

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Title: The role of the media and the journalists in providing information and shaping awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards climate change

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Discipline: social communication and media sciences

The main aim of this dissertation is to identify the media importance of climate change and its presentation, to analyze journalistic roles in conveying information about this issue, and to identify the media's functions in presenting this phenomenon. In particular, attention was paid to: how traditional and online media frame the issue of climate change, determine its media importance and identify the characteristics attributed to it, identify media functions and analyze the roles played by journalists in discussing this issue, and determine the level of awareness, knowledge, and attitudes of audiences towards this phenomenon.

In conducting a literature review, the author drew on publications by researchers representing numerous disciplines, encompassing both the social and natural sciences. This enabled her to discuss key theories and concepts concerning media functions and journalistic roles, as well as operationalize the phenomenon of climate change and present its multidimensional nature. Based on this, six exploratory research questions were formulated.

The theoretical basis of dissertation is Claudia Mellado's (2015) concept of journalistic roles, which became the inspiration for designing a two-stage research project. This concept was adapted and adjusted to the topic discussed in the dissertation, and supplemented with additional indicators, taking into account in detail the educational potential of the issue of climate change. Two quantitative methods were used to conduct the project: media content analysis and public opinion research.

The dissertation combines theoretical and empirical parts and is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the role of the media in disseminating information. Presenting key theories and concepts, the author discusses the process of setting the agenda of the media, considering the importance of individual decisions made by gatekeepers (journalists, publishers, editors-in-chief) and the responsibilities that this entails. She then addresses the role of journalists and contrasts various scholarly perspectives on this issue. She considers both descriptive and continuum-based concepts. She also distinguishes between two perspectives: active and passive. The final thread in this part of the work is a new perspective on journalism,

presenting specific types of journalism that can address contemporary challenges and audience needs.

The second chapter presents the phenomenon of climate change, emphasizing its multidimensional nature. The starting point is an operationalization of the problem, presenting its causes and potential consequences, and indicating how it differs from previous changes in the Earth's climate system. The author then attempts to demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of the phenomenon, focusing particularly on energy, political, economic, and social dimensions. This multidimensional perspective highlights the difficulties society must face and confirms that reporting on climate change presents numerous new challenges for the media world.

The third chapter of the dissertation is empirical in nature. It is the result of the first stage of the research project – a quantitative media content analysis. The research sample consisted of journalistic materials devoted to climate change and environmental protection. These news items were published between March 1, 2021, and February 28, 2022, by six Polish media organizations (TVP1, TVN, Polsat, Interia, Wirtualna Polska, and Onet). This enabled the capture of both planned events (e.g., climate summits) and unplanned ones (e.g., disasters). The chapter begins with a methodological part, in which the author not only presents the purpose, questions, tool, and research sample, but also the individual decisions made at each stage of the study. Then, she moves on to present the results of the analysis, first discussing the scale of exposure to climate change and environmental protection in media coverage and the way it was presented by individual media organizations. She then analyzes the roles played by journalists and conducts a comparative analysis. Finally, she formulates and presents the study's conclusions.

Chapter four is devoted to the second part of the project, which focuses on the audience of media messages – specifically, their level of media competences, awareness and knowledge of climate change, and perception of the phenomenon's presence in the media. For this purpose, a public opinion survey was conducted on a representative sample of the entire Polish population (N=800; 18+), taking into account demographic differences. This allows for generalizability of the obtained results. The chapter contains a methodological section, covering the purpose, questions, technique, tool, and research sample. The author then presents the results of the study, discussing (1) media use patterns and perceptions of audiences' media competences; (2) the level of awareness, knowledge, and declared behavior of Poles regarding climate change; and (3) the respondents' opinions on the supply of information regarding this

phenomenon in the media, which she compares with the results of the first stage of the project. The final part presents conclusions.

This dissertation fits into one of the main streams of research on journalism, namely, the analysis of the media's functions for society and the analysis of the roles performed by journalists. At the same time, it addresses the topic of climate change, which is both current and socially important, and at the same time multifaceted and interdisciplinary.