years (2015-2023).

Research questions: This study was guided by the following research questions below: (1) To what extent do members of the public accept the mainstream media as an institution that moulds public opinion in the twenty first century? (2) What are the alternative means which the members of the public understand as other sources that mould public opinion in the twenty first century? (3) Do members of the public believe that the Nigerian Government respected public opinion in the last eight years (2015-2023)?

Review of related Literature

The researchers examined some useful previous literature that are relevant to this study in order to throw light to the key subject matter of the work. The literature was reviewed under some subheadings for easy comprehension. Also, two theories were considered and applied to the study.

Overview of Public Opinion

According to facts from recorded history, public opinion could be traced back to the 18th century when it was believed to have originated but not clearly as known presently. However, from that point, the crude perspective of what eventually became known as public opinion was formed. As expected, the nature of it by that time differs from what it is in the present century. This could be gleaned from the submission of Davison (2021, paragraph 9) who recounts that:

Although the term public opinion was not used until the 18th century, the phenomena that closely resemble public opinion seem to have occurred in many historical epochs. The ancient histories of Babylonia and Assyria, for example, contain references to popular attitudes, including the legend of a caliph who would disguise himself and mingle with the people to hear what they said about his governance. The prophets of ancient Israel sometimes justified the policies of the government to the people and sometimes appealed to the people to oppose the government. In both cases, they were concerned with swaying the opinion of the crowd. And in the classical democracy of Athens, it was commonly observed that everything depended on the people, and the people were dependent on the word. Wealth, fame, and respect – all could be given or taken away by persuading the populace.

One underlying fact from Davison's bird's eye-view of the origin of public opinion is that, it entails influencing the opinion of the crowd or people to offer support or to oppose an idea. In essence, public opinion is not expected to be the consensus of any particular group over an issue. It is expected to portray both the views of those who agree on an issue and the views of others who hold a sharp contrary view on the same issue in a society. So, public opinion encapsulates the divergent views of diverse members of a given society. In line with this view, MacDougall (1966) cited in Ukonu (2005, p. 101) states that "public opinion can be said to be the state of opinion in a public on certain issues or matters when there are differences as well as agreements. Public opinion is just the opinions of the members of a group plus their differences." It refers to the collective opinions of those who constitute the majority on a particular matter and those who hold the minority view on the same matter of public concern.

The bottom-line in the foregoing is that the issue where the opinion is expressed should be what members of the public have interests on or the issue that affects a greater percentage of the populace or their means of livelihood. Perhaps, the submission beneath better summarises the nitty-gritty of what public opinion entails as expressed by Ukonu (2005, p. 101) who argues that:

Therefore, the centripetal force within a public is an interest for all, upon which they may be divided or agreed in debate about them. If the matter does not concern the public, it is private. A member of NLC might have had a radically different opinion from that presented by the NLC as a body about privatization of the petroleum industry. This is the more reason such groups are not publics, and when the newspaper says public opinion, it should not be the aggregation of the voices of ASUU, NLC, political parties or health organisation...

In her explanation of public opinion, Hasan (2013) included the age distinction as a factor in the meaning of the term. Thus, she notes that, "public opinion is the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs held by the adult population," Hasan (2013, p. 124). By inference, this definition does not include the opinion of the teens as what would make up public opinion. In Nigeria particularly, where the constitution of the country recognises adults from the age of eighteen years and above, it implies that the opinions of students who would not be up to the age categorised as adults should not be taking into consideration in public opinion as Hasan (2013) posits. The exclusion of the views of children on what constitutes public opinion in the idea of Hasan (2013) would not stand as an acceptable standard across the world.

Thus, we do not share the age distinction which Hasan (2013) added in her explanation of public opinion. The reason is that, it is unfair to relegate the reasonable opinion expressed by children as what could count in the views of the public. It amounts to utter denial of children's right of expression which the contemporary world does not espouse because children have some essential needs that are paramount to their development. For instance, secondary school children could express their opinion on matters pertaining to their welfare in education or health related matters and that should be taken seriously and not be side-lined or discarded on the premise that they are not adults. Article 12 of the *Child Rights*

Convention (CRC) cited in Edogor and Okunna (2020, p. 93) provides that, “children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.”

In explanation of public opinion, Key (1961) cited in Davison (2021) states that public opinion as “opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed.” The famous MacBride Communication Commission corroborates the definition of Key (1961) when it emphasised that public opinion entails the opinion of all those who are not in the position of decision making in the society. “Public opinion is considered to be that of people outside the decision making process, external to the power centres, and differs from that of people who because of their specific position, knowledge and skills, are responsible for decisions. Therefore the individuals concerned have to contribute their voices to the issue in question,” (MacBride, 1981, p. 196).

The emphasis here is on public opinion being seen as the opinion of people outside the corridors of power. This is simply because literally the root word ‘public’ implies ‘the people.’ Strictly speaking, the term ‘public’ is referred to as ‘the electorate’ or ‘the masses,’ in the realm of political science. In mass media field, it could be seen as ‘the audience.’ All these refer to those at the receiving end of the actions of others who dish out policies, take actions that would have effect, or enact laws that could impact on others. So, it would be a kind of aberration to use public opinion in reference to those who occupy seats of power. Most often, the decisions and actions of the people who are in various positions to make policies that would affect the people or members of the public are what could stimulate reactions or responses that could be technically taken as ‘public opinion.’

Davison (2021, paragraph 1) sees public opinion as “an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community. Some scholars treat the aggregate as a synthesis of the views of all or a certain segment of society; others regard it as a collection of many differing or opposing views.” This explanation summarises the divergent views of some scholars who have tried to define public opinion as cited earlier herein. Many sociologists, political scientists and communication scholars have their distinct perceptions of what public opinion is. However, public opinion should reflect the views expressed by the people on a matter(s) that affect(s) them collectively or what affects a greater portion of the society. It is seen in a scenario where the crowd or group of people make expression of their opposition or position of support to a decision, action, policy, law, bill, etc.

Mass Media and Public Opinion

The media as an institution found in human societies contribute to formation of public opinion. They could equally determine the magnitude of permeation of public opinion in society and the likely resultant response to it. This makes the media an indispensable institution in shaping and defining public discourse. Be that as it may, some scholars have argued that each medium of mass communication captures the public opinion in accordance with what the

organisation believes as a corporate entity. Perhaps, Beniger and Herbst (1990, p. 212) narrate the view better in the observation that “within a separate and growing sphere of thought and behaviour, public opinion is what the monitoring system measures, and reality is what the mass media system reports – not by scientific or technical achievement but by institutional intent.” The import is that when properly measured, each media outfit’s intent towards swaying public opinion differs from others intent depending on what each of them pursues as a guiding principle.

The sovereign position of the mass media as the efficacious instrument that commandeer the majority view has not been hidden. Although the notion that the effect of the mass media on humans are likened to the impact of a bullet on the body has been repealed with findings of some studies, the power of the mass media to exert influence on any society has not been invalidated. “During the era of limited effects, several important ideas were developed that began to cast some doubt on the assumption that media influence on people and cultures was minimal. These ideas are still respected and examined even today,” (Baran, 2010, p. 368). This submission is akin to the observation of Ojobor (2002, p. 18) who notes that, “because of the known power of the media to affect the way people think and things, they were credited with incredible persuasive ability to change attitude and behaviour. It was feared that people did exactly what they saw in the media.”

The capacity of the mass media to influence society with a dependable information which people could use to take both group and individual decisions has been made known prior to now. For instance, Murshed (2014) cited in Ullah and Khan (2020, paragraph 3) clearly observed that, “media have become the supreme source of information which is held to be true at any cost. Thus, it gives license to the people who use mass media personally to shape the opinion of the people and thereby adversely affect the society.” Neuman (1979) cited in Okoro and Agbo (2003) observe that the mass media make people adopt common value on issues. In corroboration of the above submissions, Morah and Okunna (2020, p. 712) note that, “the media are not just channels but are also diverse environments that enable communications to occur; they may influence the meaning and sense of the information transferred.”

The role of the mass media in shaping the views of the people in politics particularly was admitted by Edogor (2018, p. 75) who notes that, “at least scholars have consensus that the media determine the extent of the discourse on politics.” Hasan (2013, p. 528) affirms that “it is the media through which people form an opinion...” Also, Neiger (2007, p. 311) succinctly avers that, “...communication scholars are in agreement that the elusive concept of ‘public opinion,’ those ‘pictures inside people’s heads’ (Lippmann, 1922), is influenced by the way events are presented in the symbolic reality of the media.” The views of the cited scholars provide at least the perspective of the mass media’s impact on what is referred to as ‘public opinion’ regardless of the differences in the definition of the term.

Mass Media Landscape of the 21st Century

Generally, the 21st century era is known as a period where there are multidimensional and unparalleled changes in the ways things are done prior to the century. However, the 21st century mass media landscape seem to have experienced the changes more than any other sphere of human endeavour. The ICT devices and software have transformed the channels of mass communication as well as the consumers. The 21st century mass media vista is characterised by the use of web 2.0 applications or technologies that allow media users to generate and share contents to individuals and groups including mainstream media outfits. In observation of the changes in the century, Ciboh (2005, p. 146) succinctly notes that presently, “anybody with a computer can now become a reporter, editor and publisher.” While corroborating the submission, Akpan and Nnaane (2011, p. 34) state that, “some of the latest mobile phones allow users to take still pictures or video clips. For instance, when breaking news occurs, people in the area can take video and still pictures, before the media arrive on the scene...”

In a nutshell, the technologies of the 21st century have provided rooms for the mass media to reach their audiences through multiple means and allow the audiences as well, to participate in the work of sharing information and messages to others. This uphold the idea of a communication philosopher, Habermas (2008, p. 70) who observes that, “free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Everyone can therefore speak, write, and print freely...” These developments have made public opinion process more complex than what it used to be over the years before this current period.

So, the 21st century era is a period of democratization of the sources of information assemblage and delivery. Thus, through the instrumentality of social media and blog sites, the mainstream media audiences could equally participate in the art and science of gathering and dissemination of messages, information, ideas and opinions to members of the public. The 21st century media milieu is characteristically where there are prevalent new forms of media devices that encourage self-publishing or reporting, which has made mass communication less sophisticated, very attractive with immediate feed-back as well as more audience-friendly. Even in the present era where the new media are in vogue, the mass media and the new media combine to help the people more avalanche platforms for expression of their views. So, the existence of the multiple means of communication expectedly is helpful for expressing of public opinion. This submission was better captured in the observation that, “public opinion is not fragmented. People who read news online identify the same issues as most important for improving society. This research provides empirical evidence that proves this, contradicting those who argue that the proliferation of online media leads to the fragmentation of society,” (Majo-Vazquez, 2017, paragraph 3). In the 21st century, the audiences’ use of social media particularly to participate in public opinion and information dissemination as well as the efficaciousness of the channels in reaching the audience are useful in moulding public opinion.

The new media bring their advantages or strengths in the news dissemination to public opinion formation. It was Onomo (2012, p. 38) who notes that social

media have become “widespread tools for communication and exchange of ideas, helping individuals and organizations with just causes to reach a phenomenally vast audience that could hitherto not be reached by traditional media.” Osahenye (2012, p. 52) captures the gamut of the influence of the social media by referring to it (the power) as the “unstoppable power of the social media.” This implies that social media or the new media extends the tentacles of the mass media in assembling the views or opinions of the members of society. “Social media have become a mainstream activity and have become a major mode of communication,” (Idakwo, 2011, p.23), so, they are sources of public opinion formation today. Given the extent of social media’s influence on other contemporary channels of communication, the 21st century mass media landscape could be referred to as the ‘era or generation of digital media.’

Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on agenda-setting and media dependency theories. The proposition that the mass media programme and determine the matters people could give attention in the society has been in vogue for a considerable length of time. That is the fundamental argument of the proponents of agenda-setting theory propounded by McCombs and Shaw in the year 1972. According to Folarin (2002, p. 75) “agenda-setting implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society.” Another mass media scholar Bittner (1989, p. 376) cited in Ojobor (2002, p. 18) observes that, agenda-setting theory is “based on the thinking that people receive information directly from the media without intermediaries and that reaction to such information was a personal or individual thing, not based on how other people might influence them.” The notion that the media command a very reasonable percentage of any issue the people give consideration or devote their time to debate, implies that members of the public could see the media as the influencers of public opinion. This is why agenda-setting theory was considered very apt to be applied to this study.

Also, there is a belief that mass media have become the reliable and powerful body which people rely on the contents of their messages. This idea captures the media dependency theory propounded by Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975). They “offered a view of potentially powerful mass media, tying that power to audience members’ dependence on media content,” (Baran, 2010, p. 369). The essential point here is that the scholars projected the mass media as powerful channels whose contents are dependable enough for the members of the public to take cognisance of the contents while taking their various individual or collective decisions.

Invariably, as concerns this study, it means that the members of the public who are exposed to the contents of the mainstream media would still value their offerings in what they (the mainstream media) project as public opinion. That is, if the mass media have consistently maintained publication or presentation of dependable information to the audience in various issues reported as public

opinion. This points to the idea of upholding the ethics of giving respect to public interest by mass media professionals.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this paper as the primary data used for it were gathered from the opinion of members of the public. The population used for the study is ten thousand, one hundred and ninety-eight (10,198), which is the total number of both academic and non-academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State as revealed by the Information from the Administrative Unit of the institution.

A sample size of 371 (three hundred and seventy-one) was obtained using online Australian Calculator from Australian Bureau of Statistics. For the stated population, the calculator gives the confidence level as: 95%, at confidence interval of 0.055001, with standard error of 0.02552 and relative standard error of 5.10. The population of the study was stratified into academic and non-academic staff. The academic staff under their union (Academic Staff Union of Universities) do not have a strict division(s) among their members unlike the non-academic staff union that divided their union along – Senior Staff Union of Nigeria Universities (SSANU) and Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU).

Nnamdi Azikiwe University has three Campuses where the Academic and Non-academic staff of the institution work. However, the researchers purposively chose the Awka Campus of the university as the greater number of the staff work there. The researchers used simple random sampling (balloting) to choose between the SSANU and NASU to be studied, and after the balloting, SSANU was selected. Similarly, the ASUU members were stratified into the 10 faculties of the university where lecturers are found. The researchers employed the services of 2 research assistants who were guided to distribute the instrument (the questionnaire) equally among the ASUU and SSANU members selected for the study.

Data Presentation

The researchers drafted and validated 370 copies of questionnaire that were administered for the study where the chosen sample size was distributed at equal proportion between the members of the Academic Staff of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) both of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Chapter. Out of the 370 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 10 copies were not returned. Thus, 360 copies were used for data collation and the data collated were presented on tables using frequency and simple percentages. The information captured about the respondents are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Respondents' Age and gender Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30 – 40	98	27%	Female	160	44%
41 – 50	92	26%	Male	200	56%
51 – 60	93	26%	Others specify	Nil	Nil
Less than 70	77	21%	Total	360	100
Total	360	100	-----	-----	-----

Source: The researchers' survey, 2023

The data on Table 1 show that the respondents are within the working class statutory age brackets of academic and non-academic staff in Nigeria as indicated by the information in column 1 of the table above; and the frequency as well as the percentages of their responses were presented on columns 2 and 3. Also, the information presented on other columns of the table show that the male gender dominated the staff of the university sampled. The researchers would not be able to infer the reason for the preponderance of the male population in the university's work force.

Table 2. Respondents' Marital Status and Educational Qualification

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentages (%)	Educational Status	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Married	202	56%	HND	61	17%
Single	128	36%	B.A/B.Sc.	85	24%
Divorced	02	0%	MA/M.Eng./M.Sc.	124	34%
Widowed	28	8%	PhD	90	25%
Total	360	100	Total	360	100

Source: The researchers' survey, 2023

The data on Table 2 above show that greater respondents are married and they were followed by those who are still single while there is an insignificant number (0%) of the respondents who accepted that they are divorcees. The insignificant number of the respondents indicating that they are divorcees points to the premium significance which Nigerians, nay, Africans attach to marriage as an institution. Though, the point has no direct bearing on the objectives of the study, it is necessary to highlight that many Africans strive to endure severe conditions in marriage instead of taking the option of divorce. Also, the insignificant number of the respondents with HND qualification could be attributed to the dichotomy which Nigerians place on HND certificates and university first degree certificates.

Research question one: To what extent do members of the public accept the mainstream media as an institution that moulds public opinion presently?

Table 3. Public's Opinion on the Mainstream Media and moulding of Public Opinion Presently

Question and Responses: To what extent do you think that mainstream media: radio, television, magazine and newspaper, still mould public opinion presently	Frequency	Percentage
No extent at all	22	6%
To a large extent	330	92%

No idea	8	2%
Total	360	100

Source: The researchers' Survey, 2023

The respondents accepted that the mainstream mass media still remain the institution that moulds public opinion as defined in the instrument used for the data collation in the study. This was revealed where greater number of them (92%) on table three above accepted that they are aware that the mainstream media help to bring the divergent views of members of the public together to form a whole called 'public opinion.' Thus, to a very large extent the members of the public are aware of the role of the mainstream media in formation of public opinion.

Research question two: What are the alternative means which the members of the public understand as other sources that mould public opinion in the twenty first century?

Table 4. *People's Views on the Alternative Sources that mould Public Opinion Presently*

What are other alternative sources that mould public opinion?	Frequency	Percentage
Market leaders/unions, Religious leaders: pastors and Imams	22	6%
Leaders of Professional Bodies/Unions and Community leaders	38	10%
New media: Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, blogsites, etc	287	80%
Teachers/lecturers	13	4%
Total	360	100

Sources: The Researchers' survey, 2023

The greater number of the respondents (80%) accepted that new media: Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, blogsites, etc are the alternative sources that contribute towards moulding public opinion in the twenty first century.

Research question three: Do members of the public believe that the Nigerian Government respected public opinion in the last eight years? This research question was used to elicit the views of the respondents on whether the immediate past government of Nigeria led by former President Muhammadu Buhari respected public opinion?

Table 5. *People's Views on whether Nigerian Government respected Public Opinion in the Last Eight Years*

Do you accept that the Nigerian Government respected public opinion in the last eight years (2015-2023)?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	331	92%
Yes	23	6%
No idea	6	2%
Total	360	100

Source: The researchers' survey, 2023

The respondents accepted that the Nigerian Government (2015-2023) under President Muhammadu Buhari did not respect public opinion in the eight years of the administration. This could be seen in the responses presented on table five above. The views of the respondents representing 92% of the sample showed that the administration had no regard for public opinion in the country.

Discussion of Findings

In the course of this paper, the extent at which members of the public accept that the mainstream media still hold sway in moulding public opinion was assessed. The respondents revealed that the mainstream media are still the institution that mould public opinion in Nigeria especially within the members of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University community. This finding partly corroborates the finding of Majo-Vazquez (2017) which found that “the conventional media that have online edition have a better reputation than the new digital media. That is, they are recognized more readily as authoritative information sources.” Perhaps, this may be attributed to the fact that despite the wide usage and popularity of the new media as revealed in the study of (Edogor, Jonah & Ojo, 2014); they are largely believe to be means of spreading fake news and misinformation (Ezeonyejiaku, Edogor & Odogwu, 2022). So, this finding points to the fact that even with the popularity of the new media, they are not rated much as the sources of moulding public opinion compare to the traditional media. In a nutshell, the import of the finding is that regardless of the influence of the new media on journalism practice, the mainstream media still maintain their relevance in galvanising the views of members of the public in Nigeria.

In addition, this paper also found that the new media have become the alternative sources that mould public opinion in the 21st century after the mainstream media. This could be obviously attributed to the whirlwind of changes which the new media have ushered into the hitherto order of things in the media sphere. This revelation is not farfetched as it is obvious in the twenty first century that as the new media have offered members of the public multiple options of receiving and sharing information and messages. The submission corroborates the view of Majo-Vazquez (2017) who observes that the online media sites have had a considerable impact on the internal dynamics of news and information production and dissemination. It should be noted that before the twenty first century, the mainstream media were virtually the only sources of receiving and imparting information and opinions.

Besides, with the availability and the use of other means of receiving opinions and information in the 21st century, this paper also, sought to find out whether other sources of receiving opinions and information have replaced the mainstream mass media in moulding public opinion. The result was that the traditional media have not been displaced in their position as the main source of shaping public opinion in Nigeria. This finding is partly in line with the views of Edogor, Jonah and Idowu (2014, p. 55) who opines that “no new form of mass medium had ever displaced the existing one prior to it.” Also, as regards the position of the new media in distribution of news and information in this present time, Majo-Vazquez (2017, paragraph 5) notes that the new media have brought a lot of changes yet they “have not eroded the central position of the traditional media in the distribution of information.” Even though there are more media and the news diets are more varied, there is still a broad consensus as to the issues on which public debate should focus. And these issues are determined by the traditional media’s agenda.” This observation still adds to the fact that the conventional media with

their online presence command the aggregate views of members of the public in Nigeria.

One of the results of the study shows that members of the public revealed that the Nigerian government under former President Muhammadu Buhari did not respect public opinion in his eight years rule. Perhaps, this revelation corroborated the stance of the *Punch* newspaper's editorial of December 11, 2019, where the paper decided to prefix Buhari's name with his military rank in the 1980s. Also, the same publication chose to refer to the Buhari's administration as regime. All these were decisions of the media outfit owing to their conviction that Buhari's government lacks respect for public opinion and disregard for rule of law generally, (*Punch* Editorial, 2019). This position of a national daily in Nigeria about the then sitting president of the country is one of the means to measure the ambiance of a government vis-à-vis its regard for public opinion. Considering the fact that this study has revealed that the conventional media still mould public opinion, it could be said that the view of the *Punch* newspaper reflects the views of reasonable portion of the Nigerian people on President Buhari' administration.

Conclusion

This paper conclude that even with the huge influences of social media or the new media sites, the mainstream media maintain their position in moulding public opinion in the 21st century within Nigeria. This is an indication that the status of the traditional media as the hitherto major force in galvanising public opinion has not been repudiated as media audiences have the new media sites as alternative sources of obtaining information. Also, based on the data used in the study, the researchers avow that there was government negligence to public opinion in Nigeria in the period under review in this study.

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