

WHEN SOUND BITES BECOME THE NEWS: A CASE STUDY ON MANUFACTURING NEWS IN CROATIA

Tena Perišin

Izvorni znanstveni rad / DOI: 10.20901/ms.8.15.7 / Priljeno: 01.12.2016.

ABSTRACT *Media environment is rapidly changing and facing a widespread crisis in journalism. It is followed by the decline of audience trust and increasing market pressures. The main goal is to win the audience's attention, very often by creating drama and producing 'conflict'. The news is not based on something that really happened and that is relevant, but it is more often manufactured or artificially produced. In this case study we explore the curious life cycle of a sound bite from a passing remark by the then Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanović's to the headlines, discussions and extensive reports which developed over the course of several days. This example shows how news could be manufactured and content blurred when it is built around a fragment without providing the context, in this case a political quote. For several days, politicians, experts, war veterans, but also ordinary citizens were involved in the manufactured news story without making a reference to the context. Consequently, the democratic debate was avoided. Drawing on a discussion of news fragmentation as isolation from context, we show that in this case, news values (what news is) are increasingly blurred, preventing the news from becoming the source of information and discussion of the country's key issues.*

KEY WORDS

TELEVISION NEWS, SOUND BITE, POLITICS, DEMOCRACY, JOURNALISM, POLITICAL QUOTE

Author Note _____

Tena Perišin :: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science, Zagreb, Croatia ::
tena.perisin@fpzg.hr

INTRODUCTION

The multimedia world, in which journalists and producers work today, creates unprecedented pressures in winning the audience attention. One of the criteria of news selection, namely 'who was the first' to report on a particular event becomes more and more difficult to meet: once central, the evening television news broadcast is no longer the first source of news for the savvy media user – they have already heard the latest information via social media, radio, a mobile phone application, or an online portal. In this context, the ongoing battle among different media to keep the audience tuned stretches the definition of 'breaking news' and what makes headlines to the extreme (often without recourse to actual events). It often happens that the leading story is not the most relevant story, but the manufactured news created just to attract the audience (Perišin, 2011). When politicians appear on the news, it is usually in the form of 'short-form interviews' (Eriksson, 2011) or short 'extracts included within the context of a news story' (Ekström, 2001). Furthermore, a sound bite¹ taken out of context can become a lead story and even breaking news. As defined, a sound bite is a segment in the news story that shows someone speak without interruptions (Hallin, 1992) and it is part of the news report. How journalists make the decision on what to include and what to exclude was analysed in the past (Adatto, 1990; Hallin, 1992; Drew et al., 2010; Perišin, 2010) and was put in the context of the news selection and also of the style of reporting. According to Peter Bull, Ralph Negrine and Katie Hawn's study (2014) on British broadcast news during the parliamentary expenses scandal of 2009, there is a clear shift in television news journalism from a fact-based to a more interpretive style. Such a routine in broadcast journalism leads to news stories that are not always true, credible or accurate, nor do they reflect what had actually happened. There exist many external influences that can devalue the ethical bases and values by which a certain medium operates and which can be differentiated depending on the medium (Brighton and Foy, 2007: 163). Such influences are powerful and can vary – depending on the house policy, the source of the story, competition, as well as on any other impulses which can change perception from the background or can impact the understanding of what had gone on.

NEWS VALUES IN QUESTION

Professional criteria of news selection were defined decades ago, but in today's media landscape they are still worth studying. Although journalists in the newsroom define the ability to recognize newsworthiness as 'a gut feeling', it is a task of the media analysts to investigate journalistic practices (Schultz, 2007: 191). As Paul Brighton and Dennis Foy noted, "in the ideal world, the news would be true, valid, accurate and reasoned account of what happened. In the real world it is rarely thus." (2007: 163)

¹ or soundbite: a brief quote lifted out of, or assembled from, the context of a longer statement. Soundbites have become a mainstay of news and current affairs reporting. Those in the public eye (notably politicians) have become adept at tailoring their statements to feature soundbites (*Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication*, 2016).

The most quoted news values theory is the one of Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965: 66) who set the list of twelve news factors that determine how events become the news: 'frequency'; 'threshold (intensity)'; 'unambiguity'; 'meaningfulness (cultural proximity, relevance)'; 'consonance (predictability, demand)'; 'unexpectedness (unpredictability, scarcity)'; 'continuity'; 'composition'; 'reference to elite nations'; 'reference to elite persons'; 'reference to persons (personalization)' and 'reference to something negative'. For the most of researchers Galtung and Ruge selection criteria were a starting point in an attempt to redefine this list of news values in relation to news event, news story, news judgement or types of media. For example, some researchers noticed that Galtung and Ruge did not even mention the visual attractiveness as the news value, which is usually listed as one of the factors in television news and later in the online media (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Johnson-Cartee, 2004; Perišin, 2004; Perišin, 2010). Hans Mathias Kepplinger and Christine Simone Ehmgig distinguish news values and news factors: news values are regarded as properties of events, news factors are characteristics of journalists, meaning that what will be reported on depends on journalists' judgment (2006: 28). For Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill, news values are "the ground rules that come into operation when journalists select stories" (2001: 261). Among the news factors they gave important place to celebrity and entertainment (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). Fifteen years later they did another study to evaluate Galtung and Ruge news criteria the news values on social media and to propose a new set of criteria. Looking at the existing news criteria, particularly with regard to social media, they produced an updated list of news values (Harcup and O'Neill, 2016). Harcup and O'Neill recognized them within published stories. Consequently, potential "news stories must generally satisfy one and preferably more of the following criteria to be selected" (Harcup and O'Neill, 2016: 2). The list of news values includes: 'exclusivity'; 'bad news'; 'conflict'; 'surprise'; 'audio-visuals'; 'shareability'; 'entertainment'; 'drama'; 'follow-up'; 'the power elite'; 'relevance'; 'magnitude'; 'celebrity'; 'good news' and 'news organisation's agenda'.

Harcup and O'Neill created the list according to the existing news values in the British media. One can definitely dispute that giving place to the existing routines brings us far from the reason the news values were meant to be characteristics of the professional journalists' standards, guidance for the journalists and characteristics of newsworthiness. This is the zone where we cross from journalism to tabloid news (Perišin, 2010: 110) or to 'corruption of news values' (Brighton and Foy, 2007: 163).

There exist factors that can influence the non-objective selection of news stories. Ever since the creation of the media, there has existed the suspicion that those who are financially controlling the media are ready to devalue the selection of news and neglect certain information factors in order to protect their own interests (Brighton and Foy 2007: 164). Competition among TV stations, as well as the rise of 24-hour news channels, have had large impact on today's news structure and the content of main TV news shows due to their demand for immediacy and their incessant broadcasting of fresh hard news stories (Cushion, 2015). Nowadays, television newscasts are not competing only among themselves, they are also competing with the online media, and this influences the way TV news is produced today. The characteristic of television news of the present day is

dramaticism and the production of endless drama. Information value is being pushed out by 'commercial values' (Cushion, 2012: 3). There is a tendency for hard news stories to become breaking news even when there is nothing really special about them.

The development of the Internet as well as pressures caused by the fast pace of living in these modern times have resulted in extreme urgency of publishing news. Virtually, launching an item of news – as soon as it happens and possibly before your competitors – has become imperative. Due to the necessity of speedy action and time-constraints that have become extremely important, the need for events to be explained appears to be neglected (Perišin, 2010: 106). As Jay Rosen states, the content of the news is arbitrary and it is very much influenced by the production routine not by the news itself (Rosen, 2010). The journalist tasked with producing a news story is facing a huge challenge of reporting a story in such a way that it is as interesting as possible, but at the same time it has to be understandable to the general public.

However, due to the constant need for news to contain something that will attract the attention of a wider scope of people, TV news is attempting to compete with the Internet, so that in a bid to be interesting, incidents, unusual events, particularities are what is being sought after, but the wider story context is often missing. The measurable casualty of this process is a political quote (Fehrman, 2011). The television news reports are becoming less fact-based and more interpretive (Bull et al., 2014). In a research carried out by Bull, Negrine and Hull (2014) based on the analysis of sound bites in political TV news reports, they revealed the storytelling routine. They showed that the audio-visual excerpts were cut and edited and identical audio-visual segments were interpreted and re-interpreted across different newscasts (*ibid.*). The journalists tend to report news to a smaller extent and care less about the accuracy of their message. In their story politicians are actors and their statements are used to fit the narrative.

SOUND BITE JOURNALISM

The inaccuracy of the information can result from shrinking statements made by an interviewee. A good sound clip that can be made part of a report is referred to as a sound bite in TV journalism and it is interesting to journalists if the statement in question is short and memorable and can be easily used when editing (Perišin, 2010: 98). Michael Dukakis, the US presidential candidate in the 1988 campaign said at the time that messages "you were not able to say in less than 10 seconds, could not even be heard, as if they had not been broadcast." (cf. Hallin, 1992: 34) Numerous authors have spoken about the emergence of the so-called sound bite journalism, or more precisely, of journalism based on sound excerpts. For Kiku Adatto (1990) shrinking of sound bites has an immense effect on discourse of democracy. He raises a question: "What becomes of democracy when political discourse is reduced to sound bites, one-liners and potent visuals?" (Adatto, 1990: 4) Jeffrey Scheuer speaks of a sound bite society, as the one which is overwhelmed with pictures and slogans, just parts of the information and symbolic messages – culture of immediate, but shallow communication (Scheuer, 2001: 8). Julie Drew, William Lyons and

Lance Svehla talk about “sound-bite saboteurs” – “the saturation of our communication channels with interesting messages disguised to appear as disinterested public information” (Drew et al., 2010: 1). This is the very reason why broadcasting of sound bites can result in inaccurate transfer of a speaker’s message and incomplete information, because oftentimes the context within which a certain sound bite is not provided. This can result in biased reporting (reporting of what a journalist had heard and wanted to hear, rather than what was actually said).

When the news story is built on a sound bite taken out of the context, it is obvious that the real content could be hidden or misunderstood. Shanto Iyengar researched the way in which news stories’ framing is formed, coming to the conclusion that most of the news is episodic and not thematic (1991). As Lance Bennett claims “episodic news places the journalist and the news audience into the center of a developed situation and puts emphasis on people who are in conflict or experiencing a problem” (Bennett, 2012: 44). Such news stories are not only personalized, but also fragmented and dramatic (*Ibid.*). Thematic news stories, on the other hand, give an overview of a bigger picture, conditions in which the event took place, avoiding the drama in the process in order to get to the very root of the problem. Episodic news stories are much more common in journalism, particularly TV journalism, resulting in viewers being left uninformed and puzzled, having very little knowledge of what had actually happened. Such stories are the cause of a very low level viewers’ engagement in events which they could be a part of and could change certain things.

A CASE STUDY ON MANUFACTURING NEWS IN CROATIA: HOW A ‘SHRUNK’ SOUND BITE BECOMES A LEADING ITEM OF NEWS IN CROATIA

In Croatia, there are three national TV stations – the public broadcaster Croatian Radiotelevision (HRT), and two commercial broadcast companies – Nova TV and RTL. Until 2010 HRT’s primetime newscast *Dnevnik* was the most watched program of that kind in the country. According to the research of the news values (Perišin, 2010) they started losing audience when they undertook to compete with commercial stations with the stories which would be more suitable for commercial television, i.e. insisting on drama and scandals in TV news political reports. As a consequence, both on public television and two commercial channels stories turned out to be structured around politicians’ sound bites which are often reactions to earlier statements or interpretations of earlier statements. Similarly as in the previously mentioned research of TV news in the UK, journalists appear as interpreters, politicians as actors and the same audio-visual segments are interpreted and re-interpreted (Bull et al., 2014).

In this case study we explore a curious life cycle of a sound bite within four days (15th-18th March 2013) from a passing remark by the then Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanović² to headlines, discussions and extensive reports which developed over a course

² Zoran Milanović, Croatian PM from 2011 to 2015.

of several days throughout the Croatian media world. The goal of this small-scale research is to show how a shortened/clipped sound bite taken out of context, with no relevant background provided by the journalist, can be seen as fragmentation, even manipulation, which produces nothing else but pseudonews and non-newsworthy facts.

The research was carried out through a narrative analysis of packages used in the primetime newscasts of the public broadcaster Croatian Radiotelevision (HRT) and commercial Nova TV. We singled out a series of reactions which came about after broadcasting the sound bite by the then Croatian PM Zoran Milanović on March 16th 2013. In the press conference, he commented on Eurosceptic Ruža Tomašić's speech in which she made comments on Serbs living in Croatia.

Things had heated up a day earlier, when the then a leader of the right-wing political party (HSP dr. Ante Starčević) and a candidate on, at that time, the main opposition party's (HDZ) election list, made the following statement at an HDZ election rally during the election campaign for the European Parliament:

Why our war veterans are lying there where they are now (humiliated)? Because of the fact that we are not being able to say that we are Croats, because of the fact that we cannot call a thief a thief, or call a Chetnik a Chetnik. Which country are we living in then? I think that this is Croatia and everyone else is just a guest in this country and if they don't love it, they should leave it, but they need to at least respect it. (Ruža Tomašić's statement, 15th March 2013)³

As soon as Tomašić made the above statement, the majority of media condemned it because it was understood that she was, by saying "everyone else is just a guest in this country", referring to the Serbian minority living in Croatia. Even though Tomašić's statement as such can be interpreted as hostile, it is also true the media and journalists did not quote precisely what Tomašić had said and then went on and asked other public figures to comment on her statement, asking them to comment on the twisted part of her statement "Croatia is only for Croats and all the others were guests," which was not exactly what she had said (*Dnevnik.hr*, Nova TV, 16th March 2013). In this paper we are focusing on one of the reactions which led to the misuse of the sound bite in the main TV news, which then led to a series of reactions and interpretations blurring the information, and shifting focus from one issue to another, preventing real political discourse of the country's key issues such as the status of minorities, minorities' rights and citizenship.

At his party's (SDP⁴) gathering, the then Prime Minister Zoran Milanović was asked to comment on the right-wing candidate for the European Parliament and Eurosceptic Ruža Tomašić's statement that "Croatia is for Croats and all the others are guests". Although the quote made by journalists as a part of a question to Milanović, were not exact, Ruža Tomašić's claim, twenty-five years after the war and during a rocky transition to democracy, raises a particularly sensitive issue of minority rights in Croatia. In a longer speech, Milanović denounced Tomašić's claim. Both TV stations, the public broadcaster

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ty5Xo2jnjh0> (28.02.2016).

⁴ Social Democratic Party

HRT and the commercial broadcaster Nova TV in their main news programs, reported on the socialdemocrats' gathering, but the two TV stations selected different sound bites.

None of the channels aired the package in the first third of the newscast. The commercial broadcaster Nova TV in its primetime news (Nova TV *Dnevnik*) focused on the then Prime Minister's reaction following the statement of Ruža Tomašić. The newscast aired the reporter's package including the sound bite, which was just an excerpt from a longer statement by Zoran Milanović. Milanović denounced Tomašić's claim by making a brief, peripheral reference to the countries like Finland, in which similar claims might still be heard, but which did not have a "civil war" or, as he continued, "a massive destruction and war of terror".

The Nova TV primetime newscast aired a sound bite by Croatian PM Zoran Milanović:

Croatia is not Denmark or Finland, where sometimes you can hear comments that Finland is for Finns only and everyone else is a guest. However, the Finland we are talking about has never ever gone through a civil war. (Nova TV *Dnevnik*, 16th March 2013)

Even though this was just an excerpt from a longer statement, Nova TV reporter picked up just this excerpt. This led to the debate shifting and focusing on Milanović, with the key issue for public debate turning into why the then Prime Minister insinuated that Croatia had gone through a 'civil war', which mainstream politics prefer to refer to as the 'Homeland War' or a 'defense war' caused by the Greater-Serbian aggression.

Airing the then Prime Minister's statement as part of a TV news package during the main evening news, Nova TV's reporter commented on his statement within the news package:

Croatia had not gone through a civil war either, and that's why the Prime Minister's statement is so surprising. The final court verdict on Operation Storm⁵ states that a defense war had been waged as the result of aggression. (Nova TV *Dnevnik*, 16th March 2013)

On the same day, the public broadcaster HRT's primetime newscast (also named *Dnevnik*), reported on politicians' reactions to the statement made by Ruža Tomašić, and reported Zoran Milanović's reaction as well. However, the HRT's reporter did not use the same sound bite as Nova TV, the one in which Milanović mentioned the comparison to Finland and the civil war.

The sound segment which was broadcast during the most-watched national TV evening news program, on commercial Nova TV, sparked quite a reaction among the general public and a string of fresh reactions – which in television news then led to new reactions. Due to the chosen sound bite, Milanović came under fire from members of

⁵ *Operation Storm* was the last battle of the Croatian War of Independence and a major decisive factor in the outcome of the Bosnian War. The Hague Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia in 2012 passed the acquittal in the case, bringing down the indictment that *Operation Storm* was a joint criminal enterprise whose goal was to forcibly and permanently remove the Serb population from parts of Croatia.

the opposition, citizens and war veterans who demanded his resignation, as they had understood from the statement and comments made by the journalist that Milanović, by comparing Croatia to Finland, actually portrayed the Homeland War as a civil war. Milanović rejected all accusations and stressed that his statement broadcast on Nova TV had not been aired in its entirety, but had rather been cut-off mid-sentence. What had been omitted was the rest of his statement in which he stated that Croatia was the only country which on its EU path went through a destructive war and suffered aggression (Nova TV's news portal *Dnevnik.hr*, 17th March 2013).

Following Nova TV's primetime newscast other news media also decided to pick up just this excerpt. An army of not only political commentators but also historians were brought into the debate by the media for several days in endless discussions, without ever making a reference to the then Prime Minister's full statement, with most media reporting only on the initial sound bite, just an excerpt from a longer statement. Consequently, the public debate about the status of minorities in Croatia was completely avoided.

The following day, 24 hours later (17th March 2013) the public broadcaster HRT in its primetime newscast *Dnevnik* busied itself with a follow up on Nova TV's coverage, further expanding the news story on Prime Minister Milanović's sound bite as if it were a breaking news story adding further reports and sound bites. So, the public broadcaster's TV news built the story based on the sound bite which was not even aired in their news the day before, when the event actually took place. The same day, the editors of Nova TV's primetime newscast decided to, in addition to furious reactions by politicians and war veterans, air Zoran Milanović's statement in its entirety.

Nova TV news segment:

- ANCHOR: *PM Zoran Milanović reacted to the accusations. He said this morning that the statement he made for our main evening news program Dnevnik, had been taken out of context.*

SOUND BITE:

Milanović: *I said that Croatia had experienced a destructive war and aggression – is there anyone who does not agree with this or did I describe this wrong? Do I have the right to say that Finland had not had a civil war for the past 150 years?*

Reporter's question: *But it seems like you are at the same time comparing it to Croatia?*

Milanović: *Of course I am comparing it, I am comparing a society which did not have to go through war and war traumas during the past 150 years, a society in which saying that Finland is for Finns only means something completely different than when you say that Croatia is for Croats and I continue to say that we had endured a war of destruction and aggression. Which country should I compare us with, Mongolia? I compare us with Finland and Denmark.*

...

- ANCHOR: *We broadcast the PM's statements yesterday. We bring you the statement in its entirety today.*

SOUND BITE:

Milanović: *In politics, one has to weigh every single word, not because of calculations, but because one has to be a responsible person. When you, for example, state in Croatia in 2013 that 'Croatia is for Croats only, and everyone else is a guest,' you don't just play with fire but with radioactive material. Because Croatia is not Denmark or Finland, where occasionally one can hear that 'Finland is for the Finns and everyone else is a guest'. However, that same Finland had never gone through a civil war and it had never experienced a situation which could be compared to what Croatia had gone through. Or Denmark, or Germany in a way. Therefore, such things, such irresponsible, evil statements can be heard across Europe. But Croatia today is a different state than other European country. Its history in the past twenty years has been different. We are joining the EU as the 28th member country which had suffered a war of destruction and aggression less than 20 years ago, nobody else has such a situation. And we have to be careful about what we are saying. Who are these guests in Croatia? Who is a Croat to start with? What defines me as a Croat? That I despise a Serb? When this is said by a promoter, it's tolerable in the political sense, not in the human sense, but this is now being stated by people on election lists (note: competing for the EU Parliament)." (Nova TV Dnevnik, 17th March 2013)*

It is interesting that, speaking to the press the same day, PM Milanović had brought up the very process of constructing such news stories after a barrage of reactions by holding a tablet in his hand showing the video with the full version of his speech on the screen, and saying:

- SOUND BITE:

Milanović: *I would like to call on those responsible (...), that if it's at all possible they refrain from cutting off my sentence half-way. Even the Euro-phobic MEP from the HSP was awarded the privilege for her whole statement to be aired. (...) I see this as a serious manipulation and a deliberate move in order for it to spark this kind of debate. (Nova TV Dnevnik, 17th March 2013)*

That same evening, which saw Nova TV shed a different light on Milanović's statement, the public broadcaster HRT, in its primetime newscast (note: HRT on 16th March did not even broadcast Milanović's statement mentioning comparison with Finland and the civil war), decided to carry an extensive report relaying Milanović's statement in the form which was a day earlier aired by Nova TV. HRT dedicated a large part of its main evening news program to the reactions to the very sound bite that was shown on Nova TV the previous day, the part of the sentence on Finland and the civil war. Also, typical for constructing of news that is made up of a string of sound bites, is seeking comments. It is quite common that most of those asked for a reaction had not even heard the statement they were commenting in its entirety. So, the reactions are often reactions to an interpretation presented by the journalist posing the question.

HRT news report:

- Reporter: *His statement is being condemned throughout the country. His statement came as a reaction to a statement by the Croatian Party of Rights' leader Ruža Tomašić.*

Milanović: *When you state, for example, in Croatia in 2013 that Croatia is just for Croats and that everyone else is a guest, then you are playing not with fire, but with radioactive material, as Croatia is not Denmark or Finland where sometimes it can be heard that Finland is for Finns and everyone else is a guest. However,*

the Finland in question never endured a civil war and never experienced a situation which could be compared to the situation in Croatia.

Reporter: *The PM perceives as malicious all those who had concluded that he considered the war in Croatia a civil war. He is inviting them to listen to the segment which came 17 seconds later.*

Milanović: *We are entering the EU as the 28th member, the only member who had endured a war of destruction and aggression less than 20 years ago. (HRT Dnevnik, 17th March 2013)*

It is interesting to note that a day after the Nova TV aired its report and spurred public reactions, the public broadcaster HRT aired a long piece analyzing the statement by the PM which had been taken out of context. Nova TV, which was the place from which the whole thing started, had in the meantime retreated and in its main evening news aired the integral statement by the PM without any additional comment, while HRT relayed the statement in the way it was cut, taken out of context and aired on Nova TV. In the same package, HRT aired the second part of the sentence in which he mentioned that Croatia went through a “destructive war”. Despite the fact that this addition threw a different light on the issue, the public broadcaster in that news included also heated reactions of the general public and went as far as to question the PM’s communication skills, which were seen as insufficient, as the general public had misunderstood him. The HRT reporter ended her report with a commentary:

- Reporter: *How can we accept the fact that the PM’s statement had been understood by half of Croatia, as the bending of the truth about the Homeland War. This is surely not a topic which should be used to practice one’s rhetorical skills. (HRT Dnevnik, 17th March 2013)*

After showing a series of reactions, the same HRT’s news, carried an interview with a history teacher at Vukovina Primary School (note: Vukovina is a village in Croatia), being given airtime to teach the PM a lesson on Finnish history and the civil war in Finland. Additionally, the local elementary school history teacher’s statement was given even more importance because it was broadcast as a separate news segment after the anchor’s intro.

- ANCHOR: *Let’s add a correction of the PM’s statement in which he said ‘Finland never had a civil war. Never!’*

SOUND BITE:

Bruno Berger (history teacher at Vukovina elementary school): *Finland went through a civil war and quite a bloody one in the first half of 1918. The supporters of the red and the white had clashed and at the end of the war which ended with approximately 37,000 victims, Finland mourned this tragedy for a long time and it had marked its entire 20th century. (HRT Dnevnik, 17th March 2013)*

A day later, on 18th March, the then Prime Minister Zoran Milanović reacted sharply once again and in his speech particularly slammed the public broadcaster, HRT. Nova TV and HRT broadcast the statement in which Milanović condemned the media which had for days been dealing with his statement which had at the very start been taken out of context and then analyzed by experts. At an extraordinary press conference, Milanović said among other things:

Experts are being brought into the studio, we are discussing the Finnish war, experts from Spičkovina or Vukovina are explaining to us how many people died in the war, as if they had personally counted the bodies, while communications' specialists are comparing me to Churchill. (Nova TV Dnevnik, 18th March 2013)

Following this statement by the then Prime Minister, both Nova TV and the public broadcaster HRT primetime newscast aired the latest reactions and even aired comments by residents of the small villages of Spičkovina and Vukovina, mentioned by Milanović in his comments. The story continued for days and was reheated by sending TV crews to Spičkovina and Vukovina to produce news features from the villages most Croatians had not heard of before. Reacting to the comment by PM Milanović, HRT decided to provide its own comment and explain its stance, also publishing it on its online platform (hrt.hr, 18th March 2013).

● ON-SCREEN GRAPHIC:

Today's speech by PM Zoran Milanović is seen by HRT as intolerable pressure being placed on the independence of the media. HRT is not shying away from its own mistakes, but such messages sent out from a Prime Minister to the media are seen as utterly inappropriate. (HRT Dnevnik, 18th March 2013)

It is very rare for a TV station to use a slot within the primetime newscast to express its editorial comment. It is even more unusual when this is done by the public service media. In this case, the editorial comment was inserted within the news as on screen graphics and read by the anchor. The whole cycle of the news sound bite shows the way how news story was manufactured. In this example, the series of interpretations of someone's statement, in this case a statement by the then Prime Minister, led to numerous reactions which had very little to do with newsworthy information. The above example shows a newsroom routine which takes place quite often in the Croatian broadcast newsrooms. News organizations, in an attempt to beat the Internet and to appeal to their audiences, are not making an effort to go in depth and explain relevant topics. Instead, they stay on the surface and fill the news with fragments and episodes whose goal is not to inform but to entertain and provoke the politically divided Croatian society.

Namely, as Bennett says, the dramatization could be a good thing in order for attention to be attracted to certain political, environmental, social, economic or other issues. However, in modern journalism it does not play that kind of role (Bennett, 2012). Drama in news stories is used to underline the crisis before continuity, the present before history and to place personality in the very center of events. A crisis offers perfect material for news stories, as the news fits in perfectly into this dramatization bias. "The crisis circle in the news bears the classical elements of drama, including introduction, plot, sharply outlined characters and several resolution options." (Bennett, 2012: 46)

The life of the sound bite described in the above example, shows another characteristic of news stories: fragmentation. By isolating one story from another and from their wider context, news stories become fragmented and it is hard to make them a part of a wider picture. Fragmentation commences, for example, by isolating a politician from the political context which he or she operates in. The fragmentation is then further intensified

by the use of dramatic formats, which turn events into isolated episodes. Fragmentation is further boosted at the end by the usage of limited space (in newspapers or on TV) in order to avoid 'overwhelming' viewers with too much information (Bennett, 2012: 47).

CONCLUSION

This example clearly shows the characteristics of the current news manufacturing. Instead of discussing problems we had a genuine public media drama developing, which could be most clearly seen in the TV broadcasts.

The life of Zoran Milanović's sound bite clearly shows that the notion of fragmentation and dramatization work together and that the whole series of news stories and analyses can be constructed, just starting from a 'well chosen sound bite'. It is a clear example of misuse of sound bites. It shows how choosing a fragment, not a context, can lead to misinterpretation and manipulation instead of information. Such examples also show that such routine may result in serious consequences and deepen the conflict within the society.

As the result of cases such as the one tackled in this study the role of journalists and journalism are being brought into question. The role of media analysts is to warn about and increase awareness of the way news stories are produced. It is no longer clear what a news story is, what actually happened and what the 'very basis' of the news piece is, or the further expansion of the stories. In a sea of information viewers may no longer be able to make a distinction. The deconstruction of the process of news production is extremely important for future media analysts. Journalists have become hostages of deadlines. As production and distribution become cheaper, more and more voices can be heard among media professionals and academics speaking about the need for so-called constructive journalism. Some newsrooms in Denmark and Belgium and even some British universities are offering for the first time courses in constructive journalism (Lawson, 2015) which is an attempt to introduce solutions oriented journalism, instead of conflict stories.

The editor-in-chief of the public television channel in Denmark (DR) Ulrik Haagerup is advocating such an approach and asks if journalists are really acting to the best interest of the society. According to Haagerup, the media is in need of a wakeup call (2014). According to Jay Rosen (2010) the future of journalism lies in giving more context, building trust-based journalism. As the production routine was transformed by web, journalism has a chance to focus on what production of news was supposed to result in and that is an engaged and informed public (Rosen, 2010).

The close analysis of the life of a sound bite and the way how it is handled in the news, also represents a warning sign. The tabloidization has gone too far, so far in fact, that it is no longer possible to make the distinction between breaking news and hard news; between hard news and pseudo-news or between facts and fabrications. The call for constructive journalism, slow journalism or solutions-oriented journalism which can

now be heard more and more frequently is, actually, a wake-up call for journalism and the journalists' profession. These calls for certain 'new types' of journalism actually stem from general dissatisfaction with the state of journalism today. So instead of searching for a 'new journalism', why not just go back to the '5W and H' and question the basic rules of the profession.

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KADA TONSKI ISJEČAK POSTANE VIJEST: PRIMJER FABRICIRANJA VIJESTI U HRVATSKOJ

Tena Perišin

SAŽETAK *Suvremeno novinarstvo mijenja se velikom brzinom i istodobno se suočava s krizom koja se odražava u sve većem nepovjerenju u medije, ali i sve većim pritiscima tržišta. Pažnju publike mediji privlače neprestanim potenciranjem dramatičnosti i proizvođenjem sukoba. Vijest se više ne temelji na nečemu što se stvarno dogodilo i što je relevantno, nego na nečemu što je umjetno proizvedeno. U ovom se radu prati geneza jednoga tonskog isječka (engl. sound bite), dijela izjave hrvatskog premijera Zorana Milanovića, koji je dospio u udarne vijesti televizijskih informativnih emisija, rasplamsao rasprave i postao glavna tema novinarskih izvještaja. Na primjeru jednog fragmenta, isječka izjave političara, opisuju se kako se, kada se izostavi kontekst, stvara nova medijska priča. Sljedećih nekoliko dana političari, stručnjaci, branitelji, ali i obični građani bili su akteri te priče, a da se ni jednom nije spomenulo u kojem je kontekstu izgovorena ta izjava. Demokratska debata je izostala. Rad se usredotočuje na raspravu o fragmentaciji vijesti i njihovoj izolaciji od konteksta. Na navedenom primjeru pokazuje se kako su informativne vrijednosti (ono što vijest jest) zamagljene, pa stoga vijesti prestaju biti izvor informacija i poticaj za raspravu o bitnim nacionalnim pitanjima.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

TELEVIZIJSKE VIJESTI, TONSKI ISJEČAK, POLITIKA, DEMOKRACIJA, NOVINARSTVO, POLITIČKI CITAT

Bilješka o autorici

Tena Perišin :: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet političkih znanosti, Zagreb :: tena.perisin@fpzg.hr