Positive center
for digital media

Research and Education Program
Monitoring Media Addiction Levels and
Media Unreality Index to Create Reality-Centered Media
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I   Background

With expansion of Internet and mobile devices, media are gaining greater importance for human kind, as they are being used lengthier and more frequently than ever before, but in different ways and for new purposes. As both communication between people and mainstream media content is moving online, We now have an unprecedented opportunity to get an insight of how and why people use media, while comparing what people talk about and what mediators of their daily realities publish on mainstream media web sites.

Our television programs are dominated by negative news, which often lack connection to our daily realities. At the same time, trivial entertainment content is offered by different media in their race for profits. Thus, content offered by mass media might not be useful asset to our realities, but it is rather used by corporations to hook ourselves to different products and services. On the surface it looks like audiences are given choices, but instead, contemporary media offer uniform, entertainment-rich content, lacking of elementary connection to our emotional realities.

Similarly, it seemed as if wide accessibility of Internet brings more choices for media users, but in fact, it is being used as substituting agent for their direct lives, while mainstream media online stay similar, like their broadcast or print versions. Recent research has shown an increase in media use by children and their attempts to apply concepts from computer games to their direct realities. Being primary seductive, deceptive, intensive and unrealistic, overall societal impact of mass media may be alienating one, as their users are unable to resist pointless use, while being aware of its negative sides, like in case of most drunks and drug addicts.

Positive Center for Digital Media and Faculty for Culture and Media conducted media addiction research in March and April 2011, on multi-stage random sample of 2208 participants. The research has been done by interviewing method and it is representative for Serbian population older than 15 years of age. Results of this research indicate that 67.9% of people in Serbia show some signs of media addiction (they use media a lot, while falling into at least one of seven indicators). Participants think we need more educational (65.9%), documentary (34.4%) and informative (25.4%) programs in today's media. They urge for more positive examples from community (63%), more inspirational stories (49%), less negative news

(-45.2%) and less news about activities of politicians on TV (-61.4%). As for negative news, 76.6% of people think there are too many of them in today's media, while 44.9% claim reports about crime, natural disasters and diseases scare or negatively affect their mood. We identified two types of media addicts – those aware of the addiction with intent to escape media use and those unaware of the addiction, with a feeling of happiness attached to media use. We also found connection between media addiction and purpose of media use (amusement), repression of inner impulses, education and employment, while tracing roots of media addiction in pressures coming from family, moral and ethical norms, education and workplace. On the other hand, strong family may act as liberating factor causing low rates of media addiction. Our research results indicate it would be important to examine media contents in the future, the way they are being used and their social implications, in order to craft future media strategies in Europe and beyond.

In the past, there were indications that many individuals use media as fantasy machines, to escape their daily realities, not to assist their lives, but up to now, there were no ways to effectively measure the scope of media addictions. We aim to provide an insight in media addictions, throughout Europe, by conducting annual media use survey in 13 countries.

Also, there is a trend of offering trivial contents by mass media, which contradicts our daily realities. To measure media unreality index in these countries, we would create semi-automatic media analysis software, based on keywords and social network for media research, which would provide real time insight in differences between social networks and mainstream web sites contents.

Thirdly, we would gather international data on media use and some sociological parameters to publish them online and establish relations between them, media addiction rate and media unreality index, which finally might outcome in values of social entropy.

At the same time, we would organize panel discussions about future of media, with journalists, visionaries and wider public involved, to capture their take on societal trends.

International digital media education programs about online journalism, blogging, social networks, e-government, digital TV, web media, new world philosophy and open mind would feature both online and direct participation of students and journalists, obtaining practical knowledge needed for their work and providing us with feedback on their media-related experiences and advices on how to make better, society-centered media.

In the development component, we would use feedback from panel discussion and education programs and results of our innovative research to get continuous and standardized monitoring of media and their sociological effects, helping governments draft their media strategies, thus making a fruitful field for future reality-based-media.

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II   Project Rationale

While whole research and education program would be conducted under hat of applicant organization from EU, Positive Center for Digital Media would play major role in the program. Other partner organizations would assist us in media analysis, implementation of media use survey, internship opportunities, visibility and panel discussion component.

Major public research company in the South-East Europe, TNS Medium Gallup would help us in setting up research software and conducting media use survey across Europe.

Our academic partners, Faculty for Culture and Media, Institute for Psychology at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and Section for Media Studies at Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad would provide scientific support in creation and modification of media addiction survey and consultancy concerning policies for media strategies.

Media Center Belgrade would provide us space in downtown Belgrade to execute lectures and debates about future of media. Their work would also concern visibility issues - media relations and ads to promote program ideas and motivate public discussions about how to make media more realistic. They would gather media experts from across the region to advise us on creation of media strategies.

National Broadcasting Corporation would boost visibility of our program and provide internship positions for our students.

My Hero would serve as exemplary media of the future by introducing changes to its programs based on our research results.

DTI would conduct program management and logistics on all levels, including preparation of program documentation, logistics and timely reporting on our results.

Serbian Unity Congress would help management of the program through its strong international network.

Positive Center for Digital Media would work closely with media departments of various universities and media-related organizations around the world to motivate participation in media addiction survey and find volunteers, which would take part in social network for media analysis.

Our program has been supported by Ministry for Culture, Media and Information Society of Republic of Serbia.

III   Goal

          Our international research and education program „Monitoring Media Addiction Levels and Media Unreality Index to Create Reality-Centered Media" would help societies gain standardized and continious insight in media addictions, media unreality index and oppinions of journalists and public to build successful media strategies which would increase freedom of emotional expression in today's media to overcome influence of negative news and unrealistic content, under the pressure of materialistic aproach of media content creators.

IV   Objectives and Activities

Objective I   Examining annual media addiction rate
Activity 1.1   Translating and publishing 13 media use surveys
Activity 1.2   Finding research executors from universities around the world
Activity 1.3   Analyzing incoming survey results

Objective II   Assessing media unreality index in real time
Activity 2.1   Crafting media analysis software and creating media analysis social network
Activity 2.2   Establishing team of media researchers and networking with volunteers
Activity 2.3   Conducting real time online media analysis

Objective III   Creating a database of media use statistics
Activity 3.1   Identifying comparable sources of data in all countries
Activity 3.2   Collecting data on annual basis
Activity 3.3   Examining data

Objective IV   Discussing the future of media
Activity 4.1   Drafting panel discussion plans while creating and broadcasting ads
Activity 4.2   Executing events which would be broadcast online
Activity 4.3   Choosing parts of these discussions to be used in publications on future of media

Objective V   Educating journalists and students about digital media
Activity 5.1   Establishing education programs and admitting international students
Activity 5.2   Conducting direct and online digital media education programs
Activity 5.3   Noting observations of students to be used in publications on future of media

Objective VI   Developing basis for future media strategies

Activity 6.1   Developing new education programs for reality-based journalism
Activity 6.2   Publishing papers and books on media impacts and future of media
Activity 6.3   Publishing Analysis of Today's Media and Their Sociological Implications

V   Partners

- Positive Center for Digital Media
- TNS Medium Gallup Serbia
- Media Center Belgrade
- Faculty for Culture and Media
- Institute for Psychology at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade
- Section for Media Studies at Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad
- Serbian National Broadcasting Corporation
- My Hero
- DTI
- Serbian Unity Congress Serbia

VI   Provisional Budget and Time line

Budget

Objective I	1.000.000
Objective II	1.000.000
Objective III	200.000
Objective IV	300.000
Objective V	500.000
Objective VI	100.000
Management	300.000
Audit	200.000
Total	3.600.000

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Time line

	1	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36
Objective I	■	■	■			■	■			■	■		
Objective II	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Objective III				■	■		■	■				■	■
Objective IV	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Objective V	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Objective VI							■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Management	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Audit													■

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