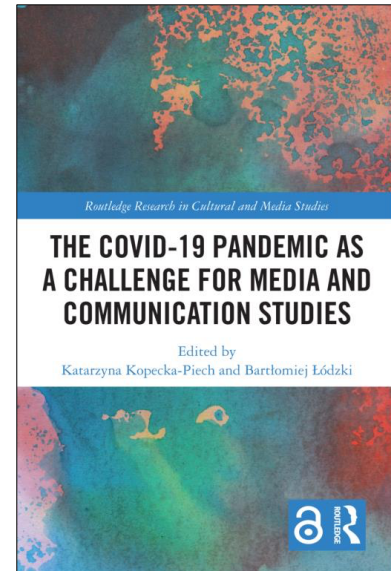


Katarzyna Kopecka-Piech and Bartłomiej Łódzki (Eds.), **The Covid-19 Pandemic as a Challenge for Media and Communication Studies**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 256 pp., \$128.00 (hardcover), \$37.69 (eBook).

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After the media briefing by the World Health Organization general director that the Covid-19 pandemic had already reached 114 countries on March 11, 2020, people gradually realized that the short social media post would have profound repercussions on their daily lives. Due to forced lockdowns and travel bans across the globe, suddenly various media forms became the primary source of information sharing and served their due role to help people in different countries combat the virus collaboratively, promptly, and effectively. It could be felt and read that the disease dramatically reshaped multiple aspects of the media. During the pandemic, traditional media such as TV programs have been suspended or dedicated to Covid-related information or even politically driven content, and companies, individuals, communities, and organizations have, voluntarily or reluctantly, adapted to rather new types of media life: massive open online courses, video conferencing, virtual reality tours, and such. The pandemic has not only given full play to traditional and social media but also, in one way or another, constructed and improved them technologically and theoretically.



***The Covid-19 Pandemic as a Challenge for Media and Communication Studies***, edited by Katarzyna Kopecka-Piech and Bartłomiej Łódzki, includes a total of 17 articles by 27 researchers from nine countries, featuring media and communication research conducted right after the first wave of Covid. The volume is academically significant because of its multidisciplinary, the context it provides surrounding the sudden global crisis, and, perhaps most important, its exploration of the theoretical and practical, methodological, technical, organizational, and ethical problems (p. 2) we might face as a media community in the post-epidemic era. The collaborative work also demonstrates qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods, which can also serve as a reference and model for conducting further Covid-related media research.

Based on the core concept of Covid-impacted changes in media studies, the entire book focuses on new theoretical and methodological foundations in media studies under the influence of the global pandemic, changes in media activities and practices, changes in media content and narration, and changes in media usage and reception.

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The health crisis has caused changes in social science research, particularly in the communication and media fields, and it has had an even greater impact on society as a whole rather than just on people's health. As a social phenomenon (Teti, Schatz, & Liebenberg, 2020), Covid has imposed some major challenges for conducting media-related research, including moral dilemmas, contentious issues like conducting research for public needs or for scholars' convenience, publication timing and conventions, humanitarianism, and the difficult-to-predict future of media studies. To explore the above-mentioned contradictions, as noted in Part 1 of the book, Leopoldina Fortunati conducted an online survey about changes in communication strategies on the basis of the unfinished research related to citizen participation prior to Covid. It demonstrates how quarantines significantly impacted research methods and designs. Although informal oral communication still pervades people's daily lives, the world is currently compelled to use digital communication in both rural and urban places. Göran Bolin and Fausto Colombo found that (1) we should turn the uberization of education media into a source generating public value, and (2) concepts like "disinformation" and "free expression of thoughts" must be rethought as a result of the pandemic's impact on public institutions' censorship and control of the "judgment of truth" (p. 47).

Following the above-mentioned discussion of difficulties conducting research in the media field, the book continues to use a number of data-driven methodologies and tools, such as multiple-case study, natural language processing, WordStat software, and QDA Miner, along with information sources such as Covid-TextHR or the Sumo platform, to discover, with sufficient statistics, tables, curves, and charts, changes in media outlets and practices. In the second part of the book, Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska, Slobodan Beliga, Sanda Martinčić-Ipšić, Mihaela Matešić, and Ana Meštrović focus on the correlation between Covid cases and news reports, as well as on the modification of TV programs. They discovered that media performed more sensitively, dynamically, and adaptively than they did prior to the health crisis, to fit in the ecosystem and provide necessary guidance to their audiences. Data also shows that articles devoted to Covid-19 during the first wave ranged from 40% to 60% (p. 89). Such information offers the best opportunity to learn about the infodemic since the health crisis is not isolated to a particular region and its severity and media reports are largely quantified.

In addition, Bartłomiej Łódzki, conducting a four-month analysis with a global perspective, found that BBC and CNN were the most popular news sites during the first wave, and that RT, Al Jazeera, and Facebook gained more international attention. It should also be noted that despite the one central issue of Covid being widely covered, different cultures and nations responded differently, with the West generally being negatively represented. The diversity further reveals interdependent relations between the pandemic, politics, values, culture, and media.

Narratives in news reports can both change people's attention and evoke similar memories of the past. Nevena Daković's comparative exploration of historical connections between the rising Covid crisis and others, such as the Holocaust/WW2 and the NATO bombing in Serbia, also shows that the narrativization of the ongoing crisis in media reports can evoke people's distant cultural traumas and also shape the way that the pandemic is covered. As a crisis and traumatic memory we all experienced and constructed, Covid was inevitably visualized and imagined by humanity, and such a process brought us from a national style of communication to a global and shared one (p. 131). Marina Zagidullina also introduces a media-aesthetic

approach to discuss shared media life, as the world has entered into the fourth meta-process of mediatization (Krotz, 2007) and also recently embraced the visual turn.

The study implies a multimodal discourse analysis in communication, especially when the global crisis overhauls the world. The five articles in part three used rather mixed methods that included online and offline surveys and easily accessible tools of TCAT and Gephi to discover both private and public narratives, not only on trending social media like Twitter and TikTok, but also on students' diaries. It was found that (1) international organizations prefer spreading content on TikTok; (2) fake news, hate content, and aggressive posts on Twitter have contributed to the spread of conspiracy theories; and (3) people's needs to express their inner tensions have led to an unprecedented level of media consumption during the pandemic.

The core function of media to connect and share can never be ignored, as the whole academic community is built around the process of how information is conveyed and received. Therefore, part four mainly addresses issues on the reception and usage of communication during the first wave of Covid. The five papers in this section focus on people's use of digital media for social interactions during the epidemic, children's involvement in online schooling during the lockdowns, and changes in Google search patterns and Polish public opinion. The methods applied in this section are specifically worth our attention. Online-based participatory research frees researchers from geographical restrictions, the corpus-based text analysis precisely extracts senders' emotions and attitudes, and the application of Google Trends in a synchronic or diachronic manner helps researchers quickly gauge public opinion.

Generally, the book provides insightful ideas on how to cope with and follow multiple shifts in media studies, which, with the rapid growth in technology, consider online interaction, public opinion, multimodalities, social narratives, etc., through increasing data- and computer-oriented methodologies. From all the articles in the collection, we might also predict that more inter- or trans-disciplinary studies will emerge, as Covid and government responses like quarantine have forced more and more media scholars around the world to focus on problem-oriented and tech-based research with their colleagues in other fields like political science, discourse studies, cultural studies, computer science, and psychology.

After almost three years since the first wave, people have tended to rely on social media to express their ideas and receive messages. However, online preferences are detected by algorithms that may constantly feed people with specific categories of information that could simplify thoughts, further deconstruct subjectivity, and, finally, reshape habits or values. Public institutions, political parties, and companies further manipulate such a phenomenon. Consequently, the world is now even more culturally and politically isolated. Further changes like the isolation in the field of media have already served as a potentially interesting topic for future studies. If we follow this line of thought and apply some of the promising methods introduced in the book, we could continue to shed light on the deeper issues we are facing in the media world.

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