

SCONUL model of analyses, organization and evaluation of informational documentary contents: Media influence in forming public opinion on police activity and performance.

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Information means power. The Internet, web pages, social media networks, search engines, wiki encyclopedic platforms have changed the traditional landmarks of information and communication.

This paper, is a descriptive research. The study focused on how the general public, received media content regarding the activity and performance of the Romanian Police.

We wanted to identify if the public image is distorted in the presentation of the media message and also if we are dealing with an informed public, which recognizes "fake-news", subliminal messages, persuasion and manipulation techniques and which its conclusions are based on personal experience or more extensive documentation.

To achieve the main objectives, we used as a research method, the opinion poll (survey) based on the questionnaire.

By using the Google Forms application, useful in applying a tool to a different and inhomogeneous audience and starting from the premise that ideally the activities of an institution and the actions of its members are highly visible and publicized, they can create a public image, regardless its quality.

The main results obtained were:

The target audience is an informed audience, 62% of respondents accessed media content about police activity in the last week.

The main information channels are the Internet (web pages, websites, blogs) - 41.4% and social networks (another component of the Internet) - 24.3%. The third option private televisions - 20%. The national radio and television as a vector of information has a minimal role - 11.4%.

Assessment of the correctness of the media message - 31% of respondents believe that the media show objectivity in presenting news about police activity, and 38% are concerned about the impartiality and correctness of the broadcast message (to a small or very small extent).

Their own experience mattered most in forming an image of the public about the activity and quality of services provided by the police - 56.3%.

According to the respondents, the Romanian Police has rather a positive image for 54.9% of them, while 45.1% categorize it as negative.

90.62% of respondents believe that the media focuses on the presentation of negative news, following the media impact on the public and less police intervention.

71.87% appreciate that they focus mainly on police intervention and resolving the situation.

76.56% appreciate that positive news about the activity and performance of the police is rarely presented.

The own experience in forming the opinion about the police institution is the defining one in the case of both male and female persons - 59% and 55% respectively. In the second option the results contrast (11% of men are influenced by the experience and stories of others, while 23% is the share of women).

University (54%) and postuniversity (62%) graduates report mostly to the police through their own experience. 15% of the respondents graduating from postgraduate studies report the most to the police from the media reports, while 8% is the share of university graduates.

KEYWORDS: info documentary, public image, police, media message, “fake news” phenomenon

1. Introduction

The idea of developing an exploratory study was a necessity for our topic, given the new challenges and changes generated by the effects of the new type of COVID-19 virus (danger of infection, legislative restrictions, prohibition of organizing activities with the public indoors, even , social distancing, the obligation to wear protective and disinfection equipment, etc.).

We identify a lot of models to analyse, identify and organize the info-documentary contents about how media reveal the news about police work.

According to the authors, “there is a high number of research models and problem solving in information literacy. The most well known are: BIG6, Kuhlthau, The Seven Pillars Model, Research Cycle. Next, SCONUL, a model developed and updated in 2011 by the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL)” (Londoy, Popa, Repanovici, 2020, p.31).

SCONUL model helps us to understand how the public is forming his image about police, portrayed by media representations.

This model has 7 levels:

Ability **to recognise** an information need.

Ability **to distinguish** ways in which “lack” of information can be addressed:

Ability **to build** strategies in order to locate information: • To develop a systematic method adequate to the need; and • To understand the principles of database construction and generation.

Ability **to locate and access** information: • To develop appropriate search techniques; • To use information and communication technologies, including international academic networks; • To use appropriate indexing and abstracting services and citation databases; and • To use current information methods.

Ability **to compare and assess** information obtained from different sources: • Understanding the issues related to authority; • Understanding the reviewing process in scientific publishing; and • Appropriate extraction of information that corresponds to information need.

Ability **to organise, apply and communicate** the information to other people in ways appropriate to the situation: • To cite the references in projects or theses and such like; • To build a personal bibliographic system; • To effectively communicate using the appropriate means; and • To understand issues related to copyright and plagiarism.

Ability **to synthesise and build** based upon existing information and contribute to create new knowledge (Londoy et al., 2020, p.30-31).

We use this model of info documentary in our article in literature review

Concerns about investigating the formation of public attitudes in relation to community services provided by the police are not current. Bellman (1935) provided for the first time a *"police service rating scale."* Later Ben Brown and Wn. Reed Benedict in the study "Perceptions of the Police. Past findings, methodological issues, conceptual issues and policy implications" summarizes over 100 articles published in the meantime regarding perceptions and attitudes regarding the police (2002, p.543). We find out that Parratt (1938, p.739) proposes a series of improvements to the Bellman and Vornier scale, introducing the idea of *"concordance with the opinion of a certain sector of citizens, in addition to that of the internal evaluation of the police"*.

What is a novelty in our approach is the modeling of the public image according to the media message, which can often be distorted, subversive, influenced by fake news or accompanied by empiricism.

The police have a multipurpose role and are in the middle of the mechanisms for regulating the norms of social coexistence, without which society could not function. All the actions of the police presuppose how well Alina Ciubaca highlights in the work "Evaluation of the public image of the police through the Semantic Differentiator, between real and desired", a close cooperation with the public, respect for individual rights and constitutional guarantees, but also the appeal to force to a small extent or within reasonable limits. "(2014, p.160)

The way the Police fulfills its mission, in order to fulfill its desideratum, depends on the internal training of its employees, accompanied by empathy, communication and rationality of decisions, in addition to firmness, good knowledge of the field, intransigence and authority, as well as the general public. observe its actions.

An educated public will understand the rationality of police actions or recognize shortcomings. An informed public will want to review other sources and form an opinion about the institutional image. An informed audience will recognize a correct media message and one that is distorted or based on truncated, out-of-context, exaggerated, singular or viral elements. An uneducated or uninformed audience may be oriented toward a negative approach.

In the work Policing and society, the article written by Oscar Rantatalo (2016) *"Media representations and police officers' identity work in a specialized police tactical unit"* draws attention to an existing risk in presenting to the public a correct and "non-cosmetic" information. An increasing flow of research has highlighted how mediated representations of policing and police practice are linked in mutually reinforcing relationships, in which "police influence the media and the media influence the police and its practices" (Manning 2003, pp. 61). Previous studies have shown that the media affects public perceptions of the police in aspects such as trust, legitimacy and presence (see Chermak et al. 2006, Callanan and Rosenberger 2011).

Police institutions have also been shown to allocate considerable resources to influencing media reporting on the police. Examples of measures taken include news management and corporate communication strategies used to design favorable police images (Leishman 2003, Ericsson 2007, Mawby 2010a, 2010b, Lee and McGovern 2013). In general, it has been argued that closing relations between the police and media outlets leads to a discourse on "police fetishism", in which the police are regularly presented as a solution to a variety of social problems (Manning 1997, Reiner 2002, 2010).

A multitude of reasons why we want to identify all these aspects that forms the public image of the police reflected in "the eyes of citizens through the eyes of media message providers."

A study closer to our topic, developed by Kennet Dowler, draws attention to the influence of the media message on the attitude of citizens towards the efficiency of the police (2002, p.227). Given the period, the study focuses on the influence of television and less social media, much more present today. If in the 2000s Dowler made a brief review of the image of the police, it was portrayed in the media either positively (authors such as White and Menke, 1978; Decker, 1985; Maxfield, 1988; Walklate, 1992; Huang and Vaughn, 1996).) or negative (Surette, 1998, Graber 1980, Lichter and Lichter, 1983), currently due to increasing exposure to social networks as well as online news content, the message is much more viral.

At the same time, the message on television is controlled by an editorial office or a news editor, following a certain direction. Instead, on the Internet, the message is transmitted by many simple users who do not necessarily have a political training, journalism, etc., which calls itself "influencers, vloggers, bloggers, postmen, and other attributes to promote certain interests."

That is why it is important to decipher what is behind these messages, what public we have and of course what institutional image the Police has. In this context, we set out to develop this study to explore the opinions of the public informed and documented correctly or erroneously.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose (General Objective) of the study:

Assessing the impact of the materials contents presented in the media and social media in the formation of public opinions regarding the activity and performance of the police institution.

The study pursues 3 specific objectives:

O1. Evaluating the image of the Police from the perspective of internet users and beneficiaries of cable TV and radio services.

O2. Measuring citizens' trust in the media (TV, radio, online press) regarding the objective presentation of the facts and events in which police officers are involved.

O3. Measuring the population's trust in the police institution.

Working hypotheses:

H1. The public is convinced of the activity and performance of the police from their own experience rather than from the news presented in the media (television, radio, internet).

H2. The technology that benefits the majority of the population, especially access to social media, does not necessarily mean the formation of an informed and educated public, but exposes the police institution, especially through the phenomenon of "fake-news" or unverified common sense, launched in virtual space by certain people.

H3. We anticipate the identification by the public of contents focused on the presentation of alarmist, distorted news, which outlines an image perceived rather negatively by citizens.

Participants

To develop this study, 72 semi-structured questionnaires (72 valid) were self-administered, online, to randomly selected respondents, taking the form of a *convenience group*.

The group of respondents consists of the following structure in relation to a series of socio-demographic variables: 53% males, 47% females, 94% with residence in urban areas, aged between 18 and 69 years and with a different educational level - 52% university, 36.6% postgraduate, 7% high school, 4.2% professional.

Methods and instruments

In order to fulfill the desideratum of the study, namely the achievement of the main objectives, we used the opinion poll (survey) based on a questionnaire. The option for the opinion poll is also given by the fact that it is "not only a component of scientific knowledge of society, but an inseparable part of the life of that society, a benchmark in assessing the various elements of the social" (Rotariu T., Iluț P., 2001, in the paper Survey and opinion poll, p.53-54).

Instruments application

The self-administered questionnaires were applied online, between 15.12.2020-15.02.2021.

The questionnaire includes a set of 15 items, composed of questions regarding the presentation of news objectively in the media, confidence in the media message regarding the activity of the police, formation of opinion about the institution and its performance, verification of information sources, personal assessments of interaction. -to-face, as well as factual, socio-demographic data.

The study questions were operationalized in a *series of indicators* that represented:

1. the degree appreciation of the correctness of the media message.
2. the frequency of watching some police materials.
3. information level of the consumer public of TV, radio, internet.
4. perception of police activity based on personal experience and interaction.
5. socio-demographic data.

Completing a questionnaire, took an average of 5-7 minutes, and participants were informed about the purpose and objectives and how the study will be conducted.

The questionnaire was applied to respondents over the age of 18.

The answers to each question were analyzed.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study and to verify the working hypotheses formulated within it, we relied on the data processed using Excel and Google forms.

Table 1: Representative projects

The frequency accessing about police materials contents.			
Last week	Last month	Last 6 months	Longer than 6 months
62%	19,7%	8,4%	9,9%

62% accessed media content related to police activity in the last week, and 19.7% in the last month. We can appreciate that our respondents form an informed public.

Table 2: Representative projects

Media information sources				
National radiotelevision	Private radio and television stations	Internet, sites, media pages, blogs	Social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.	Written publications
11,4%	20%	41,4%	24,3%	1,5%

The first option, 41.4% of respondents opted as the first option for the Internet, media pages, websites, blogs. The second option is also related to the internet - 24.3% are informed about the activity of the police on social networks. We estimate that $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents use the Internet as the main source of information, and $\frac{1}{3}$ private television and radio and national television (31.4%).

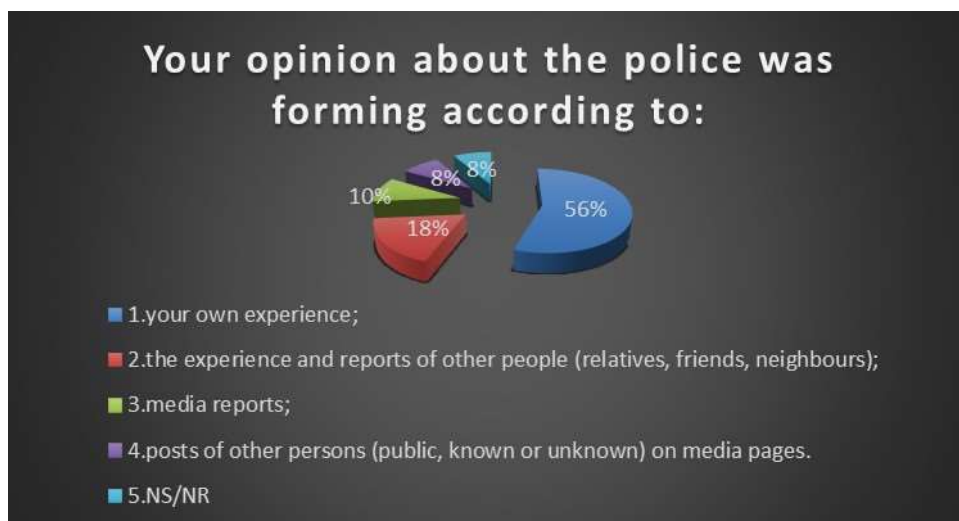
Table 3: Q3: In your opinion, do you consider that the Romanian media (televisions, radio, print or online press, media pages, websites) present the news objectively, reporting the events correctly and without distorting the truth? and **Q6.** Do you think that the events in which police officers are involved are correctly presented by the media?: (1 - the most, 5 - the least)

	1	2	3	4	5
Q3. Presenting general news correctly	4,2%	26,8%	31%	22,5%	15,5%
Q6. Presenting events involving the police correctly	1,4%	38%	33,8%	21,1%	5,6%

Diagram 1 – Q4 Your opinion about the police was forming according to: 1.your own experience;

2.the
and
other

friends,
3.media
4.posts
persons
known
on



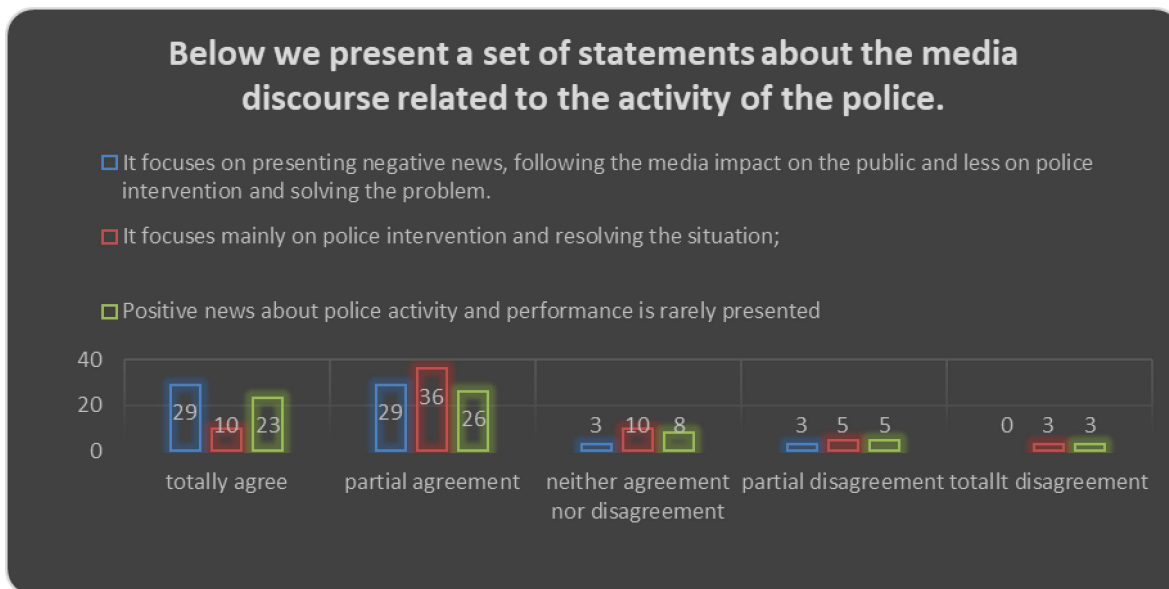
experience
reports of
people
(relatives,
neighbours);
reports;
of other
(public,
or unknown)
media pages.

Their own experience mattered the most in forming an image of the public about the activity and quality of services provided by the police - 56.3%.

Table 4. Q5. In your opinion, the reflection of the image of the Romanian Police in the Romanian media is:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Rather positive	54,9%
Rather negative	45,1%

The Romanian police has a rather positive image for 54.9% of the respondents, while 45.1% categorize it as negative.



Diagrams2.

90.62% of respondents (the options cumulatively agreed and partially agreed) consider that the media focuses on the presentation of negative news, following the media impact on the public and less police intervention.

71.87% appreciate that they focus mainly on police intervention and resolving the situation.

76.56% appreciate that positive news about the activity and performance of the police is rarely presented.

Table 5. Q10. The last time you interacted with the police

	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Q11. The last situation you interact with the police	Administrative papers	46,5%
	Road traffic checking	26,8%
	I made a written complaint	18,3%
	I was investigated in a particular situation	5,6%
	I approached a police patrol in street to report an	2,8%

Table6. Q.11 Assessment of the quality of police service

	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Q11. How satisfied were you with the way the police approached and how your problem was solved?	YES	88,7%
	NO	11,3%

The primary data resulting from the statistical processing allow us to admit the confirmation of the first 2 hypotheses:

H1. The public is convinced of the activity and performance of the police from their own experience rather than from the news presented in the media (television, radio, internet).

56.3% of the respondents appreciated that their own experience outlined an overview of the activity carried out by the Romanian Police. Although the first option as a source of information about the police is the Internet - 65.7%, the target audience did not indicate the media reports as the main factor in creating the image - only 9.9%.

H2. The technology that benefits the majority of the population, especially access to social media, does not necessarily mean the formation of an informed and educated public, but exposes the police institution, especially through the phenomenon of "fake-news" or unverified common sense, launched in virtual space by certain people.

In item 8, in which respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a set of statements, the following results were obtained:

- 90.62% of respondents (options cumulatively totally agreed and partially agreed) consider that the media focuses on the presentation of negative news, following the media impact on the public and less police intervention.
- 71.87% appreciate that they focus mainly on police intervention and resolving the situation.
- 76.56% appreciate that positive news about the activity and performance of the police is rarely presented.

The access to technology of a large audience, the presentation in the media of news with a negative impact, the fact that there are rarely positive news about the activity and performance of the police, can influence the formation of the overall image of the police.

H3. We anticipate the identification by the public of contents focused on the presentation of alarmist, distorted news, which outlines an image perceived rather negatively by citizens.

- 38% of respondents (cumulative options 4 and 5) consider that the news is not presented objectively.
- 90.62% of respondents (options cumulatively totally agreed and partially agreed) consider that the media focuses on the presentation of negative news, following the media impact on the public and less police intervention.
- 38% of respondents consider that to a large extent the media present the events in which police officers are correctly involved.
- The Romanian police has rather a positive image presented in the media, for 54.9% of the respondents, while 45.1% categorize it as negative.

Regarding hypothesis 3, it was not confirmed, even if the target audience identified a significant share of content focused on the presentation of alarmist, distorted news, the image of the police is perceived by 54.9% rather positive.

This score is identical to the GfK Trust Index (2011), indicating a level of 55% of Romanians' trust in the police.

In some works, "media refers to communication channels" (Livesey, 2011). The media (radio, television and internet) are traditionally a "one-to-many" primary source of information in the hectic world "(Motsepe, 2020, p.168).

LIMITATIONS

We cannot fail to discuss a number of limitations of the study: although it provides an informational input on the formation of public beliefs about police activity and performance, the data obtained are not sufficient to extrapolate to the entire population. First of all, the main limit is the group of respondents, selected at random, based on an invitation from the online environment, the only criterion being the absence of membership in the institution.

As the group is one of convenience, we cannot include the general public, not even those present on social media, as the people who responded are somewhat interconnected to a circle of acquaintances: people aged between 30 and 40, with a level of education and training high professional, with a certain education and respect for the law and authority and less "arguing with the law". Therefore, the assessments of the study will refer strictly to this group of respondents. But who still have a greater capacity for sequential analysis and criticism in evaluating the activity and performance of the police.

Also, social desirability is a factor that influences respondents' choices.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Conventionally, media platforms are newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet. The current trend in the media is to detail a little of what is good and a lot of what is bad about police incidents (Chermak, McGarrell and Gruenewald, 2006 p.261-281). Sometimes superfluous information is added, articles to attract readers/consumers of the media, especially the media that *give priority to profit-seeking* (Wasserman, Bosch & Chuma, 2018, pp. 145-156). Thanks to increasing technological advances on the Internet (Mawby & Reiner, 1998: 26; Polito, 2018, p. 69), mundane news travels faster than we can imagine (Livesey, 2011). The immediate question, however, is whether the media deliberately chooses to bombard society with shocking reports about the police and its activities in a biased way.

The present study is one of the few local researches to understand the public image of the police through the influence of the media message.

The obtained results allowed us to confirm the first two hypotheses and to recognize the null hypothesis in the case of the third one.

Concluding on the basis of the results obtained, we find that the public is more convinced of the activity and performance of the police from their own experience than from the news presented in the media (television, radio, internet). At the same time, excessive technology and easy access to social media does not necessarily mean the formation of an informed and educated public, but exposes the police institution, especially through the phenomenon of "fake-news" or unverified stories in common sense, launched in the virtual space by certain people.

Although the target audience has identified a significant share of content focused on presenting alarmist, distorted news, the image of the police is perceived rather positively, correlated with the first working hypothesis, their own experience is most relevant in forming beliefs.

It remains interesting to study an overview created on the Romanian police through a qualitative and quantitative approach on several groups of subjects in which an analysis of media content must be categorically included. The external image as it is outlined through the prism of citizens, local public authorities, specialists, as well as the internal image of police officers. Above all, the role of other factors that influence the institution's performance must be highlighted: media content, organizational management, socio-demographic factual data: level of education, age, gender, etc ..

Moreover, we propose that in addition to this microstudy, the analysis of the image of the Romanian police through the prism of the media message, in subsequent research, is necessary a research of the internal / external image, depending on a series of dichotomized variables, such as: agents / officers, executive positions / management positions, people with a differentiated level of education, education and training, etc ..

The public image of the police is complex and involves several aspects "Grouped in three general categories these are: the general image, perceptions about police results and perceptions about police activities.

There are different ways to measure each aspect. The results can vary considerably depending on the aspect that is measured and how each is measured " (Maguire E., *The Public Image of Police*, 2001, p.5).

Ideally, the image of the Police is a positive one, obtaining scores over 50%, especially in Western countries, which take care of improvements and institutional marketing, community trust and safe security, are the most basic desires of the citizen: community trust and personal safety.

If we go further in the neighborhoods, the scores will probably be even higher, because usually there are no frequent or intense criminal acts in the neighborhood, with small exceptions of course. leading to a feeling of insecurity, fear and terror, the repetitive use of negatively perceived words can lead to the influence of certain choices of respondents.

All this picture remains in discussion in the following research, considering the presented ones, how the public image about the activity and performance of the police service is outlined:

- media influence;
- confidence level;
- interaction with the police (administrative and operational): How do people report or how do people perceive the police according to the age / experience of the person they interact with (how credible and authoritative are young police officers?) How do the media portray the young generation of police officers?
- degree of safety in the neighborhood, city or country;
- how can we find out an informed opinion if we have not interacted face-to-face with a police officer in the last year;
- some audiences are more able to express their opinion than others;
- how much is a myth and how much is true: the phenomenon of corruption, poor professional training or poor logistics.
- what kind of stereotypes exist about police officers / Romanian police - how the media feeds / promotes these stereotypes;
- ways in which news that promotes stereotypes about police officers / police as an institution could be combated or diminished;
- analysis / presentation of examples of news that can negatively and / or positively influence the image of the police / police officers (corruption, professional training, way of carrying out the activity) - content analysis.

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