



**Research Perspective  
of Polish Media Experts**

# **MEDIA STUDIES in POLAND**

**at the Turn of the Century**

**VOL. 1**

The quarterly *Media Studies* (*Studia Medioznawcze*) is a scientific journal covering the cutting-edge issues of media studies, communication, public relations or politics. Its Polish language edition has been released by the Institute of Journalism, University of Warsaw since 2000, supplemented by key words and summaries in English. The online edition contains a selection of articles in English, as well as abstracts and key words in these two languages. In addition to regular research papers and scientific studies prepared by Polish and foreign specialists, *Media Studies* also publishes brief communications, critical reviews and reports. The journal also intends to open for Eastern and Western countries to further develop its professionalism and expand impact. It accepts all research methods and points of view that lead to the enrichment of media and communication studies in all their forms. All articles in this journal have been reviewed by the board of editors and meet rigorous criteria of scientific excellence.



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**VOL. 1**

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## The Issue of Media Studies Research Methodology

At the outset, I would like to thank Professor Wiesław Sonczyk for his interest in our latest book<sup>1</sup> which was written together with my colleague Marcin Łączyński as well as our research group affiliated to the Scientific Association for the Polish Media Observation under the name of Stefan Kisielewski operating within the Institute of Journalism, University of Warsaw. The book is addressed to readers whose interests are centered around the issues of image, media studies, media relations and public relations.

The review of Professor Wiesław Sonczyk draws attention to a number of crucial topics raised in the book *Methods of Image Research in the Media* (*Metody badania wizerunku w mediach*), which are worth a continual discussion resulting in the effective adjustment of media studies methodology to the rapidly evolving and changing mass media. By courtesy of the editorial board of *Media Studies*, I would like to refer

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a response to the review of the book *Methods of Image Research in the Media* (*Metody badania wizerunku w mediach*), edited by T. Gackowski and M. Łączyński, CeDeWu.pl, Warsaw 2009; the review by Professor Wiesław Sonczyk, 'The Method of Content Analysis and the Research on the Media Image' ('Metoda analizy zawartości a badanie wizerunku medialnego'), *Media Studies*, 2009, No. 3, pp. 181–188.

to some observations of Professor Sonczyk and make a few new remarks which – I hope – will enable media experts to view certain intriguing issues from a different perspective.

In Chapter 3 of the aforementioned book, we endeavoured to propose our own 'model of dynamic image creation in the media' (pp. 82–100). In the already indicated place, we found that, to a large extent, *the editor of the medium, who cooperates with it on a permanent or temporal basis, decides about the publication of the information acquired and processed by a journalist. At the editorial level, decisions are determined by the result of calculations concerning the amount of space in the newspaper as well as the number and importance of individual pieces of information. If there is a lot of space and little information, even these trivial ones qualify for the publication. However, if a certain piece of information (e.g. about a scandal) is very extensive and desirable by the recipients of the newspaper, it drives out a lot of other information from the issue, entirely drowning out its reception.* Our reviewer, citing this passage, notes that *such a presumption, though theoretically correct, is hardly relevant in relation to the practice of many of today's editorial offices. Anyone who knows, at least a little, the realities of this practice, may admit that the mechanism and criteria of selection of published materials (since the authors are not concerned with information as a kind of journalistic expression only) are much more complicated (complex) and usually remain a carefully hidden secret of the editorial behind-the-scenes [...]. Of course, I do not know how many editorial boards are currently carrying out such 'private wars' among themselves but I am convinced that the above-described one<sup>2</sup> cannot be regarded as the only one. If so, we should be aware that the role of such 'criterion' and its impact on the selection of published materials are impossible to either predict or assess.*

It would be unreasonable not to agree with Professor Sonczyk who argues that 'private wars' constitute one of the most important components of the selection of information in the editorial office. It is

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<sup>2</sup> A/N: Professor Sonczyk quoted the example of the rivalry of *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat* with *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

then worth adding that what is finally printed in the newspaper is also considerably influenced by such factors as the length of the text – for instance, an entire column was to be devoted to the article but the editor, unable to get through to the persons concerned, was forced to shorten the text by half. Being aware of the fact that the entire column must be filled, the editor tells a trainee or a fellow editor, who has time, to conduct a short interview with an expert who could assess the incident reported in the text. Moreover, he/she requests a graphic designer to fill the remaining empty space with an additional photo, infographics, some extracts from the online newspaper forum (*vox populi*) or short dispatches of the Polish Press Agency.

Anyone who has spent even a single day in a newspaper and observed its creation, or even participated in this process, realises that such cases occur very often. The practice of everyday functioning of the editorial board proves that there are many, difficult to be captured by media experts, phenomena and factors taking place while preparing the issue. Does the fact that the process of setting the order of news on the pages of a newspapers or in the radio/TV news programmes (the issue of gatekeeping and agenda-setting) is complex and pretty intangible to the researcher is to prejudge that it does not make sense to create, for instance, theoretical **models of information flow and decision-making effects** [level 1 – editor-in-chief vs. deputy editors-in-chief and heads of divisions, level 2 – head of a division vs. journalist, level 3 – journalist (with richer experience / having greater trust of the management / substituting for the head of a division who is ill or on leave / coordinating the issue / familiar with the expectations of the head of a division, etc.) vs. journalist (with lesser experience / working shorter in the editorial office / less familiar with the expectations of the head of a division, etc.) and the situational impact (illness of the head of the issue and the substitution of another journalist / text shorter than expected – blank on the page / lack of the photo / lack of the interview which was to complement the article / inability to get through to the parties of the conflict / need for a quick analysis or commentary from the management of the

editorial board, etc.)]? A media expert – media researcher – should give a negative response.

By creating our ‘model of dynamic image creation in the media’, we have developed certain theoretical framework for it, assuming that, in the end, what is published in newspapers to a greater extent depends on the predictable, real will and interests of the management of the editorial board than on potential ‘private wars’ or complex decision-making and situational effects. Ultimately, we believe that the editorial board reigns over what is published in its newspaper / what is emitted in its news service. It is clear that, while creating any theoretical model, the researcher has to make some assumptions that should be, as far as possible, objective and neutral. This research perspective guarantees the usefulness of creating a model that does not blur the image of the examined medium, but organises and structuralises it as well as allows diagnosing it better; even though it is, to some extent, abstracted from the practice of everyday functioning of the media, capturing of which is restricted for technical reasons. Whereas the editorial board can be observed for 24 hours a day, it seems impossible to properly understand these ‘private wars’ and skilfully correlate their presence/intensification with what is published by a given medium. Hence, we admit Professor Sonczyk is right that the process is extremely complex and difficult to assess. However, while creating the model, we have repeatedly indicated – what was noted by our reviewer – that its assumptions and guidelines should not be absolutised. They are a specific kind of interpretative framework that enables the researcher to observe the flow of information and interaction of various forces; nevertheless, it by no means completely explains the complexity of the process. We were conscious of this fact and, therefore, in the passage quoted by Professor Sonczyk, we have listed only the most important – in our opinion – forces that influence the content of the medium: **decision of the head of a division, decision of the journalist-author of the text, amount of free space, importance of the information** (as perceived by the journalist-author and his/her supervisor), **anticipated desirability of the news by readers/recipients**

**of the medium** (as predicted by the head of a division and the journalist–author of the text). Therefore, we still believe that modelling of the phenomena occurring in the media makes it easier to observe what is the expected norm and distinguish any expected (*vide*: the example concerning the length of the text) or unexpected (*vide*: ‘private wars’) aberrations.

On the following pages, Professor Sonczyk, analysing our ‘model of dynamic image creation in the media’, distances himself from our postulate to divide the media into the so-called first- and second-row media stating that *this division, in practice, is difficult to be confirmed, and even in theory, it is unclear, imprecise. Both from the viewpoint of the editors as well as from the perspective of the reader, it is difficult to be reliably justified. The authors have not done it either.* Next, our reviewer, citing the definitions of the first- and second-row media<sup>3</sup> suggested by us in the pages of the book, responds to our proposals and adds: *I am trying to understand the intentions of the authors but – once again – I do not think that such a category of the media can be unambiguously defined. The authors themselves have not explained why it can include only the ‘biggest’ magazines, ‘large’ electronic media, ‘part’ of professional journals, etc., or what, in practice, the terms ‘on a smaller scale’, ‘genuine, but not inspired information’, etc. imply.*

Professor Sonczyk, pointing out inconsistencies in our extensive definition of the ‘first-row media’, discredits it regarding it as unreliable and artificial. Paradoxically, what our reviewer considers as a disadvantage of this definition, for us, since the very beginning of its formulation, it has been an advantage. We have not aimed at defining the concept of

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<sup>3</sup> *The media of the first-row are those which gather and edit original, not published anywhere else, information and comments – they have their own journalists, reporters, photographers and publicists. In Poland, this category of media is usually comprised of the largest dailies, opinion weeklies, big television and radio stations, and a part of professional journals; on a smaller scale – also regional or local dailies and weeklies. Within the framework of this definition, also gossip and sensational magazines are the first-row media provided that they publish genuine and not inspired information – Metody badania wizerunku..., p. 93.*



the 'first-row media' in such a way that it will be possible to arbitrarily determine which media in Poland are certainly the first-row media and which are not. Our definition is of an extensive character and we do not offer any enumerative list of the first-row media. It merely draws attention to the fundamental distinguishing feature of the first-row media – **news originality**, or even better **news uniqueness** (when thinking of the Internet, where the uniqueness of news is an essential distinction, the unique content of the portal allows, for instance, Google to position a certain website higher in the ranking of results assigned to a given word searched by internauts. It is like **unique visits** to the website and not subsequent page views, or **users** who visit a website/portal for the first time). The **originality/uniqueness** of published/broadcast news is the criterion that determines whether or not a newspaper or portal is the first-row medium. We do not propose any relative or absolute measure which would allow, for example, specifying the percentage of **originality/uniqueness** of the medium. We set this issue openly. We have only indicated that the originality/uniqueness of news frequently goes hand in hand with the medium's wealth: employing foreign correspondents, reporters, journalists, owning the transmission equipment, etc. Therefore, we affirm that 'rather' the biggest newspapers, opinion-forming weeklies, television and radio stations are the 'first-row media'. Moreover, as we shall prove further, the notion of the medium of the 'first row' cannot be plain and unequivocal as it is expected by Professor Sonczyk.

Eventually, our reviewer is aware of this as he rightly notes that e.g. *in their information services, small local radio stations present mostly their own, i.e. original local news, which none of the 'big' broadcasters even pays attention to; nonetheless, the information about important events in the country and abroad is drawn – although they do not officially admit to that – from the so-called external sources. The question whether they are, after all, the media of the first row may be asked at this point. Similarly puzzling is the fact why the authors have not included, inter alia, news agencies – which are, by nature, specific 'producers of information' that is then used by various other media – into this group of media entities.* Thus, I hasten to reply.

When creating the division between the 'first- and second-row media', we took into consideration only news which are likely to be of a nationwide scope. We did not take into account the information published, for instance, in a regional newspaper about a dysfunctional bridge in the municipality of X. Indeed, we believe that the distinction between potential nationwide news and potential regional news should be made to the full extent. Our observations – and, in particular, my research on the innovative project involving the creation of the nationwide union of regional editions issued by the publishing house Polskapresse under the same brand name of the daily *Polska. The Times* – indicate that topics covered by the national media vary significantly from those raised in the regional media. I cannot provide accurate statistics, though I may formulate the following assertion: it is much more likely that news of a nationwide potential (e.g. Polish President's visit to Russia, resignation of the Marshal of the *Sejm*, etc.) more frequently enters regional/local newspapers and is positioned relatively high (the first five pages, often with a photo attached) than news of a regional/local potential (e.g. eviction of a family with children from home in a given town, etc.) receives recognition of editors of the nationwide media and is placed on one of the subsequent pages of the daily. Therefore, I find the postulate to methodologically separate thematic analysis of the nationwide media from thematic analysis of the regional/local media as well-founded. Following this line of reasoning and fulfilling the model assumptions of the terms 'first- and second-row media' proposed in the book, two theoretical levels of the division of the media – national and regional/local – must be distinguished. Simultaneously, we have to bear in mind that these two levels are not completely independent of each other and frequently interact with each other (e.g. borrowing news of a regional/local level potential from a regional/local medium by the nationwide media). In this case, our extensive definition would apply to the national media that, every day, publish/broadcast news of a national potential and incidentally borrow news of a regional/local potential from the regional/local media. Owing to such a methodological perspective, our

definition appears to be more conscious, though we realise that it does not comply with the requirements of a finite definition that could be placed in the dictionary of media studies terminology. It is possible that, in the course of further research, we will be able to particularise it more and make it many-dimensional; especially that the 'first- and second-row media', irrespective of the first national level, would also exist at the second level – level of the regional/local media. The unique information concerning, for instance, defective wells in a certain town published in the regional daily could be duplicated by a local or district newspaper, or by a newsletter of the municipal office. In this case, the regional daily would be the 'medium of the first row' while the local or district newspaper, or the newsletter of the municipal office – the 'medium of the second row'.

As far as news agencies are concerned, Professor Sonczyk is completely right pondering over whether they should be included into the group of the 'first-row media'. The failure to include news agencies seems to be only an editorial oversight on our part since, while creating the definition of the 'first-row media', we had in mind such agencies as PAP (the Polish Press Agency – Polska Agencja Prasowa), KAI (the Polish Catholic Information Agency – Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna) and TAI (the Television Information Agency – Telewizyjna Agencja Informacyjna). Unfortunately, in this case, we lacked due diligence by which they were not included in the discussed definition.

At this point, it is worth considering the issue of complete or partial borrowing of information from, for example, the Polish Press Agency by nationwide newspapers, radio and television stations. We should remember however that – according to the definition of the 'first-row media' – the originality/uniqueness of the news published by a certain national medium is proved by its regular occurrence, which does not imply that, if a national daily, in part of the materials published, completely or partially borrows information contained in the PAP dispatch, loses its originality/uniqueness and ceases to be the 'medium of the first row'. By no means. News agencies – as Professor Sonczyk rightly notes

– are the ‘producers of information’, and they largely set the tone for the functioning of the nationwide media. What is more important here, is whether the national medium is ‘satisfied with’ the PAP message, or it rather sends its reporter to a certain venue or calls the protagonist of an event and develops brief agency information into a more exhaustive article, which becomes a unique/original text subsequently copied by the ‘second-row media’.

Professor Sonczyk, discussing our definition of the ‘second-row media’, shares the doubt which has partly been explained above, when we explained the relationship between the use of PAP dispatches and the simple duplication of them in the national media. However, he also draws attention to a more interesting and intriguing matter. Namely, *how to qualify periodicals relying exclusively on reprints (e.g. »Angora«) or those publishing reprints of the texts which previously appeared in other journals, with which they cooperate on the basis of relevant agreements? Furthermore, from the viewpoint of Angora readers, reprints are treated as ‘original’ materials offered to them by the editorial board, what – I presume – cannot be disregarded.*

At the outset, let us explain that ‘periodicals relying exclusively on reprints’ – as Professor Sonczyk described them – can without doubt be classified as the ‘second-row media’. They simply duplicate information of a nationwide scope already published elsewhere. Their contribution to the discourse is very limited and confined only to the duplication of events and arguments that already exist in the media discourse. Hence, *Angora* is unquestionably, we would say programmatically, ‘the medium of the second row’. There are no doubts as to that.

What aroused my interest, however, were Professor Sonczyk’s doubts with regard to the point of view of *Angora* readers who – as our reviewer claims – treat reprints ‘as original materials offered to them by the editorial board’. My interest stems from the fact that it has always seemed to me that, in the Polish tradition of media studies, the focal point of interest for media researchers comprises message, analysed medium and everything that is associated with the formation

of a medium – work of editors, composition of the editorial board, programme policy, stylebook, journalistic reports, impact of the message creators on the message itself, final shape of the message, etc. To put it more vividly, in the relation SENDER – MESSAGE – RECIPIENT, media experts locate their field of interest rather between the SENDER and the MESSAGE; less commonly, they are interested in the relation between the MESSAGE and the RECIPIENT (e.g. the research on agenda-setting, in which survey results are used and, thus, it is necessary to be acquainted with the methodology of sociological research and the interpretation of indices and equations). This is obviously detrimental to the study of the media. Material, technical and organisational limitations all the more direct research interests of media experts at the relation between the SENDER and the MESSAGE. It is also worth remembering that the manner in which the message affects recipients, how the sender's message is understood, what results from the message for recipients, whether it persuades the recipient of something is mainly the domain of sociology, psychology, anthropology and ethnography, from which media studies – what should be emphasised – are in a sense derived. Accordingly, media specialists are interested notably in the SENDER, MESSAGE and relationships between them. As the next step only – if the researcher has sufficient organisational and technical resources – the reception of the message can be investigated, with the help of a wide repertoire of sociological methods. Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that strictly media studies methodology, such as content analysis, has clear constraints which, by nature, limit its research field. Content analysis allows scholars to multidimensionally examine the relation SENDER – MESSAGE and accurately diagnose the nature, structure, persuasiveness of the message and even objectives set for the message by its sender. Simultaneously, content analysis is useless in exploring how the recipient of a medium responds to the given message. The media expert can anticipate impressions or even reactions of the recipient, depending on the research experience which suggests that a specific interaction may be expected

as a response to certain types of messages with the given morphology of language and persuasive morphology – assuming that recipients understand all the words they read/hear in the medium tested. However, to make such suggestions, the researcher must first find out who exactly receives a given media message and be aware of the socio-psychological picture of the recipient group. And this rather, as we have mentioned earlier, seems to be the objective of sociological or psychological studies and, increasingly, anthropological and ethnographic research. It does not imply at all that the media scientist should give up or is exempt from researching the reactions of recipients to media messages. Media researchers should do it as often as organisational and technical resources allow it. It must be remembered however that the analysis of the message and its creator (SENDER – MESSAGE) conducted from the perspective of media studies is the value added to the heritage and attainments of sociological sciences, from which the study of the media originates.

Content analysis, genuinely media studies methodology, will not provide us with answers on what the relationship between the MESSAGE and the RECIPIENT looks like, i.e. how the reader/viewer/listener responds to a given message. Nonetheless, it is its peculiar advantage since it allows media experts to focus on issues and phenomena that other research disciplines mostly ignore. Therefore, Professor Sonczyk's doubts regarding *Angora* – the weekly of reprints – and how it is treated by its addressees – as an original medium or the 'first-row medium' because they read texts appearing therein for the first time – from the methodological and typological point of view are secondary to media experts; especially when creating our 'model of dynamic image creation in the media'. Media experts, creating models and typologies of the means of mass communication, are not interested in the first place how RECIPIENTS treat the media they have contact with – whether they recognise them as the 'first- or second-row media'. In this context, subjectivisation of this type is useless. (However, I realise that it would be invaluable in the analysis of *Angora* receivers and in the

creation of a psycho-sociological profile of the magazine reader). Being more precise, the fact that Mr Kowalski does not read newspapers and buys *Angora* every week, what allows him to learn about news that has long appeared in dailies, is of lesser importance to the media expert examining the SENDER or the MESSAGE, and especially irrelevant while formulating theoretical models organising mass media and the flow of information between them. Media experts are concerned with the issue of how *Angora* fills its columns and whether or not its journalists, reporters writing articles supplement the discourse with new news. If it simply reproduces texts of other newspapers, it is only the 'medium of the second row', regardless of the impressions of Mr Kowalski who draws information about the world and public discourse only from *Angora* once a week.

In the further part of the review, Professor Sonczyk states that the model proposed by us *not only does not explain anything, but on the contrary – multiplies doubts*. It is impossible to agree with this statement. It seems that our reviewer, in the course of his argument, has forgotten that the commented 'model of dynamic image creation in the media' refers to the image. It was created for the purpose of monitoring this particular aspect of someone's or something's activity in the public, media sphere. Determining which medium is of the first, second or subsequent row to someone's image (e.g. Prime Minister Donald Tusk) or something's image (the MTR Research Company) has profound significance since it affects the very nature of media monitoring, and the adequate analysis and comparison of its results. This enables quick indication of channels of good/bad information flow; information that shapes the image of our client and its social resonance – media impact (based on the size of circulation, sales volume, number of emissions, time of emission, number of page views, reach of a given medium, etc.). From this perspective, this model undeniably fulfils its task and is useful. From the standpoint of media studies, as stated above, our model provides a general, simple, though comprehensive proposal bearing the signs of a paradigmatic view, diagnosing the flow of information and its impact.

On the following pages of the review, Professor Sonczyk comments on the second, practical part of the book constituting a practical study report on the crisis analysis of Ryszard Krauze's image in all nationwide prestigious (broadsheet) dailies in the period between August and September 2007. Our reviewer unjustifiably reproaches us that we have not specified what criteria were used in determining the research sample. Professor Sonczyk did not attempt to fully quote the corresponding passage from page 143 of our book devoted to the sample selection,<sup>4</sup> in which we tried to thoroughly explain to the reader what and why was the research sample. Our reviewer, unfortunately, chose to divide the above passage into smaller parts and argue with each of them separately.

Next, Professor Sonczyk points out that our choice of the sample was incomplete – *and it is a crucial issue for the reliability of the results*

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<sup>4</sup> *The research sample consisted of articles published in these dailies [A/N: »Dziennik Polska Europa Świat, Gazeta Wyborcza, Nasz Dziennik, Rzeczpospolita, Trybuna] which, at least once, mentioned Ryszard Krauze in the period between 31 August 2007 and 7 September 2007. Texts in which there was no mention of the name of or any other association with the businessman were not qualified for the study. The sample selection was conditioned primarily by socio-political circumstances. On 31 of August, Janusz Kaczmarek, Konrad Kornatowski and Jaromir Netzel were arrested. At that time, the information that the law enforcement agencies were looking for a well-known businessman was spread. It soon appeared that it was Ryszard Krauze. What is more, the following day newspapers informed about the conference of Minister Zbigniew Ziobro and Deputy Prosecutor General Jerzy Engelking. Simultaneously, the first drops of Ryszard Krauze's shares on the stock exchange at the session of 30 August were reported. 7 September is the last day of the study as it was when the information about the affair associated with the events at the Marriott Hotel began to be displaced by the press news concerning the self-dissolution of the Sejm. Thus, the research sample presented is an empirical sample. The sample was limited only to the press due to organisational and technical reasons: enlarging the material with the TV or radio news and the Internet monitoring, when the categorisation key was so complex, would have involved the need to expand the research team which was impossible because of the lack of people trained. Therefore, we decided to choose dailies, as the most influential and frequently cited medium; hence, the medium which is generally classified as the first-row medium (research *The Most Frequently Quoted Media 2008* [Najczęściej cytowane media 2008 r.] conducted by the Institute of Media Monitoring, [in:] *egospodarka.pl*, 15 April 2008) – *Metody badania wizerunku...*, p. 143.*



of research carried out using the content analysis method. He reproaches us that the term 'socio-political dailies' we used is vague and seems to be erroneous. He ascertains that *this category should also include 'Super Express', 'Fakt', 'Gazeta Prawna' and 'Puls Biznesu'. It would be better to use the category of 'universal dailies', distinguished because of the thematic profile and the circle of potential recipients, but then, in addition to the five dailies selected for analysis, both tabloids should be added as well (or their exclusion convincingly justified). I would not underestimate these newspapers at least due to their mass circulation and high indices of social reach (especially of 'Fakt')*. Unfortunately, we cannot agree on this issue with Professor. Firstly, the category of 'socio-political dailies' seemed obvious to us, though perhaps it would have been prudent to add that we were investigating solely prestigious, opinion-forming (broadsheet) newspapers, what would have allowed to avoid confusion. The concept of 'universal dailies' is, in my opinion, artificial and irrelevant because, in practice, it makes the researcher defining the research sample in this category include all the dailies available on the Polish market, and it simply misses the point. Secondly, content analysis and its results are as much worth as the properly and wisely selected research sample is worth – it means that media messages compared with one another are in fact comparable, i.e. the studied newspapers are located within the same media studies category, compete for the same reader, affect one another by means of the texts published, editorial boards of each of these newspapers are not indifferent to what their competitors print. From this perspective, it is thus understandable why we compare *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Nasz Dziennik*, *Rzeczpospolita* and *Trybuna*. In 2007, all these were prestigious nationwide socio-political newspapers. Therefore, the results obtained for each of them by means of content analysis were comparable. If we had included tabloids – *Super Express*, *Fakt* and professional journals – *Gazeta Prawna*, *Parkiet*, *Puls Biznesu*, we would not have been able to think of either such a degree of comparability, or the inference on the research sample. *Super Express* and *Fakt* do not compete for the readers of *Rzeczpospolita* or *Gazeta*

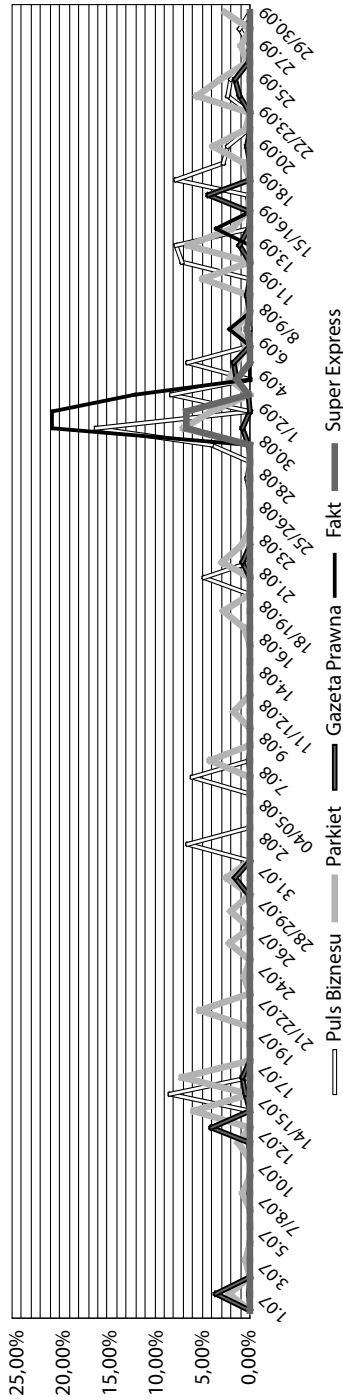
*Wyborcza*. If not separable, these groups are then slightly overlapping. As for professional journals, classifying them into the same category as *Nasz Dziennik* or *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat* would be a misunderstanding. *Gazeta Prawna* is a legal journal that only briefly touches upon political and social affairs. It does not compete for the reader with *Trybuna* or *Nasz Dziennik*. (It partially competes with *Rzeczpospolita*, or rather with its yellow pages; certainly not with the white pages which were of the greatest interest to us during the study). *Parkiet* and *Puls Biznesu* are primarily economic and stock exchange periodicals not concerned with socio-political matters. Even though they raise political issues, it remains merely in the background of their centre of interest. Hence, comparing the results of content analysis of these journals with the results of such titles as *Trybuna* and *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat* would be ineffective. *Parkiet* and *Puls Biznesu* (professional journals), as *Fakt* and *Super Express*, compete for the reader between them, within their category, but do not compete for the reader with *Gazeta Wyborcza* or *Nasz Dziennik*.

Obviously, while analysing the image – especially at the time of Krauze's (a well-known businessman) image crisis, it was advisable to take into account such economic journals as *Parkiet* and *Puls Biznesu* or even *Gazeta Prawna* – as suggested by Professor Sonczyk. However, this content analysis should be parallel with the analysis of prestigious socio-political journals. They should not be placed – as our reviewer postulates – in the same category as it would only blur the results instead of clarifying them. Additionally, our goal was not to examine the general media image of Ryszard Krauze. If such had been the purpose of this sample research – conducted for the book, for the reader to visualise research methods that can be used to study the media image – then, we would have had to examine, first of all, TV and radio stations, the Internet and weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, etc. There would not simply have been enough time and space in the book for this. In the case of comprehensive monitoring of the image in the media, it is clear that all means of communication should be monitored. However, as

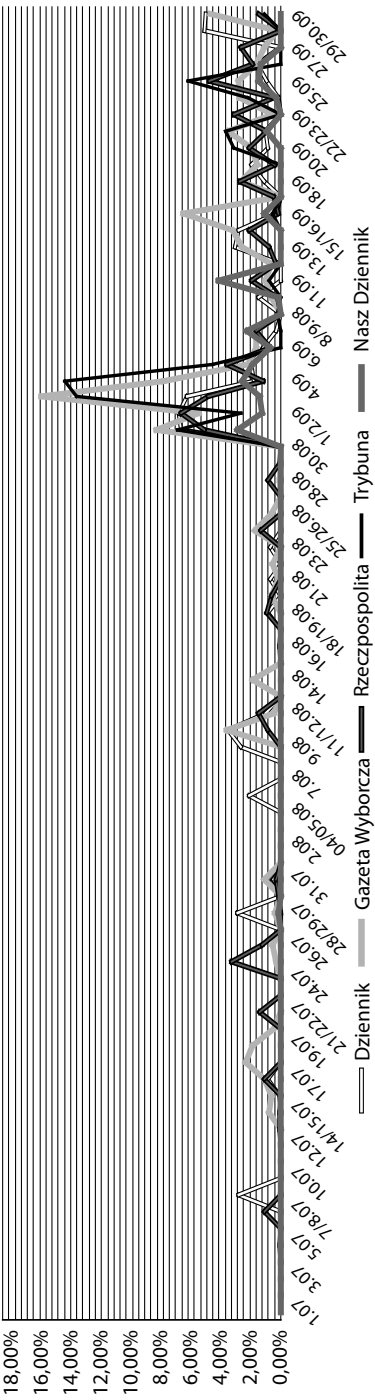
I have already said, it was an example of the analysis of the businessman's image in political discourse in prestigious nationwide newspapers. The researcher and author of books is always bothered by the dilemma that perhaps more should have been explored or written; yet, will it bring proportionally more observations and conclusions in relation to the amount of work done and financial resources invested? This question should be answered by every media expert and author themselves.

Still, it is necessary, for the purpose of this polemic, to respond unambiguously to the question of our reviewer: how would the research report and the conclusions contained in it have changed if we had included such titles as *Fakt*, *Super Express*, *Gazeta Prawna*, *Puls Biznesu* and *Parkiet* in the research sample? The charts below seem to confirm the division, made in the book and defended above, between prestigious socio-political dailies, tabloids and professional journals; simultaneously, they undermine the relevance of creating an artificial sub-category of 'universal journals', which would comprise all the commented magazines.

The graphs present changes to the length of texts (percentage of each issued number – relative measure) which mentioned the name of Ryszard Krauze at least once in the period from July to September 2007. It is done separately for prestigious dailies and professional journals or tabloids. To analyse the curves for dailies, it is worth distinguishing three periods that are clearly visible in the timeline below: pre-crisis period (1 July 2007 – 30 August 2007) when Ryszard Krauze functions as a businessman, owner of public joint-stock companies; crisis period (31 August 2007 – 07 September 2007) characterised by an explicit increase in the length of articles which mention Krauze. The latter period was analysed in our book *Methods of Image Research in the Media* as an example of image crisis analysis – beginning with press reports that the Internal Security Agency (ABW – Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego) was seeking Krauze (31 August 2007) and ending with the day of the self-dissolution of parliament (7 September 2007). This extraordinary deflection of the index confirms the reasonableness of the research sample selection in our book. And the post-crisis period



**Graph 1.** Length (percentages) of texts mentioning Ryszard Krauze published in professional dailies (*Puls Biznesu*, *Parkiet* and *Gazeta Prawna*) and in the tabloids (*Fakt* and *Super Express*) between July and September 2007.



**Graph 2.** Length (percentages) of texts mentioning Ryszard Krauze published in prestigious (broadsheet) dailies between July and September 2007.

Source: own elaboration

(8 September 2007 – 30 September 2007) which witnessed the decline of interest in Ryszard Krauze, a smaller number of texts in which his name was indicated and only temporary, one-day increases of interest related to recalling the events of late August and early September – the so-called land scandal ('afera gruntowa'), media activity of Janusz Kaczmarek and the ongoing election campaign, including the war between the Law and Justice Party (PiS) and the Civic Platform (PO) pertaining to election spots which featured an actor impressively resembling Ryszard Krauze who played the role of a Polish oligarch.

The first chart shows that professional journals (*Puls Biznesu*, *Parkiet*) due to their programme policy – close interest in economy, economics and stock exchange – in their pre-crisis issues have the highest rate of lengthy texts mentioning the name of Ryszard Krauze. This is associated with Krauze's intense activity in the stock market in July and August due to the debut of his oil company Petrolinvest on the Warsaw Stock Exchange (WSE) and the involvement of the Prokom Group in the debut of Marek Stefański's building company – Pol-Aqua. *Gazeta Prawna* clearly differs from this configuration since, as it has previously been indicated, its main interest lies in legislative matters while economic or political issues are shifted to the background. It is similar to *Puls Biznesu* and *Parkiet* where economics, economy and stock market are key topics whereas politics is of secondary importance. As far as the tabloids are concerned, they observed the 'existence' of Krauze solely during the crisis and only in a very dynamic (two subsequent editions of *Fakt* were devoted in more than 20 per cent to texts concerning the land scandal, aka the leakage scandal), though elusive way.

The second graph, presenting the curves for prestigious dailies, shows a relatively slight interest in Ryszard Krauze in the pre-crisis phase when compared to professional journals. If it occurs, it is almost entirely due to the long expected debut of Petrolinvest in the market. In this respect, *Gazeta Wyborcza* seems to be very active as it, nearly every day, offers some news related to the preparation of the debut in its economic section. There is a well-grounded belief that these texts were

sponsored by the Prokom Group – an advertisement of Petrolinvest encouraging to participate in the subscription for shares could even be found beside one of the articles of mid-July.<sup>5</sup> This issue affects notably the tone of articles in *Gazeta Wyborcza* before the outbreak of the crisis. The articles demonstrate that the largest daily clearly distances itself from the reports (as of 9 August 2007) of competitive *Dziennik*<sup>6</sup> relating

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<sup>5</sup> See Prusek, T., 'Polska bije rekordy w giełdowych debiutach', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 July 2007.

<sup>6</sup> From the contemporary perspective, it is worth noting that *Dziennik* was the opinion daily which informed about the affair of the 40<sup>th</sup> floor at the Marriott Hotel in the most extensive way and for the longest period of time (almost to mid-October 2007). It was due to the explicit activity of its investigative journalist – Anna Marszałek. In December 2008, *Newsweek* published transcripts of wire-tapped conversations of Marek Zieleniewski, Director of the Corporate Communications Department at Prokom (former deputy editor-in-chief of *Wprost*), with his colleague responsible for PR, Artur Witoszek (former journalist of *Wprost*) and Wiesław Walendziak, the Vice-President of the Management Board of Prokom Investments. The evidence came from the 44<sup>th</sup> volume of files concerning the leakage scandal. It showed that Prokom's PR specialists exerted pressure on Robert Krasowski, editor-in-chief of *Dziennik*. Their aim was to undermine the credibility of Marszałek's reports and to prevent the publication of her articles in *Dziennik*. The style of the conversation between the men is also striking. While talking on the phone, they arrange what to do, what to say and who to speak to. (see Duda, M., *Jak PR-owcy Prokomu chronili szefa przed mediami*, *Newsweek.pl* 5 December 2008 – [www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/polska/jak-pr-owcy-prokomu-chronili-szefa-przed-mediami,29970,1](http://www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/polska/jak-pr-owcy-prokomu-chronili-szefa-przed-mediami,29970,1) [accessed 8.02.2010]; *idem*, *PR-owcy Krauzego chronili szefa przed... plotką*, *Newsweek.pl* 8 December 2008 – [www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/exclusive/pr-owcy-krauzego-chronili-szefa-przed---plotka,29977,1](http://www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/exclusive/pr-owcy-krauzego-chronili-szefa-przed---plotka,29977,1) [accessed 8.02.2010 r.]; see also the answer of M. Zieleniewski to the reproaches of *Newsweek* – *Zieleniewski na PRoto o zarzutach Newsweeka*, *PRoto.pl* 9 December 2008 – [www.proto.pl/informacje/info?itemId=56698&rob=Zieleniewski\\_na\\_PRoto\\_o\\_zarzutach\\_Newsweeka](http://www.proto.pl/informacje/info?itemId=56698&rob=Zieleniewski_na_PRoto_o_zarzutach_Newsweeka) [accessed 8.02.2010]; About the case of A. Marszałek – *Anna Marszałek dla PRoto komentuje sprawę Prokomu*, *PRoto.pl* 10 December 2008 – [www.proto.pl/informacje/info?itemId=56714](http://www.proto.pl/informacje/info?itemId=56714) [accessed 8.02.2010]. In the light of what was presented above, the increased activity of Anna Marszałek in describing the affair of the 40<sup>th</sup> floor at the Marriott Hotel in *Dziennik* is a notable example of journalistic independence, despite the powerful influence and pressure of one

to the mysterious involvement of Krauze in the land scandal. Scepticism and an inconsiderable length of texts commenting on *Dziennik's* information (e.g. '*Dziennik*' associated the President of Prokom, Ryszard Krauze with the scandal') may intrigue in the light of the possible sponsorship of *Gazeta Wyborcza* reporting the debut of Petrolinvest; particularly that, at the beginning of the crisis period and after the crisis, *Gazeta Wyborcza* frequently published texts suggesting that Krauze was a victim of the campaign whose motto was that nobody in the state governed by the Law and Justice Party could feel safe, especially the rich who should beware etc.<sup>8</sup>

As regards *Trybuna* and *Nasz Dziennik* whose results, particularly for the pre-crisis period, differ significantly from the other three major dailies, it is caused by the fact that they simply do not have their own economic sections and, therefore, they 'entered' the discourse on Krauze only in the crisis phase; however with a considerable commitment. Nonetheless, *Trybuna* very quickly, after the self-dissolution of the parliament, loses interest in the figure of the businessman and focuses exclusively on elections and on – at times astonishing with clarity and unambiguity – political communication aimed at supporting the Left

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of the largest corporations in Poland (Anna Marszałek wrote the most about Krauze during the crisis period – See *Metody badania wizerunku...*, p. 219 (8 times) – but also in the post-crisis period what is shown by Graph 5).

<sup>7</sup> 'Ziobro oskarża Kaczmarka, Kaczmarek oskarża Ziobrę'. R. Kalukin *et al.*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 August 2007.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, *Since yesterday, when Janusz Kaczmarek, Konrad Kornatowski and Jaromir Netzel were arrested – no one in Poland should feel safe. I do not feel safe either – nobody knows whether, in the sick imagination of the ruling, they will not be included in the composition of some kind of a conspiratorial-criminal collusion* – A. Michnik, 'Uczciwe wybory bez Kaczyńskiego i Ziobry', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 August 2007; see also, e.g.: 'WRÓB, Ziobro „odgrzał” Krauzego', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 September 2007; Kublik, A., 'Lis: PiS przystawiło Solorzowi pistolet do głowy', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 September 2007; Kosztrzewski, L., 'Przedsiębiorcy mówią: Nie dzielcie Polaków!', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 September 2007.

and Democrats (LiD), plunging the Peace and Justice Party and ridiculing the Civic Platform.<sup>9</sup>

When we look at the discussed texts in terms of their nature, substantial differences between socio-political dailies, tabloids and professional journals can be observed. In the pre-crisis period, prestigious dailies are interested primarily in the political aspect of Krauze's activity, i.e. rumours about his involvement in the land scandal, aka the leakage scandal, which will then cause the crisis in early September. A lot of space – though only in their economic sections – is devoted to the debut of Petrolinvest – its financial health and development plans for the Prokom Group (the likely merger with Asseco Poland which indeed took place in September, bringing Krauze back again to the press). At the same time, tabloids are generally not interested in Krauze whereas professional journals fully focus on the debut Petrolinvest and the activity of the entire Prokom Group. They do not raise the already – early August – emerging issue of Krauze's political commitment to (or better interference with) one of the Central Anticorruption Bureau (CBA – Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne) actions. This plainly indicates the policy adopted by professional journals in terms of the selection of topics discussed. In contrast to prestigious dailies, for which politics is the quintessence of their content, they believe, probably rightly, that their readers, recipients are in the first place interested in economics or business and this information is crucial to them. This is another important reason, confirmed by reliable data, for separating these two categories of dailies. In this respect, tabloids constitute an obviously distinct type of a newspaper.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. 'Warszawa pełna LiD-erów', *Trybuna*, 11 September 2007; 'Liderzy list – LiD', *Trybuna*, 17 September 2007; 'Karta na całej zło. LiD domaga się wysokich standardów w polityce', *Trybuna*, 19 September 2007; 'Dziennikowi nie-biuletyn partyjny PiS-u', *Trybuna*, 20 September 2007; 'Kopernik głosowałby na LiD', *Trybuna*, 24 September 2007; 'Albo LiD, albo nic. Wybory Lewicy', *Trybuna*, 27 September 2007; 'Donald Tusk nie zna Konstytucji. Śmiech na Sali', *Trybuna*, 29–30 September 2007, etc.



With regard to the period of crisis, the interest in the political context of Krauze's activity – as it might have been expected – begins to dominate also in professional journals. However, in the immediate post-crisis period, professional magazines decidedly return to their own perspectives of looking at the media discourse and to their own economic, trading (*Puls Biznesu*, *Parkiet*), legal (*Gazeta Prawna*) narrations, rather free from the political context. Prestigious dailies are in an entirely different situation. Socio-political magazines for a long time mention Krauze what results from the fact that politicians decided to use his image in their electoral campaign, employing, for the purpose of election spots, an actor confusingly resembling the businessman of Gdynia who smoked cigars so favoured by the President of Prokom. The nature of Krauze's presence in the discourse and narration of prestigious dailies during the crisis changed categorically and rather irrevocably. It seemed that any subsequent information on the businessman from Gdynia after the period of crisis would be associated only with the land scandal, aka the leakage scandal. Even the very important information from the business, economic perspective, i.e. the merger of Asseco Poland with Prokom, was presented in the political narration, which implied that the reasons for this state of affairs could be found in the land/leakage scandal. Professional journals, even in the post-crisis phase, sometimes mentioned the affair of the previous few weeks in their articles devoted to economic and business aspects of Krauze's activity; however, they did not endeavour to explain all business decisions of the President of Prokom from the perspective of the 40<sup>th</sup> floor at the Marriott Hotel. The further away from the crisis week of the turn of August and September, the quicker the narrative frame of professional journals returns to the former well-known policy – especially to economic or business concerns (*Puls Biznesu*, *Parkiet*) and legal considerations in the case of *Gazeta Prawna*, which generally did not show much interest in the ongoing political spectacle in the period discussed, even in the crisis phase. It acted as if it did not realise the extraordinary significance of the land aka leakage scandal.

The above remarks are fundamental narrative and discursive differences among the distinguished types of dailies in Poland – prestigious (broadsheet) dailies such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Dziennik*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Nasz Dziennik*, *Trybuna*;<sup>10</sup> professional journals: *Puls Biznesu*, *Parkiet* or *Gazeta Prawna*; and tabloids *Fakt* and *Super Express*. Unfortunately, there is no room in this polemic to exhaustively present the remaining results of the report on the topicality, length and exposure of the articles concerning Krauze in the period from July to September 2007. However, I can assure readers that they testify against the creation of the sub-category ‘universal dailies’ promoted by Professor Sonczyk.

Concluding the topic of Krauze’s image research raised in our report, let us refer to the last remark of our reviewer. In the subsequent part of his review, Professor Sonczyk reproaches us that the selected research time sample (31 August 2007 – 7 September 2007) was too short: *in such a short time, the results cannot be either reliable or representative*. The selection of the sample resulted from the fact that Ryszard Krauze began to be widely commented on in the dailies only since 31 August 2007 – it can be judged on the basis of the number of occurrences, references to the businessman and the amount of space devoted to him in the newspapers. This is evidenced by the above graphs as well as extensive reports and analyses in the book *Methods of Image Research in the Media*. Krauze gradually disappeared from the newspapers during the following 3 weeks. After 7 September 2007, the decrease of interest in Ryszard Krauze was evident as newspapers began to feed on new news: the self-dissolution of the *Sejm* and preparations for the elections – who would take possession of the souls of voters that time.

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of *Trybuna* – the level of impoverishment of the journalism practiced there (widespread mixing of comment and information, using numerous colloquialisms and even vulgarisms) rather indicates its tabloid character, though *Trybuna* does not seem to fight for the reader of *Fakt* or *Super Express*. Therefore, placing *Trybuna* in one of the categories remains an open issue, as well as its speculated end. See, e.g. Wronowska, K., „*Trybuna*” upada. *Przed kapitalizmem*, *Dziennik.pl* [accessed 19 July 2007].

It seems that this is heedful argumentation fulfilling methodological requirements of empirical testing.

The above remark urges me to make one more observation concerning the second part of the review by Professor Sonczyk. When reading the remarks of our reviewer, I have the impression that Professor has not fully realised the objectives we set. Namely, the research report placed in the second part of the book concerned the image analysis during the image crisis which was an unusual and non-standard situation for Krauze. The purpose of creating crisis reports at the end of each day and reports summarising the week is to make the person concerned be able to quickly diagnose sources of image crisis and eliminate or, at least, neutralise them as soon as possible. Such was the goal of our report. The idea here is that, every day during the image crisis, our clients receive reports diagnosing the current situation with the proposed actions that would allow them to overcome the image impasse as quickly as possible. From this perspective, the reasoning of Professor Sonczyk, that only panel studies conducted on the broadest possible sample of the media (press, radio, television and the Internet) are representative and reliable, is inaccurate and irrelevant. Enumerating the features of representative and credible research on the media image of public figures, Professor in fact provided the definition of a comprehensive long-term monitoring of the image, which is offered by our research company MTRResearch ([www.mtresearch.pl](http://www.mtresearch.pl)), though it has little to do with the image crisis analysis that is governed by different rules and whose ersatz was presented in the pages of our book examining only prestigious dialies. Our reviewer looks from the perspective of a researcher who has a lot of time and is free to explore past communication messages, not caring about what will be published in the newspapers the next day and how the client – the person/institution whose image is analysed – may respond to this news. This is a fundamental difference between the viewpoint of Professor Sonczyk and the book's authors. Our research report was a substitute for the crisis analysis carried out by means of nationwide prestigious daily newspapers. Let me only point out that

another categorisational key must be applied to longitudinal or panel research on a normal non-scandalous period, when the presence of a certain person, e.g. Krauze, in the media discourse would be limited and rare. Utterly different categorisational key should be used if the image crisis period has already been diagnosed. The comprehensive media monitoring should be programmed in such a manner that the researcher is able to record the over-representativeness of his client's image in the media in a short time – upwards deflection signalled by several times higher number of mentions, increase in the number and intensity of persuasive and non-neutral terms related to the client's image, etc. When the researcher has observed this phenomenon, he/she automatically implements a crisis categorisational key prepared on the basis of historical experience, detailed interviews with the customer, intracorporational information, etc. Of course, the proper selection of the monitored media is a deeply significant issue. The scope of the media image activity should be defined for each client separately. Thus, there is no point in bothering the entire team – taking care of, for instance, Jan Kulczyk's image – with the weeklies *Auto Świat* and *Mój Pies*. When selecting the monitored media – depending obviously on the budget of the image group – in the first place, there must be prepared the list of the media that reach the recipients of services/goods offered by our clients, their contractors, stock market investors, i.e. – according to our 'model of dynamic image creation in the media' – people whose decisions and opinions on our clients have a measurable impact on their business, political or social activity. However, the problem I am raising at the moment goes far beyond the scope of our book and this polemic.

To conclude the article herein presented, special thanks should undoubtedly be addressed to Professor Sonczyk for his critical and thought-inspiring observations presented in a rather positive review of our book *Methods of Image Research in the Media*. Simultaneously, we shall express hope that this debate in the form of subsequent discussions, conferences, articles, polemics and reviews will be returning incessantly

to the pages of *Media Studies* as broad debate on methodological issues is absolutely indispensable in Poland.

**Keywords**

media studies, image, content analysis, methodology, research

**Abstract**

This article is a response to the thought-inspiring review of the book *Methods of Image Research in the Media* (*Metody badania wizerunku w mediach*) – edited by Tomasz Gackowski and Marcin Łączyński published in 2009 – written by Professor Wiesław Sonczyk entitled ‘The Method of Content Analysis and the Research on the Media Image’ [‘Metoda analizy zawartości a badanie wizerunku medialnego’], *Media Studies*, 2009, No. 3). The text presents several methodological research postulates in the field of media studies supported by the findings of the research on the image of Ryszard Krauze in nationwide daily newspapers in the period between July and September 2007. The author hopes that the theses contained in the article will be an impulse to initiate further discussion on media studies research methodology.