



Dariusz Krawczyk  orcid.org/0000-0003-1823-0309

d.krawczyk@olpress.pl

COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN OBTAINING INFORMATION BY THE MEDIA BASED ON THE OPINION POLL OF PRESS SPOKESMEN OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

Abstract

Presentation of the methods of staying in touch with journalists that are preferred by media relations specialists is the aim of the paper. The opinion survey dedicated to this issue was carried out in 2020 among all spokespersons for the municipalities forming the statutory separated Upper Silesian and Zagłębie Metropolis (Metropolis GZM). It was found that personalized communication tools such as e.g. personal e-mail (40%) or telephone conversations (22%) are most commonly used. Obtained results were compared with the results of analysis with 94% share of Silesian police officers authorized to provide information to the media. An assessment of social reach of disinformation and verification of perception of the effectiveness of publishing the corrections, as a way of responding to distortions in press materials, were also subject of the study.

Keywords: media relations, information policy, spokesperson, communication tools, disinformation

Introduction

Cooperation with the mass media is the subject of scientific reflection. The research problem is considered from the perspective of entities from the environment of media organizations that try to influence the content of disseminated messages. As a result of technological progress, media relations activities are currently based on the use of different innovative information tools for dissemination of information that usually use the potential of cyberspace. Despite implementation of state-of-the-art communication solutions, the essence of the process is based on reaching

with a properly prepared message to properly selected recipients, who undertake modifications and further distribution of the received content. The nature of the message delivered to the journalist, the choice of contact method or the scope of further relations depend on the specificity of the sender. Commercial economic entities take care of mass media interest in their own way, while big monopolists, political parties or state institutions treat it differently. Media relations are also an important issue for local governments. Aiming to shape a positive image is particularly relevant in their information policy, what results, among others, from the impact of earned reputation on electoral decisions. Effective cooperation with journalists to provide the media audience with messages desired by broadcaster requires specialist knowledge from the spokespersons and experience gained in practice. A research project addressed to spokespersons for the municipalities and cities with poviat rights forming Metropolis GZM was carried out to obtain data on effective methods of keeping relations with mass media.

The conducted research enabled to determine the communication tools preferred by public administration spokespersons and their opinions on the situation on the media market. Correlating the results with data obtained from police press officers and journalists during the study made it possible to detect differences in perception of these issues.

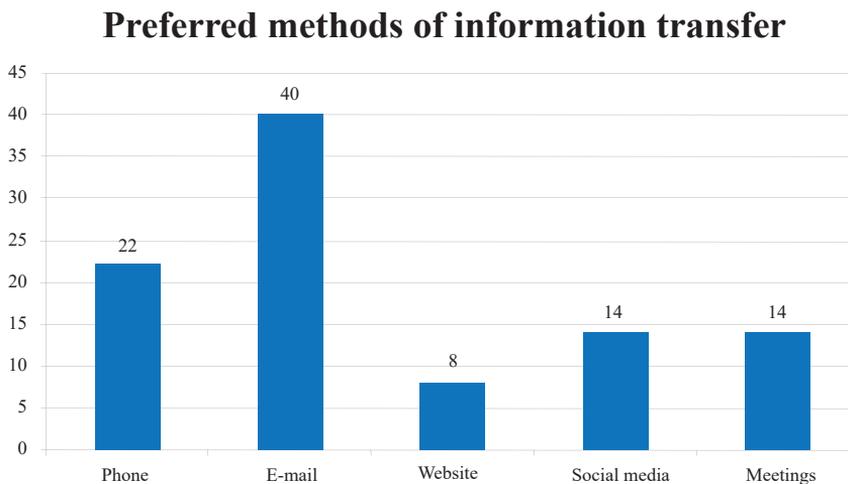
1. Use of communication tools in relations between spokespersons of local government units and journalists

Analysis of perception of communication tools enabling optimization of relations with the media environment was carried out in a separate research field which was Metropolis GZM. The first Polish metropolitan area, consisting of 41 municipalities with strong functional connections, was formed in the Upper Silesian conurbation in 2017 by the act *on the metropolitan association in the Silesian Voivodeship*. Spokespersons or officials responsible for contacts with mass media of all local government units forming GZM participated in the survey, which was completed in January 2020. The survey was carried out from 16th December 2019 to 31st January 2020. It covered the representatives of press services of all 41 municipalities that are part of Metropolis GZM, which at the beginning of 2020 was formed by: Będzin, Bieruń, Bobrowniki, Bojszowy, Bytom, Chełm Śląski, Chorzów, Czeladź, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Gierałtówice, Gliwice, Imielin, Katowice, Knurów, Kobiór, Łędziny, Łaziska Górne, Mierzęcice, Mikołów, Mysłowice, Ożarówice, Piekary Śląskie, Pilchowice, Psary, Pyskowice, Radzionków, Ruda Śląska, Rudziniec, Siemianowice Śląskie, Siewierz, Sławków, Sosnowiec, Sośnicowice, Świerklaniec, Świętochłowice, Tarnowskie Góry, Tychy, Wojkowice, Wry, Zabrze, Zbrosławice.

In the case when there was no spokesperson in a given office, due to the size of the commune or the specificity of the organizational structure, a person who, in accordance with internal procedures, was responsible for maintaining relations with media participated in the survey. An interview conducted in person or by phone with use of the questionnaire was the method of contact.

The survey showed that the professional activity of public administration spokesperson is closely related to cyberspace. A survey conducted among GZM press services revealed that e-mail is preferred tool that is used to provide information to journalists. 40% of respondents said that they send messages to the e-mail addresses of mass media employees. The second place in the ranking of the most popular methods for contacting the journalists was taken by a phone call, which was chosen by 22% of respondents. Such forms of distribution of messages as profiles in social media and organization of personal meetings (in both cases approx. 14% of responses) were placed by spokespersons on the following positions. Posting the messages addressed to reporters on the commune's website was the least frequently practiced way to maintain current communication relations with reporters (8% of responses).

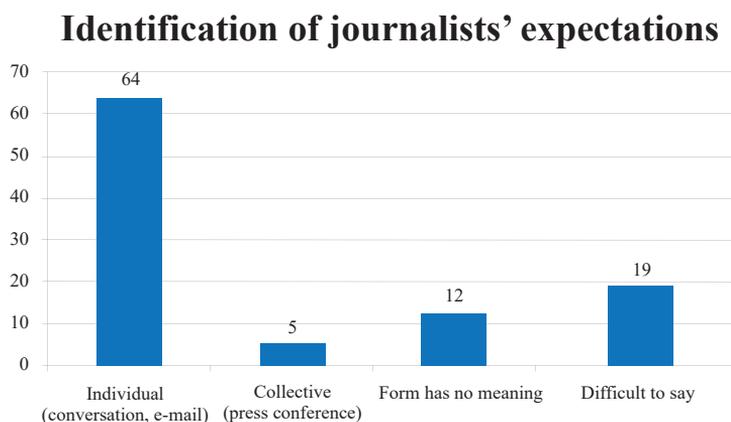
Graph 1. Communication tools most commonly used by spokespersons



Furthermore, perception of the role of individualizing the formula for dissemination of information between broadcaster in a form of public administration office and journalists was analyzed. The majority of spokespersons were for contact with selected journalist. As much as 64% of persons involved in the implementation of

the commune's communication strategy preferred to talk directly to the reporter, both by phone and in person, sending him text, photo or multimedia messages, using messengers or e-mail, but assuming that the journalist's personal e-mail address is used instead of general editorial e-mail address. Only 5% of spokespersons chose the method characteristic for collective contact with media employees, i.e. press conference. For a relatively large group consisting of 12% of the surveyed people the parameter of personalizing the message was irrelevant, unlike the content of distributed materials. The others did not have any views on the subject.

Graph 2. Journalists' preferences regarding the formula of information distribution in the opinion of spokespersons

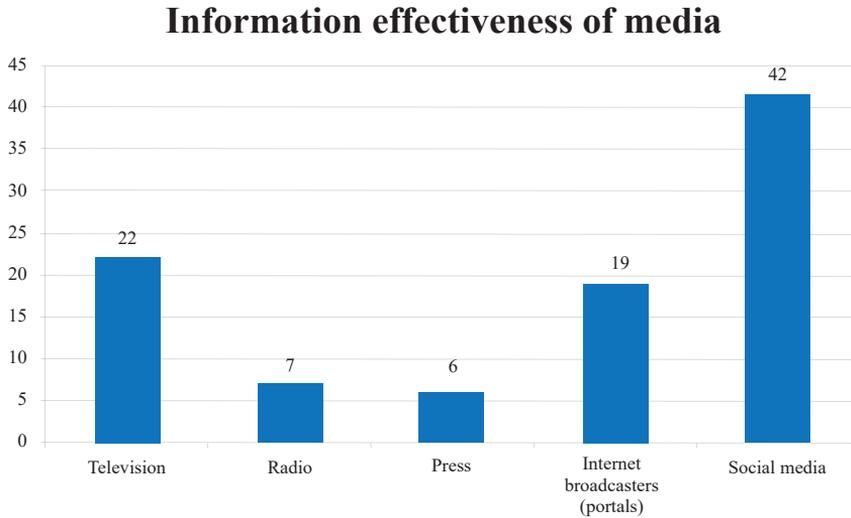


Determination which mass media, in the opinion of local government public relations practitioners, reach most effectively the recipients with the prepared message was also the aim of the research project. Social media, indicated by 42% of respondents, turned out to be the most effective information distribution channel. The next positions, with a loss of about half of responses, took television (22%) and internet portals (19%). According to press spokespersons, traditional mass media such as press and radio (analyzed in their classic formula, i.e. without cyberspace editions) had only supporting meaning (in the case of radio – 7%, and in the case of printed press – 6%).

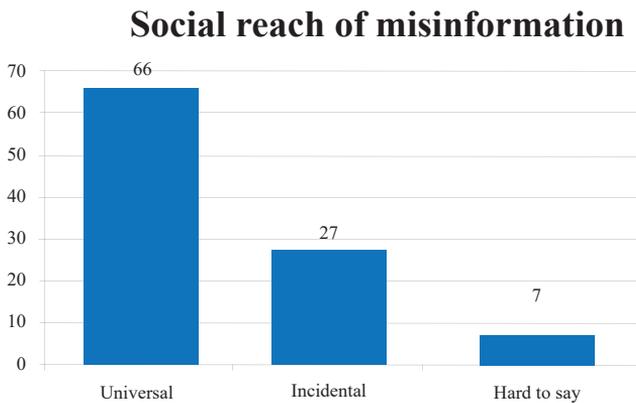
Attitude of officials representing local administration to the problem of making disinformation public is another subject to verification during the survey. Manipulation of reports published in mass media has taken the scale of a widespread phenomenon, according to the vast majority of surveyed spokespersons. 66% of respondents indicated *fake news* as a serious threat to both broadcasters and media audience. 27% of respondents had the opposite opinion, recognizing misinformation

in media in terms of incidental accidents. The rest of respondents were unable to express specific views on the intensity of the phenomenon.

Graph 3. Opinions of spokespersons on the effectiveness of providing information to recipients through specific categories of media market entities

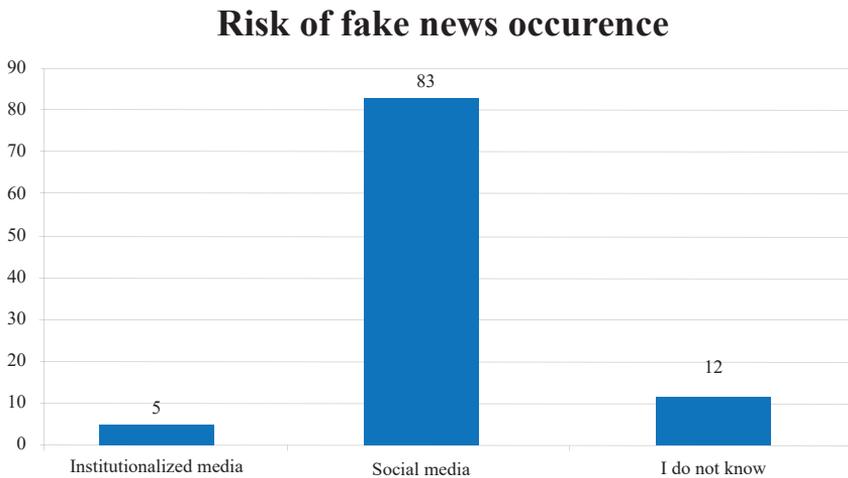


Graph 4. Spokespersons' perception of the scale of the phenomenon of fake news dissemination



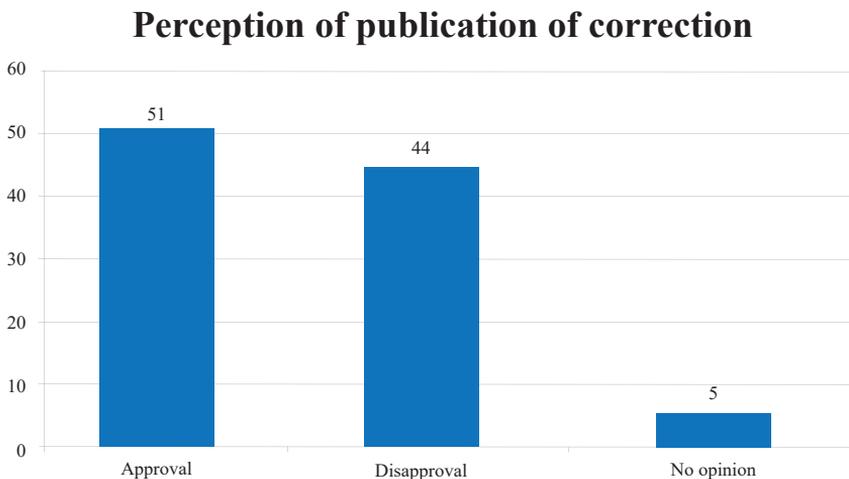
On the other hand, respondents achieved exceptional compliance in the field of channels of the most common distribution of lies, fabrications, distortions or materials from the sphere of black PR. As much as 83% of specialists from the information policy sector of local governments participating in the study identified *fake news* with social media. Only 5% of them were willing to admit that institutionalized media are equally often or even more often a source of misinformation. The rest did not express a specific opinion.

Graph 5. Spokespersons' assessment of risk of dissemination of misinformation by official media and social media



Publication of correction can be one of classic reactions to dissemination of false or inaccurate messages by mass media. Slightly more than half of participants of the research project (51%) expressed the opinion that it is actually a good, proven and effective method of responding to disinformation or manipulation of facts. 44% of respondents, noticing the shortcomings of this press law institution that outweighed the advantages, had the opposite opinion.

Graph 6. The level of spokespersons' approval regarding the legitimacy of using the correction



2. Differences in media relations activity of local governments' spokespersons and police press officers

The paper also concludes by presenting the differences in perception of communication tools and situation on the media market by police press officers and active journalists.

A study aiming at determination of preferred methods of providing information to journalists was conducted at the end of 2017 among press officers of police departments in the Silesian Voivodeship. Altogether about 94% of Silesian policemen, competent to keep in touch with journalists, took part in the research project that was conducted from the 10th October to the 15th November 2017. A comparative analysis of the obtained results allows to state that police officers choose telephone conversations with mass media representatives much more frequently than spokespersons of local governments (52% against 22% of responses). Policemen also willingly publish media relations content on the police website, treating this technique as an effective mean of communication (35%). In the case of local government this way of communication is practiced by few spokespersons (8%), focusing primarily on sending e-mails to individual e-mail addresses of specific journalists (40%) or publishing messages on social media profiles (14%). Techniques often used by spokespersons are not recognized by police press officers, only one in ten of which uses e-mails in relations with journalists, while the profiles in social media are used for that purpose even less frequently (2%).

A difference in specificities of activity of local government and police, which has at its disposal expected by media data from the field of criminal, economic, drug, organized, road crime, etc., is the source of differences in technical aspects of maintaining information relations. Press officers provide current information in the event of natural disasters, accidents and communication difficulties. They regularly

(...) provide comments, prepare press services, develop and share multimedia materials, organize press conferences, respond to criticism in media, etc. The scale and intensity of their duties probably places them at the forefront when it comes to workload among press offices of other services as well as institutions and commercial entities. At the same time, they work in special conditions, because most often they have information that are desired by mass media. Kindness of press officers towards individual journalists can even contribute to their professional success (Krawczyk, 2018, p. 91).

Mass media can also gain an advantage over competing editors due to efficient dissemination of messages obtained from press officers, who for this reason sometimes act in a more reactive manner than spokespersons of local governments. Municipal officials are forced to slightly more activity in order to interest journalists in their press materials. The nature of the transferred messages is also different. In the case of road accident the press officer calls the journalist cooperating with the police and provides only basic data, e.g. about the time, place, victims and probable course of accident. After arriving at the given address the editorial employee takes photographs and record movies by himself or gathers opinions by talking to accident participants and witnesses. The spokesperson for the municipality while forwarding information e.g. on the resolution of the city council is more eager – to the satisfaction of the recipient – to use e-mail to provide the complete content of the local law act. The journalist will then receive not only ready-to-use content, but also the justifications, attachments etc. that he is interested in. Therefore, selection of communication tools corresponds to the nature of the most widely disseminated messages and meets the requirements of communication process ergonomics.

The information policy of local government units covers a wide range related to the implementation of public tasks, as well as performing the functions of a leading body or ownership supervision structures. Hence, the municipality is responsible for the subjects typology of which creates a set of statutory own tasks, as well as those commissioned in the field of government administration, undertaken on the basis of agreements with specified entities and from the sphere of financial management accompanying these tasks (The catalogue of 22 own tasks is contained in art. 7 of the Act of 8 March 1990 *on a local government*). By providing the information of different nature the spokespersons for local governments, as well as police officers, are for journalists one of the basic sources of information about the events that are important for the local community.

However, local administration is sometimes perceived by journalists through the prism of political conditions. The municipal's one-man executive body, i.e. head

of the commune or city mayor, since 2002 has been elected directly by the residents (According to the Act of 20 June 2002 *on a direct election of a head of the commune and city mayor*). During election campaign the candidates make promises, form coalitions, transfer public support. Then, for the term of five years they manage the municipality (Changes consisting, among others, in extending the term of office from 4 to 5 years with the simultaneous introduction of a limit of two terms of office for one-person executive bodies of the municipality were included in the Act of 11 January 2018 *on amendments to some laws in order to increase the participation of citizens in the process of selecting, operation and control of certain public authorities*). Political activity causes that in some places there is a permanent rivalry between the persons that are in charge and the opposition. Such activities affect the way in which commercial media inform about the situation in a given municipality, for example by escalating the reports of more or less real negligence, irregularities, omissions or inefficiency reaching the journalists inspired by the opponents of current local authorities. Messages distributed in local government media, which in the current legal status are unable to effectively perform their critical function and often play the role of a “propaganda tube”, are the counterweight to negative press materials.

The allocation of public funds to maintain the media shaping the information policy of local governments in turn causes a wave of criticism from commercial media, which in addition to threats to freedom of speech perceive it as limiting their own influence. Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the municipality not only organizes the distribution of public information among journalists, but is also often considered a person responsible for creation of image of local authorities.

These are just some of the reasons for the disproportion in identifying police press officers and local government public relations specialists, despite their similar role consisting in maintaining relationships with mass media.

Differences in choosing the methods of providing information to journalists, however, were accompanied by opinions similar in both groups on the legitimacy of publishing corrections. 51% of spokespersons for the municipalities and 53% police press officers perceived corrections as the appropriate method of responding to distortions disseminated in mass media.

3. Perception of publishing corrections in managing social communication of the organization

Police press officers usually can afford a relatively high level of assertiveness in dealing with journalists. This is due to, among others, the nature of their service, where e.g. the good of pre-trial investigation should have priority over the expectation of providing exclusive information on the progress of the investigation. On the other

hand, in the case of revealing distortions in disseminated press materials it was natural for more than half of the surveyed policemen to use available tool in a form of corrections. The consequences of lack of knowledge, distraction or even conscious manipulation then burden mass media employees who are most often interested in maintaining further positive relations with press officers. The publication of correction formally finalizes the whole case.

Spokespersons for local governments are expected to be involved in the long-term process of shaping the communication relationships between local authorities and mass media. Therefore, high level of approval for use of this rather “repressive” measure, which is pointing out journalists’ mistakes and causing editorial acts of self-criticism, is a bit surprising.

The correction goes hand in hand with the constitutional freedom of speech, at the same time constituting its antithesis and complement. According to the law, at the request of the person concerned, “the editor-in-chief of the relevant journal or magazine is obliged to publish free of charge factual correction of inaccurate or untrue information contained in the press material” (art. 31a. of the Act of 26 January 1984 *Press law*). It is worth noting that lawyers conduct a doctrinal dispute about the essence of correction, which can be seen both as a tool for replacing objectively false content with statements referring to the facts, as well as a forum for subjective statement of the party mentioned in journalistic material. In the second concept “the principal function of a correction is to enable the person concerned to present his version of events and thus to implement the principle of *audiatur et altera pars*, nevertheless in court jurisdiction the concept of subjective recognition of correction seems to prevail now” (Judgment of the Court of Appeal in Warsaw of 10 November 2015).

It should be clarified that “the correction applies only to facts, while the answer mainly concerns assessments, although it may also apply to facts. Statements that are not corrections and do not respond to statements that threaten personal interests, but contradict the theses or arguments of the press material, are of polemical nature” (Judgment of the Supreme Court of 15 May 2008). So generally “the correction recognizes an important element in preventing the unilateral nature of the content transferred by the media” (Resolution of seven judges of the Supreme Court of 18 February 2005) although after the judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal in 2010 (Judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 1 December 2010) the editor-in-chief’s criminal responsibility for avoiding publication of the correction or reply was abolished. The provision was repealed

(...) due to the lack of a clear specification of what is a correction and what is the answer, as well as the lack of a clear indication of the obligatory refusal to publish them. It should be emphasized that the European Court of Human Rights did not question the admissibility of introducing a criminal sanction for not publishing the correction. It considered this to be an acceptable possibility of restricting freedom of speech (Czarny-Drożdziejko, 2017, p. 147).

The editor-in-chief when now making a decision regarding correction does not have to take into account the possibility of a criminal sanction, but only the editorial line of action in such matters (Legal status current in spring of 2020). Of course, in some countries (e.g. Sweden or the USA) there is a “belief that if a given medium regularly publishes corrections, this is a sign of its reliability. The myth of the infallibility of the press or television has long since become a thing of the past” (Janiak, 2010). However, this is not a universally binding rule. Therefore, clarifying the inaccuracies or answering the author after publication of the material, which is based solely on the applicable regulations may not be sufficient for effective management of information policy.

When analyzing the issue in terms of communication, it should be stated that demanding a correction can affect the relationship between a given organization and a media market entity. Such relationships are often consistently built in a spirit of mutual kindness, which results from long-term plans to shape the image – especially by entities in the competitive market of production, services or trade. Meanwhile, some editorials treat the publication of a correction as an admission of defeat, ambitiously understood defeat or a kind of invitation to escalate polemic journalistic activity.

Thus, depending on the nature of inaccurate or false information in press material, it is sometimes worth considering to undertake specific explanatory actions. They consist in thorough checking of the circumstances of the distortion. Direct contact with journalist, determining the reason for error and taking corrective and often also educational actions will help to solve the problem of not only one message (to which the journalist can apply “self-correction”), but – more importantly – will help to stabilize mutual contacts with the author in the future. In the absence of a will to obtain a mutually satisfactory agreement, there is always a possibility of intervention in the journalist’s superiors for a systemic explanation of arising misunderstandings. The editor-in-chief or the corporate governance bodies can be the next addressee of communication activities.

Whereas excessive focus on the pursuit for a literal enforcement of the rights can be harmful in the context of the overall understanding of the relationship between a given organization and mass media. Of course, each case should be analyzed individually, but if communication strategy assumes constant dissemination of the desired content through mass media, then exposure of positive contacts for one-time benefit may bear the signs of irresponsible action.

4. Analysis of opinions on misinformation. Dissemination of fake news in the poviast city's communication space

Spokespersons representing local government, speaking during the described study on dissemination of lies, half-truths and manipulation in media, in majority, i.e. in 66% identified them as widespread and potentially dangerous. A minority, i.e. 27% of them were willing to recognize fake news as appearing only sporadically. The results obtained in the study conducted among press services of local governments were compared with opinions on disinformation expressed by the representatives of broadcasters of messages addressed to recipients in the mass communication model, i.e. the journalistic community.

Data on perception of the phenomenon of disinformation by journalists were collected during analysis carried out in 2019. In a study involving dozens of employees of nationwide and regional media working for press, radio and television editors it was found that 57% of them rated the dissemination of fake news as widespread and recognized it as a serious threat. In turn, 38% of respondents expressed the opposite view, minimizing the scale of the problem. The author's own research study was carried out on the 16th February 2019 in Zabrze during the meeting of journalists from: TVP Info, TVN24, TVN, Polsat News, TTV, Superstacja, Polsat, TVS, TVP3 Katowice, TVZ and TV Imperium and radio journalists from the following radio stations: RMF FM, TOK FM, Jedyńka (Polskie Radio), Czwórka (Polskie Radio), Polskie Radio24, Polskie Radio Katowice, Polskie Radio Kraków, Radio Piekary, Radio CCM, Radio FEST. Journalists from "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Super Express" and "Trybuna Górnicza" also participated in the study. In total 63 journalists answered the questions.

It means that spokespersons pointed to the risk posed by fake news slightly more often than the journalists themselves, more than half of whose (approx. 51%) considered that disinformation in the long term is an opportunity for reliable editors. They hoped to gain a competitive position by the centres providing reliable information to the media audience, due to their outstanding presence in the flood of manipulated content available in cyberspace.

Even more than by the spokespersons of local government units, the issue of threats posed by such manipulations was pointed out by participants of the international research project from 2019 diagnosing the coverage and significance of disinformation. Persons who are partners of association involved in making the cyberspace available for educational purposes participated in the assessment of impact of fake news on social communication. 18 experts from the USA, Great Britain, Pakistan and Kenya participated in the author's own research study conducted from the 26th March to the 9th May 2019.

For 89% of respondents fake news were widely present and prevailed not only in social media (55%) but also in institutionalized media (45%). Therefore, the problem seems to take on greater significance as the scale of the analysis extends,

including the global one. This does not mean that the commune or powiat space remains free of fake news. As regards the functioning of local government, there is no shortage of examples of deliberate manipulation of information or even involvement of institutionalized press editors in such dealings.

Disinformation activities carried out by local mass media during the campaign preceding the early local elections in Gliwice were revealed during the opinion poll of GZM spokespersons. The elections were ordered on the 5th January 2020 (by the regulation of the Prime Minister of 6 November 2019 *on early elections of the Mayor of the city of Gliwice in the Silesian Voivodeship*), after the current mayor of the city obtained the mandate of senator in the parliamentary elections that took place in 2019. Zygmunt Frankiewicz, after 26 years as the Mayor of Gliwice, in the parliamentary election on the 13th October 2019, applied for a seat in the Senate Electoral District No. 70. Representing “Koalicja Obywatelska PO .N iPL Zieloni” he obtained 61.09% of votes. As a result, early elections of the Mayor of Gliwice were ordered for the 5th January 2020.

The outgoing mayor pointed out his current deputy, recommending him to voters. Three other candidates also fought for the votes of Gliwice inhabitants. Local mass media and social media related with them conducted information and advertising activities adopted in such situations. However, the public debate about Gliwice's development programs was dominated by dissemination of negative persuasive messages against three out of four candidates. So-called black PR campaign, which was to be conducted by the administrator of the portal sympathizing with current authorities, was revealed by a competitive editorial office. It caused consternation in the city's journalistic community.

A statement published in local media that reads: “We, Gliwice journalists, publicists, reporters, citizen journalists, are strongly separating from pseudo-journalistic activities of people who, without reason, discredit and denigrate local politicians, including candidates for the city mayor. We oppose such activities, considering them to be shameful, contrary to the ethics of journalism and not in line with our profession” (“Gazeta Miejska Gliwice”, 2019, p. 8) was an expression of indignation. The statement was signed by 26 persons. The website of the “Press” Polish trade monthly informed about the case in the text entitled “Journalists from Gliwice against criticizing politicians from false accounts” (“Press”, 2019). Of course, the topic was taken by the mass media, providing not only the data of the person suspected of deliberate misinforming the residents, but also of the beneficiary of his manipulation, who replied with a statement. “In connection with false information appearing in the Internet, I declare that I have nothing to do with fake Facebook accounts. I have never asked anyone, and what is more I have never paid a negative campaign against anyone from real or fictitious Facebook accounts or in any other form” (“Nowiny Gliwickie”, 2019).

Explaining the technical aspect of making the fake news public, it was found that by carelessness, rush or omission, the author did not re-login the user and

accidentally revealed his real profile. A “digital track” in a form of a sender’s profile photo was registered by an employee of another city portal. He recorded so-called screenshots, recorded a movie and disseminated information. The caught journalist denied:

(...) he claimed that he did not have an account that would be aimed at doing black PR to the candidates for the mayor or at making positive advertising for only one of them. He emphasized that the only evidence for his allegedly keeping a “fake” account is graphics prepared by an employee of a competitive portal (...), he suggested that the graphic designer made a photo montage, which he sent into the world (“Nowiny Gliwickie”, 2019).

However, the graphic designer was ready to defend the authenticity of the materials presented before the court.

In terms of political marketing, the scandal probably caused an image problem for the candidate who had to publicly explain that he does not use disinformation in communication relations with residents. Once again, it drew attention to the issue of the credibility of the content authored by various Internet users, posted on profiles administered by mass media. When publishing the cited statement, the owner of one of the portals noted: “the case is extremely shocking, but we want to avoid warming up emotions, so we decided to disable the option of adding anonymous comments under this material. At the same time the statement appears on our Facebook profile, where you can comment under your own name” (24gliwice.pl, 2019). The issue of fake news, which would affect the results of local elections, also referred to the effectiveness of legal protection of image in cyberspace, as well as responsibility of journalists for published content. Regardless of these contexts, in the elections held on the 5th January 2020, the candidate recommended by his predecessor received 51.2% of votes, becoming the Mayor of Gliwice. However, it is difficult to precisely determine the nature of impact of described events on his result. Based on the protocol of the “Results of voting and results of election of the Mayor of Gliwice” prepared on the 6th January 2020 by the City Electoral Commission in Gliwice. The protocol was published on the website of the Delegation of the National Electoral Office in Katowice at the <https://katowice.kbw.gov.pl>.

Summary

The study shows that spokespersons for municipalities on a daily basis prefer individual contact with journalists. Most of them, 40%, preferred sending the materials to reporter’s e-mail address, and 22% of them chose a phone call. This was accompanied by the belief of the majority of spokespersons (64%) that journalists want to receive information for further processing in this way. The majority of survey participants (66%) considered the phenomenon of spreading disinformation to be common, and saw their most frequent source in social media. Slightly more

than half of the spokespersons (51%) saw the publication of corrections as an appropriate way of responding to inaccuracies and manipulations appearing in mass media.

The effectiveness of activities directed at commercial and public mass media still seems to be extremely important for the implementation of communication strategy of local government units. Of course, local government press also plays an important role in the model of information policy of local administration, where media relations activity replaces ownership supervision, as well as constantly developing sphere of social media. These are social media that “have significant communication potential that can be used to manage public policy and thus affect its quality. It seems that the most engaging, participatory model of the ‘discussion club’ gives the greatest potential impact on the shape and thus the quality of dialogue-communicated public policy” (Annusewicz, 2019, p. 101). Hence local governments consistently involve human and financial resources in maintaining social media profiles.

A study on the use of Facebook by the municipalities of Metropolis GZM (The author’s own study was carried out in October 2019 in all 41 municipalities of Metropolis GZM) showed that 87.8% of local governments in autumn 2019 led an official FB profile, and their total social coverage was 16.5% of the entire population of the metropolitan area. Considering the data obtained in voivodeship cities (The author’s own study carried out in October 2019 in all voivodeship cities covered the seats of central and local government administration, i.e. Bydgoszcz and Gorzów Wielkopolski [provincial offices] as well as Toruń and Zielona Góra), where at the same time social coverage reached almost 40% (39.2%), a development of this method of communication can be forecasted.

Analyzing the mediatisation of public sphere in the face of changes in media environment, it should be stated that

(...) the Internet, followed by social media caused that traditional, one-way mass communication has evolved into mass individualized communication to refer to the term formulated by the well-known Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells.

Processes of hybridization of media systems, determined among others by blurring the boundaries between senders and recipients of media content, changing the ways of using the media, growing number of channels and forms of communication, and commercializing the media content are one of the main factors “destroying” the classic theory of agenda-setting (Hess, Bukowski, Grzechnik, Klytta, 2018, p. 21).

A survey on the opinion of spokespersons confirms these conclusions, because they identified social media when specifying the ways to ensure the most effective reach to final recipients (42% of responses).

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- Act of 11 January 2018 *on amendments to some laws in order to increase the participation of citizens in the process of selecting, operation and control of certain public authorities* (Journal of Laws from 2018, item 130).
- Judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 1 December 2010, act signature K 41/07 (Journal of Laws from 2010, No. 235, item 1551).
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Sprzeciwiamy się takim działaniom, uważając je za haniebne. Wspólne oświadczenie dziennikarzy (We oppose such actions, considering them to be shameful. Joint statement by journalists) (2019), 21st November, www.24gliwice.pl (accessed: 10th January 2020).

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