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# **Communication Strategies of the Media Elite**

Anastasiia BESSARAB<sup>1</sup>, Nataliia ZYKUN<sup>2</sup>, Valerii DRESHPAK<sup>3</sup>, Olha KVASNYTSIA<sup>4</sup>, Galyna VOLYNETS<sup>5</sup>, Tetiana ROHOVA<sup>6</sup>

### **Abstract**

The article examines the role and influence of the media elite in shaping communication strategies, political communications, and the editorial policies of corporate publishing. Given the current changes in the global media landscape, this research is highly relevant. This paper aims to identify the main characteristics and functions of the media elite, define the content and structure of ideas about media elites and their communication policy. The study employs an integrated approach, utilizing descriptive, analytical, and synthetic methods to present the theoretical and methodological framework. It also applies an interdisciplinary research method to examine specific features of media elites and their communication strategies. Analysis of statistical data was used to determine the popularity and frequency of use of various sources of information, as well as to assess the level of trust in the media elite among society. A semantic and stylistic method is

- <sup>1</sup> Psychology and Social Work Department, Faculty of Special Education and Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Municipal Institution of Higher Education "Khortytsia National Educational Rehabilitation Academy" of Zaporizhzhia Regional Council, Zaporizhzhia, UKRAINE. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3155-5474; E-mail: staicy@ukr.net
- <sup>2</sup> Department of Language Training and Social Communications, Faculty of Social and Humanitarian Technologies and Management, State Tax University, Irpin, UKRAINE. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9727-6190; E-mail: nzykun@ukr.net
- <sup>3</sup> Department of Journalism, Faculty of Management, University of Customs and Finance, Dnipro, UKRAINE; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9802-3769. E-mail: dreshpak.ucf@gmail.com
- <sup>4</sup> Department of Foreign Press and Information, Faculty of Journalism, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv, UKRAINE; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5364-5046. E-mail: olha.kvas@gmail.com
- <sup>5</sup> Department of Journalism, Faculty of Social Sciences, National University "Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic", Zaporizhzhia, UKRAINE; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1266-0578. E-mail: Volynec@ukr.net
- <sup>6</sup> Department of Journalism, Faculty of Journalism, Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhia, UKRAINE; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3615-2861. E-mail: tata zahars@ukr.net

employed to illustrate language resource utilization in media texts. The research establishes that media elites' structure and ideological guidelines significantly impact the style of political communications, communication strategies in the media, and the type, content, and meaning of contemporary media texts. The findings emphasize the evolving nature of media elite communication strategies in response to various factors, including technological advancements, socio-political shifts, and cultural changes. This underscores the importance of further exploration of their roles in transitional democracies and regions facing media challenges. This research provides a foundation for understanding how media elites align with other influential groups, their perspectives on national interests, and the potential implications for democratic processes.

*Keywords:* communication strategies, media elite, media text, political communications, media criticism, corporate publishing.

# Introduction

The modern media world is undergoing significant changes. First of all, the media elite are viewed as a phenomenon of influence on the actions of the ruling circles. Their communication strategy is to control, analyze, and evaluate the quality of governance, freedom of speech, and ideology of the ruling circles and systematically present their opinion in the media. Representatives of the ruling elite are not in a rush to voluntarily allow the media elite to influence political communications, society, and public opinion (Domhoff, 2009). However, government officials in the modern media space play the role of media commentators who can be perceived and act as public intellectuals from politics and business (Milner, 2014).

Moreover, the role of media elites is sometimes complemented by media magnates, who also belong to the category of status elites. This is an exciting trend in media development, where the media elite not only check the acceptability of elite politics but political elites themselves begin to shape the media space (Akimova & Akimova, 2022). They replace media-critical periodicals with their own narratives. This is just one of the many changes in the development of communication tactics in the media that require close attention from scholars (Bondarenko, Makeieva, Usachenko, Veklych & Lernyk, 2022).

Regarding the media space in the past and present, it is essential to remember the different natures of media texts. These texts can have different effects on the formation of public opinion and the patterns of media elites' influence. On the one hand, the narrative of power and political communications in the form of law, order, and propaganda rely on strength and legitimacy and are universally recognized (Zayed, Edeh, Darwish, Islam, & Stanislavyk, 2022). They sound concrete in

the form of media text. In contrast, media elites need analysis, commentary, and manipulation to gain the listener's voluntary consent and fully comply with the editorial policy of publishing.

The focus is on heroes of different ranks, social status, role in society, and functionality. However, they all act as units of a single media space in multiple media development strategies (Tribe, Janav & Grosenick, 2009).

Several studies on the rules of media elites' functioning have noted that appealing to media criticism as part of the editorial policy of corporate media outlets is a traditional aspect of media communication and journalistic discourse (Shytyk & Akimova, 2020). Moreover, this allows to present a political and public stance in a vivid and influential way. In fact, it enhances the manifestation of the actualized discursive content.

The study aims to identify the main characteristics and functions of the media elite, as well as to define the content and structure of ideas about media elites and their communication policy.

Based on the aim, the following research goals should be achieved: (1) to establish the structure of the media elite, their specificity, functions, and guidelines of the media elite communication policy; (2) to identify the main requirements for creating media texts in the elite press; (3) to determine the typology of media elites in terms of form, functions, content, and nature of editorial policy.

# Literature review

The main contemporary studies on the use of Ukrainian media identify their significant impact on the audience and the ability to program the reaction of consumers. Understanding the interaction of media elites in shaping media policy and criticism of the directions of modern media development is crucial for the theory and practice of communication strategies.

Some researchers focus on the practices of international cooperation, the contradictory multilateralism of media narratives, and political communications that are moving toward populist nationalism (Morse & Keohane, 2014; Lake, 2018). There are also issues of discovering and analyzing the mechanisms and forms of public support for media elites and the impact of such support on the financing, influence, and effectiveness of the media in general (Agné, Bes & Sommerer, 2018; Tallberg & Zürn, 2019). Negative assessments can destroy credibility, eliminate them from political discourse, and significantly hamper communication influence. They can even create regulatory pressure on a public figure, structure, company, etc. (Zürn, 2018).

As an active force of mass democracy, media elites play a key role and are highly influential. Therefore, some studies present the media elite as a group within which there is a competition for influence and for promoting their point of view and perception of legitimacy among citizens. The intensity of narratives in the media and the tone and nature of such messages are essential for shaping the audience's beliefs (Dellmuth & Tallberg, 2015). Media elites shape the attitudes of media consumers towards the government and society. Besides, the media provide essential clues for creating personal beliefs (Grigorescu, 2015; Lenz & Viola, 2017). Moreover, the ideas formed by media elites can program the editorial policy of corporate publications, the nature of media criticism in society, and the nature as well as the content of political communication. In general, they determine the strategies of society's development.

The study of media elites' influence on the formation of public opinion on the openness policy of international and state institutions is worth considering separately. For example, these include changes in the public relations of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the movement towards openness to civil society, and reforms in public communication (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2017; Dingwerth, Schmidtke & Weise, 2018; Ishiyama, DeMeritt & Widmeier, 2015).

Recently, scholars have turned to considering the mechanisms of granting legitimacy to certain realities and personalities or categorically denying and ignoring others (Binder & Heupel, 2015). The study of historical periods as objects of interest or "taboos" in the media has also revealed a lot of new things in the formation of communication strategies of media elites (Steffek, 2015).

Several studies have examined the research aspects of social communications: (1) the role of international research activities and the impact of media technological capabilities on it (Davcik & Sharma, 2016; O'Connor, Zhang, Honey & Lee, 2021); (2) stylistic means that determine the skill of discussion in digital media (Jadrian & Wooten, 2020; Nebojsa, Davcik, Cardinali, Sharma & Cedrola, 2021).

In recent studies, there have also been attempts to find and interpret new communication strategies of media elites, the reactionary policy of corporate publications, and their evaluation in various areas of media criticism. Particular attention is paid to the study of media elites' role in shaping the nature of corporate publications, as well as brand policy as a component of business success. This may also be a new shift in the modern media space (Lim, Kim & Cheong, 2016; Deutch, 2021). In the future, it is worth considering changes in the communication strategies of media elites and their impact on media criticism, as well as the formation of editorial policy of corporate periodicals in all their typological diversity.

# Methodology

The analysis of statistical data was aimed at evaluating and comparing the level of use of various sources of information in modern society. This analysis made it possible to determine which sources of information are the most popular among the population, as well as how often they are used. The comparison of these data helped to understand the place of mass media compared to other sources of information and how they are perceived by citizens. An analysis of the level of trust in the media elite and an assessment of the level of media literacy in society were also carried out in order to find out how reliable these sources of information are considered and how deep the population's knowledge of the media sphere is.

A comprehensive approach is required to study the main aspects and functions of the media elite, as well as to determine the content and structure of perceptions of media elites and their communication policy. In addition, this approach should be applied to the formation of communication strategies of media elites at the level of corporate publishing.

That is how the complex and multidimensional nature of the communication strategy of media elites can be understood. The problem is the correlation between different forms of elitism, influence, and how emotional, axiological, and rational components influence society. The theoretical and methodological framework of the study is based on the descriptive method, analysis, and synthesis. In this way, it is possible to give basic definitions, clarify the meaning of certain terms, and specify the main directions of theoretical research. The descriptive method made it possible to identify and describe the theoretical features and typology of media elites presented in scientific research. The structural approach made it possible to consider the media text and image as an integral functional structure, where all components correlate with each other and affect the quality of the research goal.

An interdisciplinary research method was applied to identify the specific aspects and functions of media elites and their representatives in modern media, society, and political communications. The possibilities of the interpretive method were used to analyse the images presented in the Ukrainian media, as well as to identify various forms and criteria of quality media texts. The interpretive approach helped to determine the content and ideological characteristics of the media text and its personality.

The research goal involved the use of an interdisciplinary method that helps to consider media elites as representatives of media discourse and participants in political communications. These people combine professional journalism, participate in society, and implement media communication strategies. This vision of journalism makes it possible to analyse additional problematic points.

The nature of the media elite and its influence on the development of modern communications requires an additional analysis of the extra-linguistic realities and discursive practices. In other words, it is the framework where media criticism is created and operates. Such research makes it possible to understand the choice and use of specific strategies, ideas, and stylistic resources dictated by the context, the nature of communications, and the social and informational components of the media. The analysis of the transformations of the media elite's communication strategy in modern Ukraine in wartime required the use of discourse analysis to interpret and reveal the internal politics of creating new narratives by the media elite.

The ideological basis of the media text is designed and functions as a persuasive type of discourse. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the discourse analysis guidelines. It will help to consider the specifics of the media elites' work not only as journalistic creativity or as a set of media texts but as a media critical given. This is a system, the implementation of communication strategies based on media technologies and social constructs.

The material for the analysis includes heroes, authors, and texts published in professional media (BBC News) and public journalism. It also includes the resources of television (reports by TSN and Espresso) and electronic press specializing in media criticism and corporate publications ("Media Criticism," "Detector Media," "Media Lab," "MBR" - Media Business Reports).

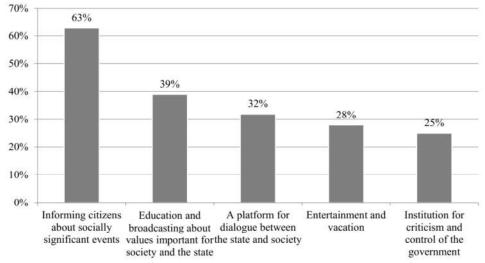
### Results

The role of mass media in the contemporary information environment is growing and diversifying, influencing the formation of a global perspective, comprehension of happenings and societal norms. Society-wide organizations are challenged to respond to the needs and expectations of a society that actively consumes news and information through a variety of media platforms. Hence, the examination of the prospects and expectations of the populace regarding the significance of mass media in society reveals a diverse range of concepts and prerequisites for these information structures (Figure 1).

The potential of the media and the role of media elites in shaping communication strategies for development in the socio-cultural and political paradigm of media operation can be presented through several basic concepts, positions, features, and development prospects.

First, the notion of media elites is closely related to the idea of elite media. Elite media are traditional and digital media that have a significant impact on the nature of communication, information, as well as social and political agendas of certain countries and the world in general. Such elite media include the BBC, CNN, New York Times, etc. The criterion of elitism is defined through the power of a particular media outlet to dictate the rules. By these rules, other media outlets should work, as well as politicians and civil society should communicate. In other words, the

communication strategy formed and implemented by media elites influences the nature of political communications, media criticism, and public opinion.



Source: compiled by the author based on (Media detector, 2021).

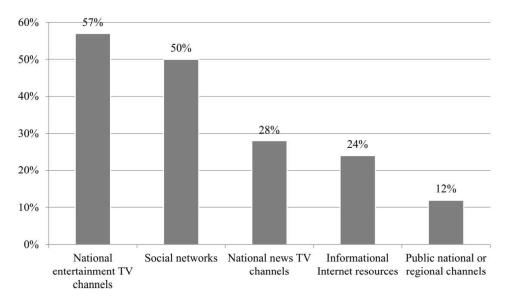
Figure. 1. Perspectives and expectations of the population regarding the role of mass media in society

The media elite is a small group of media industry figures belonging to the top management and top faces of the media. They determine the style, character, image, and overall editorial policy of the press. In addition, in the modern world, media elites play an important role in shaping public consciousness and influencing public opinion (Figure 2). People receive information through various sources: television, radio, newspapers, Internet portals, social networks and others. Researching the sources and frequency of information received by the population from the media elite is important for the analysis of its information preferences, trust and perception.

The communication strategies of the media elite consist of the use of marketing, commercial techniques, and media tools to broadcast and coordinate consistent and meaningful media texts and socio-political messages and promote ideologies. Such communications can be both internal and external.

At the level of implementing communication strategies, for the journalistic media elite, it is essential to be able to create aesthetic and artistic valuable content. This content is designed to form a convincing, clear, and understandable media text to create a compelling narrative in the field of media criticism. In fact, to implement a successful idea in media criticism, the key quality is persuasiveness and the ability to present the essence of the problem clearly. The essential criteria of quality media criticism are relevance, clarity, and harmony between the amount

of information and the volume of media text. From this perspective, one of the issues for media elites is to create the most effective and influential communication strategies, where media content should be of high quality, clear, convincing, and bring aesthetic and moral satisfaction to the audience. Elite media present such standards and models of media influence in such a way that unknown and unclear (but attractive to the audience) facts and issues are explained. They are shown by creating high-quality media text that informs, comments on issues, and offers solutions to problems.



Source: compiled by the author based on (Media detector, 2021).

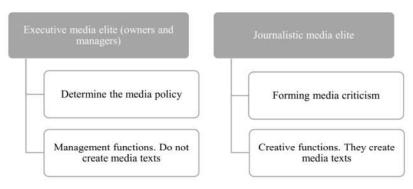
Figure 2. Sources of information and their use in modern society

Moreover, they can show a straightforward way to avoid the problem and implement the solution. In the end, the audience, the political elite, and society should preferably accept the proposed solution. In other words, they should change the picture of the world in the way that elites want.

It should be borne in mind that communication strategies in the media space are formed by loosely connected and sometimes significantly influential organizational hierarchies and groups of elites. First and foremost, these are the executive business elite and the journalistic elite. The first group includes owners, executives, and top corporate/public/state media managers, including publishers and shareholders. The forms of governance also shape the nature of executive media elites: commercial enterprises and non-profit organizations. The executive media elites do not directly produce media texts and do not redact news and analysis. However, they influence the nature of media coverage of certain narratives, shape the nature of political

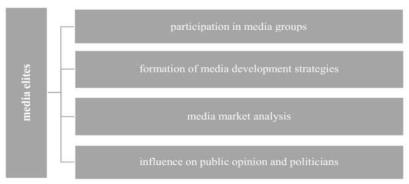
communication and corporate publishing policies, etc. This is an extensive range of influences, from increasing the budget to the formation of "topics" and the editorial policy of publications.

When it comes to the similarities and differences between commercial and business media elites, they remain two separate elite groups. In fact, their social influence is based on control over resources and, thus, has features of political and economic power. These particular representatives of the media elite, media owners, and media magnates control a significant part of the media market. They use their influence on symbolic resources and political decisions, promote their own interests, and put pressure on political elites and civil society. Such pressure is also exerted on executive media elites, state-owned and public media. Executive media elites are strategic, i.e., they determine the ways of media development and the nature of their influence on the government and society. Representatives of such elites are the heads of broadcasting companies and their leading sectors. In some countries, representatives of corporate bodies and media supervisory boards may be considered to be executive media elites.



Source: author's elaboration.

Figure 3. The typology of media elites by their form, functions, and content

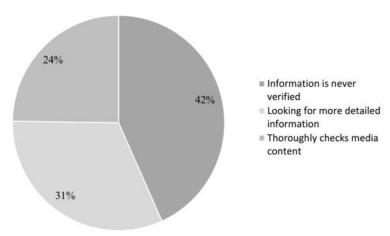


Source: author's elaboration.

Figure 4. Functions and characteristics of modern media elites

The current status of strategic elites, including media ones, mainly depends on the level and depth of control over symbolic resources. These resources can be transformed into political resources if the elite media work with them properly. The governing media elites perform administrative and business functions. However, they differ from conventional companies in the need to coexist and cooperate with the journalistic media elite.

The journalistic media elite is actually the face of the elite media. It creates their unique brand, an individual recognizable style, and the way they present information, emotions, and viewpoints on certain events. These are leading reporters, columnists, correspondents, analysts, and editors who create media content, media texts, and media criticism in an original, skilful, prompt, and regular manner. All this determines the political and social role of the media in society and the state. The responsibility for shaping the communication strategies of media elites also depends on the algorithm and nature of the selection, promotion, and production of the content. It should be noted that currently, the transparency and reliability of this content are ensured by Ukrainian media personalities quite well, because the population does not need to actively check or search for additional information (Figure 5). However, it is worth considering that, given the conditions of the spread of fake news and manipulation of information, increasing the number of people who check the authenticity of information can be important for strengthening trust in the media and improving information literacy among citizens.



*Source:* Compiled by the author based on (Media detector, 2021).

Figure 5. Trust in the media elite and the level of media literacy in society

Through a series of performed functions, the ruling media elites can shape a new reality. They are able to create new politicians in a new political communication environment. For example, in Ukraine, there is a tendency to create a new type of media hero as a historical and political figure. These changes in political

communications are determined by the political realities of the present and the past. The media reassess the life of society and the role of certain politicians, institutions, organizations, and historical figures. It is worth paying attention to those topics and types of political communication with a sharp topical sound and nominating the most significant influence on the history of the people and the country. For example, the story of Natalia Babeush ("Auntie Soup") is a new type of glorification and creation of a new image structure in the value system of the Ukrainian audience (Gromluk, 2022). Natalia Babeush is a true hero of Mariupol because she fed children with soup during the famine in the city's catacombs under shelling by Russian troops. This image of a woman guardian was actively disseminated in the Ukrainian media. The media elites presented it as a symbol of a female guardian, a protector of children.

In contemporary Ukrainian journalism, the media elite influences the nature of communication strategies regardless of the media type, forms and types of communications, and ownership. The Ukrainian media system is currently transforming martial law. The main features of this transformation are manipulativeness, patriotic pathos, polemics, and an active transition from traditional to digital media.

# **Discussions**

The theoretical basis for studying media elites' communication strategies involves considering basic social communications theories and their practical implementation in the global media space (Lazarenko & Nazarenko, 2020). Also, in modern humanitarian studies, the politics of media elites is studied in correlation with the activities of "media magnates" (Fowler, 2015). We should add to this list an approach to the formation of new communication strategies of media elites during the war. Today, the topic of war is widely represented not only by modern Ukrainian elite media and media criticism but also by world journalism. It is represented in analytical and informational genres, etc. In our opinion, the formation of new narratives and new types of political communication begins with Ukrainian journalism and mass media.

Several studies have emerged over the past few years (Ivanova, Mosenkis & Strokal, 2020). These studies examine the newest functions of media elites and the patterns of formation of strategies for the development of modern media through the prism of their assessment of media criticism. This type of media should be studied separately, and their experience should be introduced into educational practices, changing the nature of professional education. The research results have shown that turning to new contexts, images, and topics changes the rules of the media market. They have created new types of media elites and the nature of media texts. It requires a journalistic media elite that is conscious, has a clear public position, and is a helpful part not only of political communications but also of society.

In the future, we plan to study the typology and pragmatics of media text creation as an element of media policy in contemporary Ukrainian journalism. The potential for comparative studies, historical research in the field of journalism history, and a step-by-step consideration of the formation of media elites allows for the consideration of media narratives realized in diverse types of discourses and in different media.

# Conclusion

Communication strategies of the media elite are subject to changes due to the emergence of new technologies in the media, as well as historical, socio-political, and cultural changes. The functions and aspects of modern media elites include: (1) Representing the interests of specific media in media groups; (2) Analysing and forecasting media markets; (3) Formulating media development strategies; (4) Influencing public opinion.

The wide range of topics and problematic areas of media elites' research is so broad that only some components of the puzzle are considered at this point. First of all, this is an actual analysis of the activities of certain representatives of the business part of media elites, as well as reflections of world-famous editors and reporters on the development of journalism.

It is essential to note the strategic role of the media elite in determining the agenda, nature, and content of the narratives of the custodians and legislators of current issues in political information. Media elites remain the voices of public opinion. They are commentators and the "watchdogs" of governments. For this reason, it is important to continue researching media elites and systematize such studies.

We believe special attention should be paid to media elites and strategies for their development in transitional democracies and countries where the media are under pressure.

In the future, journalism research should take into account the full range and systematic nature of the media policy of corporate publications in transitional democracies and in Ukraine, which is currently in a state of war. It is also worth paying special attention to the perception of the media elite in society, its coordination with other elites, the development of communication strategies of the media elite from the national-patriotic standpoint, and the prospects for democracy.

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