



CESC 2013

The Twenty-First Century, the Reign of Tabloid Journalism

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Abstract

The twenty-first century is the century of tabloid journalism. In Serbia, the number of scientific papers on this type of journalism has recently increased. Investigators of media and media markets are confronted with constant changes of their object of study. Besides the media contents which change daily, media technology, legislation and the audience are also constantly changing. This happens due to complex demands of the modern world. Some authors define the tabloid press as a form of commercial media culture created for profit and distributed in the form of goods whose products are going to sell well because of their factual popularity. As part of popular journalism, tabloidisation means creating the product which attracts the maximum number of customers. The emergence of such products which shocked the world by breaking with the conventions led to the creation of a new form of media literacy, whose celebrities replaced the old values of life and way of thinking, creating new models of identification and resonant performances of style, fashion and behavior. Since profit and not ethics is the deepest motivations of tabloid journalism, some authors of tabloids do not consider them among traditional print media, rather placing them in a separate category defined as "consumerist magazines". This subcategory develops rapidly and commercially, as this approach is based on the pursuit of erotic content, gossip and kitsch. As the topics of tabloids are processed, sensationalism is used: relevant contents, giving way to bizarre scandalous, or tabu subjects peek into people's privacy. The consequences are reflected in shaping the reader's view of world, entering virtual reality. Moving from a strictly populist media towards a completely different media, tabloid contents manipulate consciousness and create dependence. Since they have low professional level of journalistic processing, tabloid journalism unfavourably reflects on the promotion of genuine values.

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Peer review under the responsibility of the West University of Timisoara.

Keywords: tabloid journalism, virtual realities, print and electronic media;

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The media have enormous power to represent the main and often the only source of information on many important events and themes. They can define which events are important and the extent media consumers need to understand these events. Modern communication technologies and innovations such as the Internet and satellite broadcasters, drastically reduced the global information gaps, so that the rapid transmission of information is of crucial importance and greatly affects the demand of the consumers. Information is nowadays qualified faster than ever, causing discontent among supporters of the "slow" journalism: traditional reporting techniques (e.g. cursory reporter reporting, thorough checking of sources.) still apply. Current trend of tabloidisation in today's media, has caused an uproar among the media traditionalists, especially in the field of news and print media. Tabloids are small format editions with content easier, readers understand, quick to read, and even more quickly adopted. There are many opinions from which comes the word *tabloid*. On the one hand comes from the Latin word *tabula* - tabla and Greek *eidos* - form on the other hand is believed to have come from the pharmaceutical industry. Father of expression would be certain Henry Wellcome, an Englishman who, along with an American Silas M. Burroughs, in 1880. in London founded the pharmaceutical company Burroughs Wellcome & Co., and in 1884. registered, and 1889. began manufacturing-under the sign of Capricorn (*trade mark* of the company) - painkiller (*another painkiller*) called „tabloid“. Name is just any *trade mark*, and was the compound of the noun „tablet“ (*tablet*) and -oid suffix, what suffix „takes the form of something or something like that“ (from the Greek word *oeides*, „like“). Already in 1901. the term originated *tabloid journalism*, „since there are newspaper format divided into“ tabloid „size 17 x 11 inches (43 x 28 cm), the „broad Schiff“ (*broadsheets*), normally reserved for the newspaper „higher quality“ (*higher-quality journalism*), measuring about 22 inches (for us are „sheets“ of half a meter, or even more: a typical broadsheet format has a size of 29 x 23 inches or 75 x 60 cm), where the first such newspaper published in the Netherlands still 1618. and the so-called Berlin (*Berliner*) format (18 x 12 inches, 47 x 32 cm), which is a cross between the first two formats“¹. Since the first tabloid size or format appeared only in 1918. years, seventeen years after the term „tabloid journalism“, based on which we can not help but suspect that this is about something else: that the term *tabloid* primarily was tied at the time of its creation and expansion of journalism, communication: „This tabloid pharmacological effect has been readily transferred to the media, with the more literal meaning in relation to newspaper size at the turn of the century quickly giving way to descriptions of editorial and presentational style, which in turn were extended to non-print forms like television“²

The word „tabloid“ usually has a negative connotation, because it has become associated with poor quality content and techniques of unethical reporting. Some of the commonly used synonyms for the tabloids, „yellow press“, „soft news“, „infotainment“ (the modern term formed from a combination of information and entertainment - eng. *information* - information and *entertainment* - entertainment) and more often „newszac“ („news turned into a party“). The term *yellow journalism*, or *yellow press* is pejorative, as in Western cultures yellow or yellow color associated with feces and, indirectly, with what is cheap or even worthless. That is the term for a similar period as the term „tabloid“, namely the very end of the nineteenth century, and came as two U.S. label, namely the New York newspapers, in their conflict over the audience and circulation, and therefore money, which is lasted between in 1895. and in 1898. These were the *New York World* of Joseph Pulitzer (Joseph Pulitzer) and the *New York Journal* of William Randolph Hearst (William Randolph Hearst), and the name he gave the third list, *New York Press*, writing for the first two: „*We call them Yellow because they are Yellow*“³.

Freedom of the press, of opinion and expression are the foundation of any democratic society. The only thing it can not build the future of media, independent of any influence. Only when they are absent pressures from the political elite, powerful individuals and groups, public relations manager and similar companies spinning information, we can not hope true professional, objective and unbiased information. In transitional societies, critical and investigative journalism is marginalized, while the interpretation of the data is often carried out in accordance with the expectations of political elites, PR agencies, powerful advertisers, hidden interest groups and non-governmental centers of power. Model forms and ways of presenting figures, phenomena and processes in daily

¹ Milić, Novica (2010). *Provokacija kao komunikacija*. Beograd: *fmk*, p. 55.

² Cunningham, S. and Miller, T., with Rowe, D. (1994) *Contemporary Australian Television*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, apud David Rowe (2000). On Going Tabloid: A Preliminary Analysis, *Metro*, 121/122., p. 78-85.

³ Milić, Novica (2010). *Provokacija kao komunikacija*. Beograd: *fmk*, p. 60.

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