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Thesis summary: History and contemporariness of media psychology. An attempt at synthesis and prognosis of development

The subject of the present thesis is the historical development and the current state of research in media psychology. The work comprises the characterisation of particular mass media and their influence on recipients. Drawing on these researches and theoretical reflections, frequently inter-disciplinary, media psychology emerged in the 1980s as a new discipline. It is a science studying the interrelations between the human and the media taking into consideration psychological, social, political and cultural contexts. Media psychology integrates psychologists' achievements with those attained by the sociologists, specialists from the field of media and cultural studies and from other disciplines. Because of that, the science concerned can be classified either as a psychology subdiscipline or as a separate but hybrid discipline (Dill, 2013a; Ptaszek, 2013). The main tasks of media psychology include "the description and explanation of those individual experiences and behaviours which are under the influence of (...) the media of individual and mass communication" (Winterhoff-Spurk, 2007, p. 19). The psychological perspective, adopted by this science, allows to undertake fuller attempts at understanding of human interactions with technology (Rutledge, 2010). It can be said that media psychology is an important field of study due to the characteristics of today's world such as continuous emergence of new technologies which redefine everyday life of every human (Rutledge, 2010).

The aim of this work is to present an attempt at the original analysis of media development and their influence on human behaviour and cognitive processes. The review and classification of researches, as well as the endeavour to perform their meta-analysis should facilitate not only the understanding of the current status of media psychology but also advancing prognoses concerning their development and indicating new research areas. The thesis consists of six chapters. The first one includes the description of history of the most popular media and their influence on the recipients' functioning. The second chapter presents the science of media psychology in a detailed way – its beginnings, key researches which had taken place before the official emergence of the discipline, its relations with other sciences, definitional difficulties and the description of the main research methods applied by the media

psychologists. The third chapter is devoted to the presentation of theories explaining media influence. It contains also the original classification of those theories and the proposition of the unification concerning their names and translations. The following chapter concerns the topic of the impact of aggressive and prosocial media texts, which is amongst the media psychologists' most popular interests. It includes the review of crucial theoretical approaches, researches, meta-analyses and other related issues. The fifth chapter is a synthetic discussion of the remaining issues related to media influence, such as values in media texts, media representations of various social groups and the advertising. The last chapter is dedicated to media psychology in Poland, so it shows the ways of studying previously described issues undertaken by the Polish scientists. There is also a summary of similarities and differences between the topics researched by Polish and foreign media psychology.

Thesis summary contains, among others, recommendations and propositions concerning the resolution of problematic issues, the evaluation of popularity and of the state of research on different aspects of media influence as well as the prognosis of this science's future development. Taking into account the past achievements in the field of media psychology one can observe that the recent decades have seen the remarkable change regarding media user as an active person who often consciously decides how to use media and who individually interprets the meaning of media texts. Nowadays, great attention is paid to variables modifying the relationship between the media and the behaviour, such as individual differences and social, cultural and economic contexts.

Despite the big number of reports concerning the consequences of media use, a great deal of crucial problems still have not been unequivocally explained which proves the need of further research. The consensus concerning the most important mechanisms responsible for the influence of aggressive media contents still has not been reached. There is also still a need to develop the research methodology and to explore the impact of prosocial media contents and the influence of media other than television, which has been the subject of the biggest number of researches until now.

The thesis presents the comprehensive coverage of knowledge in the field of media psychology, especially in European, American and Polish science, whereas the achievements of other researchers have been omitted or presented in short. The present dissertation can contribute to further empirical research by indicating drawbacks in the present studies. Thanks to the systematization of theories it can also facilitate finding theoretical foundations necessary for the introduction of new research hypotheses.

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