

Journal of Media Business Studies – Special Issue

Call for Papers: Media Management in Times of War in Ukraine

Co-edited by:

- Anna Jupowicz-Ginalski, Dr Hab. Associate Professor, a.ginalski@uw.edu.pl
Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw/Poland
emma Board Member
- Castulus Kolo, Prof. Dr., c.kolo@macromedia.de
President of Macromedia University of Applied Sciences/Germany
emma President

Introduction: background and media studies

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was the transformative event for Europe in this century. It is as tragic for the Ukrainian population as it is significant for geopolitics and the world economy. The outbreak of this war has impacted every sphere of human life.

On a global level, it has reshaped the balance of political and economic power, leading researchers to associate it with a recurring Cold War or even an entirely new geopolitical era (Zięba, 2023). On the nation-state level, it had a substantial impact on societies. Europe and particularly the Central and Eastern European countries have had to deal not only with security issues but also with a massive influx of war refugees from Ukraine. The arrival of millions (primarily women and children) necessitated a plucky adjustment of immigration policies to unforeseen circumstances. Accommodating these refugees required enormous logistical, administrative, legal, financial, and social efforts. Furthermore, the countries that hosted the most significant number of refugees will probably face further challenges, such as harnessing the potential of refugees, ensuring inclusive decent living conditions, and combating anti-Ukrainian sentiments (Tymińska, 2023; Vydrov, Chupryna & Kotelnikov; 2023).

The war has impacted certain social groups and individuals on the micro level in very specific ways. This includes everyone involved in the war, from the refugees and their receiving families, via volunteers and non-governmental organizations to local governments. It is important to keep in mind that the consequences many face go far beyond their immediate physical and material (i.e. also financial) impact but encompass severe psychological effects, affecting their psychological well-being (Vintilă et al., 2023).

In the face of the invasion, the media have played a pivotal role. Most importantly they provided the information about what was and still is happening on the front lines and its consequences for the local population as well as the world at large (Rizun, 2021). Clearly, its accuracy and credibility differed – selecting the right sources always being a challenge for the individual as well as for the media professionals.

Considering the scale of migration, it is also essential to address the specific needs of refugees who seek news about what is happening in a war-torn country and information on everyday needs such as how to obtain assistance. Therefore, the media tried to respond with continuous updates (i.e., in Poland, since 2022, over 8.4 million war-related articles have been published in the legacy media and almost 54 million on social media; JSX, 2023). This ties in with an observation made by Eddy and Fletcher (2022), who claimed that in the first months of the conflict, the viewership of news media significantly soared.

The awareness of the wartime situation continues to persist, although it is evident that people started "looking for normality and comfort in everyday life" (Wirtualapolska.pl, 2022, p. 9). This is reflected in the media's attitude, as they attempt to cater to their audience while staying at the centre of events. As a result, they enrich their content offerings with elements of entertainment, culture, or education. This process unfolding before our eyes is a rewarding area for researching the role of media and its management in times of crisis to better understand its complex dynamics from an academic point of view and consequently also to make better decisions in the political realm based on the latter.

So far, researchers have focused on hybrid warfare topics, examined through disinformation and fake news (Erlich et al., 2023; Morejón-Llamas et al., 2022). Social media platforms, also playing a central role, are investigated as the source of news and support in general, but also more specifically as a means of distraction for refugees or an additional front line (Cheng, 2023; Kravchenko, 2022; Maathuis &

Kerkhof, 2023). Additionally, media content is being analysed with regards to polarisation (Demescuk, 2022) and integration (Krylova et al., 2022). Increasing attention is also devoted to how the media portray refugees (McCloskey, 2022; Zawadzka-Paluektau, 2022).

Media Management Perspective

Extant research on the role of media in Times of War in Ukraine focused mainly on content and its reception. This is understandable from the perspective of media's social responsibility and their impact on society. However, such perspectives are incomplete as even under these tragic circumstances, at least commercial media operate within a market framework (Terry, 2013), and also public media must comply to financial restrictions. This is ingrained in the media's economic function (Kowalski & Jung, 2008), with finances being just one of its aspects. Hence, media management offers an important additional perspective that views the media through the eyes of media companies, owners, managers, and employees. This encompasses topics related to the production and distribution of media goods and services, creating value, innovating business models, optimizing marketing, and by developing the roles and responsibilities of media professionals accordingly. Shifting the focus from media content analysis or the audience relationships to the analysis of stakeholder relationships within a managerial context appears to be an intriguing and vital additional perspective.

A valuable source of guidance and a starting point for research in this area could be the works of Dayan and Katz (1992) on particular events, demarcating "interruptions of routine". Katz & Liebes (2007) presented three types of phenomena: contests, conquests, and coronations. They are characterised by interrupting everyday media consumption, live broadcasting, mass audience integration, and the respective scripts. Over the years, a further type of media event emerged. As Liebes (1998) and Katz and Liebes (2007) stated, disasters are connected with tragedy, conflict, drama, surprise, and despair - encompassing natural catastrophes, terrorist attacks, or war. Sonnevend (2016), with his notion of global iconic events, emphasised a new type of media event, combining the phases of foundation, mythologisation, condensation, counter-narration, and remediation. However, these different types of media events have something in common: they break the routine of media schedules, understood as the "architectural framework" of the media offer (Świerczyńska-Głownia, 2017).

In this context, Jupowicz-Ginalska (2022) studied the media's management reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic – a hugely disruptive event given its scale, repercussions and long-lasting, tragic consequences. She identified several strategies: changes in the production process (e.g. changing job profiles as well as work organisation and the reorganisation of audience participation in programmes); suspension of production or broadcasting (e.g. of programs or commercials); modification of the existent offerings (e.g. changes made to the content or format, increasing number or extending of news programmes, multiplying news channels); introduction of new programmes (e.g. advisory, journalistic, sport, educational, religious, and entertainment programmes or documentaries); rebroadcasting; resumption of programme production; renewal of broadcasts; postponing the premieres, and the complete 'deletion' of productions.

Although the latter compilation of strategies during and in the aftermath of the pandemic can serve as a basis for analysing the media's managerial reactions to the war in Ukraine, given the scale and reach of the war, additional strategic decisions might have been taken across Europe and even beyond. Among them are special initiatives dedicated to Ukraine, for example, in the form of CSR activities of media companies, personal involvement of media practitioners in aid activities (volunteering, collections, public declarations of support), changes in branding, organisation of pro-Ukrainian events, making content available for free to Ukrainian citizens, orientation of recruitment processes towards Ukrainian journalists, bilingualism of media content, legal or self-regulatory regulations, etc. Despite the immediate, complex, and multifaceted managerial response of the media market to the war, there are no encompassing cross-sectional academic investigations based on comparative studies on media practice and its managerial aspects from different parts of Europe – whether on operational issues, (portfolio) strategy, organization and structure, leadership behavior, or corporate culture.

JOMBS Special Issue as a response

This special issue aims to explore, investigate, compare, and describe changes in media management at the national and cross-national levels in the aftermath of February 24, 2022. It encourages focus on strategic decisions and decision-making, operational adaptations, organizational change processes, related leadership, and tactical and operational implementations to understand reactions to future disruptive events better and prepare for them. By doing so, different parts of the European academic community shall be bridged by encouraging transnational cooperation and reinforcing solidarity-based collaboration between countries.

We look for papers with strong theoretical, methodological, and empirical foundations. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

1. *Media Policies, CSR and Grassroots Initiatives*

The goal is to study the media's reaction from three different levels: the media system (legislative & internal regulatory), organisations (media companies), and the individual (media workers) as well as their respective forms of social solidarity engagement. Did media legislative bodies and internal regulators respond to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 (and if yes, how)? Which CSR and grassroots initiatives of the media (goods, services, financial support, psychological and emotional comfort) can be found? To what extent can culture and geopolitical layers influence potential differences across media and countries? How do different types of media systems set different framework conditions and to which effects?

2. *News Media Management*

The goal is to highlight changes in managing the news, bearing in mind the legacy media (radio, press, television companies) and online-born platforms (websites, media profiles on social media, mobile communications, and so on). We aim to identify how the crisis forced media companies to modify their news production and distribution, considering each country's cultural context and society. The key is the identification and analysis of implemented changes. How did the war affect news production and distribution? Were these changes addressed in general or with regards to specific groups (e.g. children, seniors, refugees)? How does the war impact on news promotion activities (including self-promotion)? Were there any institutional solutions to combat fake news and disinformation?

3. *Entertainment Media Management*

The goal is to indicate changes in media's entertainment offerings regarding media as cultural goods and bearing in mind legacy media (radio, press, television companies) as well as online-born platforms (websites, media profiles on social media, mobile communications, and so on). It shall investigate how the crisis forced media companies to modify their entertainment and cultural offerings in terms of production and distribution through the prism of the cultural context and societal diversity of each country. How did the war affect media entertainment and the production and distribution of such cultural goods? Were these changes addressed in general or with regards to specific groups (e.g. children, seniors, refugees)? How does war impact the media's promotion activities (including self-promotion)? What were the media's entertainment and cultural events supporting Ukraine?

4. *Media Education*

The goal is to examine the reactions to the war by media education (academic and non-academic) at all levels (by associations, universities/faculties, researchers and students of communications and journalism). How did educational institutions (e.g. associations, universities /faculties) and their individual representatives (e.g. researchers, students, and doctoral candidates) respond to the war? How did requirements by individual media makers and media organizations change? Can any changes in the paradigms of studying media and communication be observed?

The different research perspectives and individual experiences of researchers from diverse European countries will allow us to document and better understand various methods and strategies for the ongoing geopolitical crises and societal tensions across Europe. Cross-cultural and international investigation of media management could have a significant theoretical and practical impact, not only helping us to

identify transnational media management patterns but also contributing to the potential development of policies for media management.

Calendar of the “Media Management in Times of War in Ukraine” Special Issue

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SUBMISSION DEADLINE HAS BEEN PROLONGED TO JUNE 30, 2024! The remaining dates might in result change accordingly.

- April 30, 2024: submission of papers
- Mid-May, 2024: editorial decision on rejection or reviewing the paper
- By end July, 2024: first round of peer reviews
- By end October, 2024: submission of revised papers
- By end of 2024: second round of peer reviews and editorial decision on rejection or accepting the paper; possibility of additional round of revision
- During 2025: publication of special issue; online publication of papers happens continuously after acceptance

Instruction for Authors

Please, note that the papers will undergo strict formal and substantive editorial and peer reviews. All necessary information about the submission process can be found here:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=romb20>

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