THE IMAGE OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS IN THE HUNGARIAN PRESS

Analysis of articles appearing in 2005 and 2006 in two national dailies

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The relevance of the media image, the influence of the media

- There is no consensus within the literature
- Empirical studies: the failure of the hypodermic modell
- Perspectives, which treat the audience as active and which imply minimal media effects are popular
- BUT even if we accept that media effects are complex phenomena and the audience is active – that does not mean that there is hardly any media effect!
- Theories of minimal effects often attribute too much power to the audience

Arguments for the relevance of media effects:

- It can cause mass hysteria (for example USA Rodney King case 1992)
- The role of the media can be different for different topics, for refugee affairs there is a great relevance of the media image:
  - News about minorities are received differently
  - Rate of personal information on refugees, asylum seekers is low
- Researches have found connections:
  - Between media image and attitudes towards refugees, asylum seekers
  - Between media image and attacks on refugees, asylum seekers

The direction of the media effect

IT CAN HAPPEN THAT:

positive image - contributes to negative judgement of a minority

BUT WHAT IS LIKELY:

negative image – contributes to negative judgment

Refugee affairs in the media – Previous research

- Negative, stereotypical image
- Treated as an official, legal, political issue
- Difference between local and national press
- Difference between liberal and conservative papers

Methods, research material

- Quantitative content analysis and qualitative text analysis
- Dailies: Népszabadság és Magyar Nemzet
- From 1. January 2005 to 31. December 2006
- 3 selection criteria:
  - contains expressions from refugee affairs or migration affairs
  - content is connected to the question of refugee affairs
  - discusses refugee affairs in more than one sentence
- 149 articles (from 120 000 articles)

Major events in the articles

2005:

- Opening of new center for foreign minors in Hungary
- Immigration law debate of UK
- Uzbekh refugees when the revolution took place in Uzbekhistan
- Roma from Slovakia sought asylum in the Czech Republic
- Asylum-seekers tried to enter two Spanish cities in Africa

2006:

- Anniversary of the 1956 revolution: Hungarian refugees of 1956
- Roma families from Hungary travel to Sweden to ask for asylum

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Themes in the articles – economic integration

	Number of articles	**% (N=149)**
Labour market situation, economic activity	34	22.8%
Financial situation, support, aid	33	22.1%
Demography, population	24	16.1%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Themes in the articles - social integration

	Number of articles	**% (N=149)**
Housing affairs, homeless affairs	9	6.0%
School, education, courses	14	9.4%
Relations formed with receiving society, integration	19	12.8%
Crime, deviant behaviour	55	36.9%
Health status	9	6.0%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Other themes

	Number of articles	% (N=149)
Law, politics	80	53.7%
Situation of receiving station, hostel, refugee camp	22	14.8%
Individual case, life history	20	13.4%
Catastrophe, scandal	10	6.7%
Art, culture, book	7	4,7%
Other	10	6.7%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Attitudes towards refugees, asylum-seekers

	Attitude could be determined		Inclusive, tolerant		Indifferent		Judgmental, hostile	
	Number of articles	% (N=149)	Number of articles	% (N=149)	Number of articles	% (N=149)	Number of articles	% (N=149)
Government policy/policies	104	69.8%	29	19.5%	15	10.1%	75	50.3%
Civil society (civil organisations, local residents, general public opinion)	40	26.8%	18	12.1%	1	0.7%	29	19.5%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Proposed solutions appearing in the articles

	Number of articles	% (N=149)
Mentions a proposed solution	39	26.2%
Stricter laws, regulations	21	14.1%
Expulsion	14	9.4%
Milder laws, regulations	1	0.7%
Greater role for the state	3	2.0%
Greater financial support	0	0.0%
More programmes helping integration	8	5.4%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Origin of persons involved in refugee affairs /1

	Number of articles	**% (N=149)**
Europe	56	37.6%
Asia	40	26.8%
America	5	3.4%
Africa	47	31.5%

Results – Quantitative Analysis

Origin of persons involved in refugee affairs /2

	Number of articles	% (N=149)
Slovak	5	3.4%
Hungarian	35	23.5%
Romanian	10	6.7%
Serb	11	7.4%
Serb-Montenegrin	2	1.3%
Ukrainian	4	2.7%
Other European	13	8.7%

Conclusions

- Refugee affairs treated as an “official” political matter (not as for e.g. a humanitarian issue)
- Dominance of articles showing problems, conflicts
- Negativity in the media is a general phenomenon – but its significance is different in relation to different topics: in case of the refugee topic the image shown by the media is of great relevance
- Differences between the image presented in the two dailies