Does media information about economic crisis modify entrepreneurial attitude?

Czy informacje medialne o kryzysie ekonomicznym modyfikują postawę przedsiębiorczą?

The aim of this study was to answer the question: whether and how media information about economic crisis (press and television broadcast) modify the entrepreneurial attitude. Undertaking the subject of this study was a response to current processes happening in Poland and is an original contribution to the psychology of entrepreneurship. The study consisted of two experiments designed on the basis of McGuire’s Model of Persuasion. In the first study participants (N = 103, M_age = 27) were exposed to press information about economic crisis, and in the second study (N = 87, M_age = 28) — to television broadcast. Both experiments were conducted in the frames of Solomon four-group design, including experimental and control group with pretest and posttest. The experiments were repeated in two weeks period. The Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation Questionnaire (EAO) was applied to measure the entrepreneurial attitude. The experiments revealed that entrepreneurial attitude is modified by media information about economic crisis in positive way. The press information enhanced Perceived Personal Control. The television broadcast about economic crisis strengthened the emotional component of Entrepreneurial Attitude and Innovation. The effects were significant although small. The results were interpreted in the light of Bandura’s socio-cognitive theory of mass media.

Keywords
entrepreneurial attitude orientation, economic crisis, media psychology, innovation

Media play a vital role in the functioning of a modern society. One can even speak about hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1987) shaping an individual on both cultural and individual levels. As early as at the beginning of 1960s, the issue of confronting a pseudoreality or enacted reality instead of confronting the objective reality was raised (Boorstin, 1964). A current example of the phenomenon can be seen in the overuse of the term crisis in media in relation to Poland’s economic condition when, in fact, economic indicators give evidence to a mere economic slowdown in the country.
Since 2008, Polish media have been discussing the issue of worldwide economic crisis and Poland’s economic crisis associated with it. In the first months after the outbreak of the crisis, Polish press published 2000 articles discussing the issue. Analyses indicate a growth in the occurrence of the term recession in the Polish opinion-forming press (Press Service, 2012). After eight years, news on the economic crisis are still on the rise.

An individual who functions in media reality receives television news as a substitute (Bandura, 2009). Therefore, it can be assumed that the substitute will modify the individual’s attitude. As a consequence, a study of the influence of media information upon entrepreneurial attitude in the context of constant exposure to negative information on the national and worldwide economic crisis seems particularly interesting.

Questions whether and in what way media coverage influences entrepreneurial attitude, whether media information on the crisis poses entrepreneurial barriers or whether it stimulates the development of the attitude arise. The current paper aims at establishing answers to the above questions on the basis of entrepreneurship and media psychology.

**Selected trends in media psychology**

Fundamental theories of media psychology stress the mutual influence of culture and society (Giles, 2010). The cultivation theory theory claims that an individual exists in the world whose main motivation and inspiration is the story-telling process (Gerbner, 2000). Since one’s early years, these stories develop the system of values and norms and constitute a representation of reality. However, contemporarily, the stories are not passed on by family sharing their experience and knowledge but by media such as television or the Internet. The theory emphasizes the meaning of cultivation of television, which is reflected in a simplified, subjective vision of the world based on media information. Television is present in the life of an individual since their early years. Therefore, it shapes an individual by conveying a particular picture of the world, which in turn has secondary influence upon the surroundings and culture. In the light of the above, television constitutes an enormous force penetrating culture and an individual’s actions.

Marshall McLuhan’s technological determinism theory (2001) presents an individual as a passive subject of media influence and presupposes the fact that cultural changes occurred as a consequence of the emergence of novel methods of communication, communication channels. It is the individual who must adjust to the particular means of communication used when communicating with others. Therefore, the technological medium determines the individual. Modern researchers stress the fact that due to the pluralisation and democratization of media, the “artificial” presentation of the world is not meagre and carries numerous alternative ideas (Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli, 2012). At present, researchers focus on the psychology of the Internet. Recipients of internet services are not passive participants in a particular vision of the world but they play an active role and independently select content. It is the content provider who follows the recipient.

An active attitude towards media manifested by an efficient search for interesting information, changed the attitude towards television as a more passive medium when compared with the Internet. It seems that interest in television decreases among the younger generations. People under 30 years old exhibit a more active attitude in the Internet (Dembińska and Ochnik, 2014). The older the person, the more important television is with its regular programme (World Internet Project Poland, 2015). However, television still occupies 12 hours a week of an average viewer’s time of internet users in Poland (World Internet Project Poland, 2015). Such modus operandi of the user penetrated into television, whose ambition is to offer as interactive programmes as possible.

Media effects research plays a vital role in media psychology. The research pertains to the influence and effects of media exerted on various aspects of an individual’s life and media relationships and their significance in politics, education and public health among others (Giles, 2010). The trend in research also encompasses Albert Bandura’s experiments key for the development of psychology (Kubicka, 2007). On the basis of social cognitive theory of learning based on the explanation of the social shaping process, Albert Bandura presented the social cognitive theory of mass communication (Bandura, 2009). In this transactional approach to an individual and society, personality traits, behavioural patterns and environmental factors remain mutually in bidirectional interaction as regards cognitive, affective and biological aspects. Therefore, people are at the same time active creators, influence the surroundings and become the product of social systems (Bandura, 2009, p. 121). Due to the fact that people possess the ability to think symbolically and in abstract terms, media, as an important source of information, play a vital part in the process of learning and stimulating self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Media are treated as a substitute enabling the assimilation of behaviours, attitudes and particular
emotional reactions (Bandura, 2009). Social cognitive theory of mass communication offers the opportunity of interpreting the influence of media upon the attitude and behaviour of recipients (Bandura, 2001, 2002, 2004). Although described theory can be defined as classic, it is recognized as current and appropriately explaining also changes in (post)modern world (Ptaszek, 2013; Kubicka, 2007).

The discussion and criticism of media effects research refer to the efficiency and quality of results, which must encompass dispositional, socio-contextual variables and developmental factors which are not directly associated with media (Valkenburg, Peter, and Walther, 2016). However, Elihu Katz (2001) claims that all research connected with media psychology must refer to effects as regards their characteristics. This approach was implemented in the own study pertaining to the influence of media information on the economic crisis upon entrepreneurial attitude.

Media vs. entrepreneurship in psychological research

Studies combining media psychology and psychology of entrepreneurship focus mainly on the influence of cognitive representation of entrepreneurs upon entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour.

French studies indicate the importance of a positive image of entrepreneurs for the stimulation and reinforcement of entrepreneurial intentions (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008). British studies analysing the image of entrepreneurs in media in 1970–2005 (Boyle and Magor, 2008) also prove that television constitutes a vital factor reinforcing particular attitudes towards social phenomena, which by popularisation have become a part of culture.

It is noteworthy to mention about research referring to the current economic crisis and entrepreneurial intentions (Alonso, Sanchez and Maditinos, 2016). The analysis of entrepreneurial intention and the perceived regional economic situation (EU-28) revealed that due to the Entrepreneurial Cognition concept, the fundamental influence on the entrepreneurial attitude has the perception of opportunity vs. the lack of alternatives.

Jonathan Levie, Mark Hartand and Mohammed Shamsul Karim (2010) put forward a new model of entrepreneurial behaviour based on previous theories (Radu and Redien-Colletot, 2008; Krueger, 2008) and own research carried out in 2009 among 1250 respondents. The above researchers claim that patterns of entrepreneurial behaviour reflect relations between social norms and values which influence the emergence of entrepreneurial attitude and behavioural intentions. The model of media effects as regards entrepreneurial behaviour indicated three fundamental criteria: appropriateness — conformity with cultural norms, desirability — the degree to which individuals aspire to behave in a particular way, feasibility — the degree to which an individual is convinced that a particular behaviour is possible to be realised. Studies based on this model indicate that the greater the positive public attitude towards entrepreneurship, the more entrepreneurial attitude is desired as a behavioural pattern. Media provide means of transfer for social norms and patterns of behaviour and shape entrepreneurial behaviour and intentions. The study was based upon the reception of business programmes and television campaigns depicting entrepreneurial attitudes. However, the discussed studies refer to the possibility of reinforcing entrepreneurial attitude by minimising anxiety and building competencies owing to the positive image of entrepreneurs in media. This study pertain to the influence of negative television coverage of the economic crisis upon the level of entrepreneurial attitude, which constitutes an original input into the study of entrepreneurship on the whole.

Entrepreneurial attitude

An attitude constitutes a relatively constant trend for a positive or negative assessment of an object (a person, an object, idea) (Maio and Haddock, 2014). Classicist theories (McGuire, 1985) presuppose a ternary composition of an attitude consisting of emotional, cognitive and behavioural components. An attitude can serve several functions: orientational, instrumental, for expressing values, socio-adaptive and for the defence of ego. An attitude can change in time and due to changes in a situation by an interactive relation with surroundings and may serve as a predictor of prospective behaviour (Maio and Haddock, 2014).

It seems that approaching entrepreneurship in terms of an attitude allows for a more accurate capture of its specificity as opposed to the theory of personality or demographic approach (Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000). The effectiveness of the theory of personality may be decreased by the evaluation of general characteristics, which are broader than the construct of entrepreneurship.
As a consequence, theoretical accuracy of "entrepreneurial personality" has been considered as less effective (Mitchell et al., 2002). The effectiveness of entrepreneurship’s evaluation would require a theoretical model including both the influence of the surrounding environment and the influence exerted on the surroundings by an interactive action (Robinson, Huefner and Hunt, 1991). Theory of attitudes may be applied to the study of entrepreneurial attitude. It turns out that the study of entrepreneurial attitude accurately differentiates between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. There exists a relationship between entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, especially as regards feasibility and desirability (Krueger et al., 2000). Therefore, one can assume that a high level of entrepreneurial attitude constitutes an indicator of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner and Hunt (1991) were among the first to develop a model of entrepreneurial attitude encompassing four key constructs:

- need for achievement in business,
- innovation,
- perceived personal control,
- self-esteem.

These subscales consist of emotional, cognitive and behavioural components of the attitude. Emotional component consists of positive or negative feelings towards the object. Behavioural component encompasses intentions of behaviour and predisposition towards certain types of behaviour as regards the object. Cognitive component consists of beliefs and thoughts on the object of the attitude. Need for achievement in business pertains to particular results associated with starting and running a business. Innovation denotes the perception and undertaking certain business activities in an original, exceptional and unique way. Perceived personal control pertains to the perception of control of the influence of one's own input into business activity. Self-esteem denotes self-confidence and perception of one’s own business competencies. On the basis of the above model (Robinson et al., 1991) the Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation (EAO) was developed. The tool enabled an accurate assessment of the entrepreneurial attitude (Hunt et al., 1989; Robinson et al., 1991). This measurement method was utilised in own research.

The objective of the study is to establish the answer to the question whether and how media information about economic crisis (press and television broadcast) modify the entrepreneurial attitude.

The undertaken study is an answer to current processes taking place in Poland and constitutes an original input into the development of psychology of entrepreneurship. Up until now studies focusing on the search for the direct influence of media information on the economic crisis upon entrepreneurial attitudes were non-existent.

Methodology

The 1st study encompassed 102 respondents (Females = 87, Males = 15), students of part-time course at Katowice School of Economics, the Faculty of Management - active participants of economic reality. Average age of respondents was 27 years (min. = 20, max. = 56). The introduces experimental variable was press information on the economic crisis in Poland.

Experimental model (N = 103):

- experimental group YE1 (pretest) (n = 38);
- experimental group YE2 (no pretest) (n = 10);
- control group YK1 (pretest) (n = 37);
- control group YK2 (no pretest) (n = 17).

The 2nd study encompassed 87 respondents (Females = 73, Males = 14), students of part-time course at Katowice School of Economics, the Faculty of Management. Average age of respondents amounts to 28.48 (min. = 22, max. = 46). The introduces experimental variable was TV broadcast on the economic crisis in Poland.

Experimental model (N = 87):

- experimental group YE1 (pretest) (n = 18);
- experimental group YE2 (no pretest) (n = 21);
- control group YK1 (pretest) (n = 18);
- control group YK2 (no pretest) (n = 30).

Although research referring to entrepreneurship within students as participants face sharp criticism, the entrepreneurial attitude orientation seems to be fair indicator of entrepreneurial behaviour (Robinson et al., 1991). The participants’ knowledge of business and consciousness of economic mechanisms is thorough, therefore one can expect that their reaction to media information about economic crisis could be generalize to people with business orientation but not particularly entrepreneurs. Although high entrepreneurial attitude orientation can distinct entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs, being an entrepreneur wasn’t the selection criterion. It is noteworthy to emphasize that the aim of this research is to establish whether and how media information about economic crisis modify the entrepreneurial attitude. Therefore in this experimental study, the entrepreneurial attitude orientation is the limelight rather than being an entrepreneur.

In order to measure the entrepreneurial attitude, The Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation Questionnaire (EAO) (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner and Hunt, 1991) was applied.
The EAO is an effective tool enabling prediction of entrepreneurship (Huefner, Hunt and Robinson, 1996). The measurement has been adapted to Polish version. The EAO consists of 75 items rated 1 to 10 by respondents and four subscales. The reliability was assessed by Cronbach’s $\alpha$. The main scale (total sum of 75 items) gained high level of reliability (over .7), with $\alpha = .83$. The subscales were: Achievement ($n = 23, \alpha = .88$), Innovation ($n = 26, \alpha = .82$), Personal Control ($n = 12, \alpha = .51$) and Self-esteem ($n = 14, \alpha = .51$). The two last subscales did not reach expected amount, therefore results of Personal Control and Self-esteem should be treated with caution.

As the attitude consists of emotional, behavioural and cognitive aspects, the reliability was .77, .69, .76 respectively.

**Procedure of experiment**

The study consists of two experiments.

*Study 1* refers to the press information as the experimental variable. Participants read articles chosen from Polish press on the economic crisis and its meaning for the Polish, European and world economy. During the 1st study only Personal Control subscale has been examined.

*Study 2* refers to the TV broadcast as the experimental variable. It was presented in the form of a current affairs TV programme (Graffiti, 2012) featuring an interview with an expert regarding the economic crisis in Poland and in the world and currency fluctuations associated with it. During the 2nd study all subscales and full version of the EAO has been examined.

Solomon four-group design (1949), considered particularly useful in the evaluation of effectiveness of a change in attitude (Brzeziński, 2010), was applied in the experiment. This allowed for a methodologically reliable assessment. Both studies were carried out according to presented experimental model (Figure 1).

Each group of participants was located in a separate room. Stages II and III were carried out after a two-week’s break. Stage I encompassed a pre-test (EAO). Stage II consisted of an exposition to the experimental variable (press information/TV broadcast). In stage III, respondents filled in the EAO questionnaire again. In case of experimental groups, the survey immediately followed the exposition to the experimental variable.

The experiment was carefully designed on the basis of McGuire’s 2 stages model (1868; 1985). The detailed psychological background of the experiment’s design can be found in the previous work (Ochnik, 2012; 2014). The number of participants, the time span between stage I and II, the character of the experimental variable (complex media message) and a possible bias of participants can be considered as limits of the experiment. Although the experiment has been thoroughly designed, the

![Figure 1. Experimental model of Study 1 and Study 2](image)

Experimental model based on Solomon four-group design. Stages II and III were carried out after 14 days break.

Source: own preparation.
results still have to be interpreted with caution as it is difficult to assess the unique influence of any variable on attitude.

Results

Two-way ANOVA analysis of variance was applied in order to analyse experiment in SPSS22 program.

Study 1. The experimental variable significantly and with influenced the Personal Control subscale F(1,98) = 14.72, p < .001, η² = .13. The effect size can be described as medium.

Study 2. Experimental variable does not significantly influence the entrepreneurial attitude (the sum of four subscales), F(3,83) = 3.77, p > .05, η² < .04, but emotional aspect of the attitude undergoes a statistically significant although small change influenced by the experimental variable, F(3,83) = 4.25, p = .04, η² = .05. Respondents who were exposed to the persuasive message obtained higher results as regards emotional aspect of entrepreneurial attitude when compared to respondents from the control group. The influence can be considered as small. Behavioural F(3,83) = 4.55, p = .01, and cognitive aspects F(3,83) = 3.53, p > .05, η² = .04, of entrepreneurial attitude turned out to be irrelevant.

Entrepreneurial attitude subscale- business achievement, is not influenced by the experimental variable, F(3,83) = 2.98, p > .05, η² = .03. TV broadcast did not influence the change in business achievement.

The experimental variable significantly influences entrepreneurial attitude- Innovation, F(3,83) = 8.20, p < .005, η² = .09. Its influence can be described as small. Respondents who were exposed to the persuasive message obtained higher results as regards innovation when compared to respondents from the control group.

There is a lack of significant influence of the experimental variable on entrepreneurial attitude subscale — perceived personal control, F(3,83) = 0.00, p > .05, η² = .00 and subscale- self-esteem, F(3,83) = 0.18, p > .05, η² = .00.

Discussion

It can be stated that information on the economic crisis in the form of a TV broadcast enhances the emotional component of entrepreneurial attitude and its subscale-innovation. Furthermore, press information on the economic crisis enhances Perceived Personal Control. The stronger effect of press information can be explain by different features of media information, as the press information is more effective for sophisticated and complex content whereas TV broadcast is related to emotional aspect of attitude.

Classical studies of attitude changes (Maio, Haddock, 2014) indicate the change of habits, behaviour and positive adaptation by means of self-efficacy enhancement. At the same time, self-efficacy (understood by Bandura as an approximate of entrepreneurship) may constitute a particular mechanism of reaction to aversive situation by mobilisation of an individual’s resources.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 2009) stipulates that modelling is characterised by strong motivational effects. These are deeply rooted in reward and punishment mechanisms found in effects of modelled behaviour. Particular motivational effects will be significant in behaviour modelling and perception of undertaken actions. Anxiety evoked by negative information is associated with the prediction of negative consequences. In order to avoid these, defence mechanisms are activated. Albert Bandura emphasises the fact that there is no clear relationship between anxiety and defence mechanisms as regards reaction to an aversive situation. These are rather a consequence of the same cause. The experimental study made use of the term crisis which carries strong negative emotional connotations and may evoke anxiety in recipients. Studies indicate that medium anxiety is most effective in causing the attitude change. In addition, it is the emotional component of entrepreneurial attitude which was influenced the most.

In relation to Bandura’s social cognitive theory of mass communication (2009) it can be considered that certain objectives are formed by an individual whose achievement is fundamental for support and enhancement of self-esteem. Negative information may become a mobilising factor as regards overcoming prospective difficulties, which constitutes a vital condition for overcoming fear and can serve self-enhancement and socio-adaptational functions. As a consequence, negative information may cause the emergence of compensation strategies and establishment of positive objectives, which enhances entrepreneurial attitude (Figure 2).

In this case, negative information does not influence entrepreneurial attitude but reinforces its emotional aspect. Therefore, a negative message of a TV broadcast can activate and mobilise individual resources in order to counteract the anticipated negative expectations so as to create positive ones along with expected reward instead of punishment.
Innovation as an element of entrepreneurial attitude refers to the perception and undertaking of activities in original, exceptional and unique way in business (Robinson et al., 1991). Readiness to execute prospective satisfying plans is associated with creativity by respondents. Such attitude allows for the search of novel solutions which must emerge in the time of crisis. Disintegration of previous structures as a result of their ineffectiveness provides an opportunity for implementation of innovative solutions, which would not occur in stable conditions. Dynamicity inherent in the crisis demands such innovation.

Information about the economic crisis evokes the activation of the essence of entrepreneurial attitude called “creative mobilisation” by Zofia Ratajczak (2011, p. 23). A difficult situation associated with exposition to negative information activates defence mechanisms. An individual transforms the potential barrier into inspiration, anxiety into motivation towards innovation. It is the negative stimulus that evokes a positive reaction. As a consequence, the crisis in a broad sense, becomes the chance for an innovative use of one’s own resources.

Results of the experiment cannot be interpreted without socio-historical factors in mind. The understanding and operating in the time of economic crisis in Poland can be considered vital elements due to the country’s communist past. Multi-generational war experiences, economy in the time of the communist reign, 1990s capitalism are all experiences of life in permanent crisis with relatively short periods of prosperity. Such experiences make it possible for an individual to adjust, get used to certain shortages and shape entrepreneurial attitude. Activating entrepreneurial attitude in the time of crisis may be a way of reinforcing personal control in a difficult social situation which deprives the individual of such control. Undeniably, respondents represented various age groups and different generations. However, the fact of passing on experiences from generation to generation cannot be disregarded as it is connected with shaping similar attitudes.

In order to examine such conclusions in more detail, further experiments in countries whose citizens have lived in prosperity for at least two generations would be required. This would provide an opportunity to verify whether information on the crisis would reinforce entrepreneurial attitude as regards the perception of the perceived personal control in such society as well.

References


