

The Social Impact of Economic Downturn Quantitative Media Analysis on Theft Offenses Committed by Women

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Abstract

When it comes to side effects, in each country a recession period is usually followed by economic and social decline. Depending on the area in which it manifests, this decline gets a unique specificity and it affects the most the vulnerable members of the society. A scanty economy would negatively stimulate the poor members of the society just as much as “bad” society would affect the level of a state’s economy. These influences are interdependent and they are creating a vicious circle.

The state of crisis is generating exceptional circumstances in which members of society, with certain idiosyncrasies, gets uncharacteristic traits. That is why such a category includes representatives of the female gender, who’s public image is exceptionally associated to the offender’s quality.

In order to grasp the peculiarities of this specific category, a media analysis of the phenomenon, was considered useful.

Key words: social impact, economic downturn, theft, media analysis, women.

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1. Introduction

Generally speaking a media analysis should cover topics of interest and describe how these are captured and reported by the media and afterwards presented to the public (Berelson, 1988).

Especially when it comes to the press it is very important what kind of messages are submitted and what kind of messages are being neglected, because depending on how the specific topics are addressed, the risk that appears is to create a distorted perception. In this context the question that arises is how many of these messages are erroneous? And when it comes to women’s antisocial behavior, how is that phenomenon viewed by the public, through the “lens” of the press? Are there contexts, such as a poor economy, in which, attenuate circumstances are granted to this kind of behavior? The present study aims to answer these questions and to bring a touch of objectivity to the matter, by quantitatively analyzing media’s publicistic output (Wimmer, Dominick, 2010).

Following the specific steps of a media analysis by using as a searching term a phase resulting from joining the words “theft” and “women”, in order to cover the field of analysis, we targeted the electronic editions of four national newspapers: Adevărul, Evenimentul Zilei, Jurnalul Național, România Liberă. These journals were selected by referring to the Audit Runs Section (Kent, 1994), on the website of the Romanian Audit Bureau Transmedia (BRAT) using the following criteria:

- the level of the publication – were chosen papers that address general topics,
- for the coverage of topics and dissemination publication - national newspapers were selected,
- the periodicity criterion - took into account that, given the topics of interest, the daily newspapers provide the necessary volume and a sufficient semantic corpus.
- other criterion was the newspaper circulation figures (Table no.1)

Table no. 1 Circulation audit for the Newspapers included in the analysis

Publication	Category	Periodicity	Aria	Circulation	Total broadcast
<u>Evenimentul Zilei</u>	General	Daily	National	17.961	12.059
<u>Adevărul</u>	General	Daily	National	14.692	9.076
<u>Romania Liberă</u>	General	Daily	National	14.228	11.346
<u>Jurnalul Național</u>	General	Daily	National	9.605	4.205

Source: www.brat.ro/audit-tiraje/cifre-de-difuzare

2. Quantitative analysis of the selected newspapers

After choosing the newspapers, a specific search was un-winded using the phase “woman theft”. This action generated many results, but some of the items were useless and were removed because even though by their title were corresponding to the investigated areas, article’s content was not relevant for the research objective, that kind of "error" being possible because the searching terms are common and frequently used by journalists in press articles.

Although the current periodic reference for a press analysis is 6 months, given that the media is not very generous with articles about this social category of women, in order to have the accuracy in interpretations and to obtain significant results, the reference period envisaged for data collection was extended to four years between the period of January 2012 to July 2015. There were also situations in which the searching terms generated reference results previous to the period, which caused their removal from the semantic corpus.

The selected items were processed online in txt documents through the website <http://document.online-convert.com/> in order to be processed.

After documents transformation, each item titles have been extracted and transferred in a separated document and data unrelated to the articles were also eliminated.

In the next phase, the text of each article was copied and transcribed to the site <https://wordcounter.net/> for that the words contained by each one to be numerated.

Another operation aiming quantitative analysis was the labeling of the items (articles) (Neuman, 2011). Each one received a title containing: the gender of the person who wrote that article (M- masculine, F- feminine, N - unknown author), the number of words contained by the article, the section of the newspaper where that article appears and the title under which was published.

Subsequently all the articles were sorted considering the year of publication, the newspaper section where they appear, the searching terms used for selection (accompanied by the results generated by the search) and the publication they were selected from.

For the present study the years of appearance, taken into account for targeted journals, were 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015.

The searching term initially generated a significant number of articles, the total number emphasized by the search was 382 items (figures are presented in the table below), but based on whether the press articles were related or not to the search terms, only the significant articles were selected to be part of the semantic body. That required a rigorous selection having as criteria the importance and representativeness of those items for the main objective of the research and it involved the elimination of more than half of the initial batch of articles. Even after that operation was performed, a significant number of items still remained available in order to carry out media analysis.

Table no. 2 The total number of results generated by searching terms

The number of results generated by searching terms	Evenimentul Zilei	Adevărul	România Liberă	Jurnalul Național	Total
Women theft	-	264	118	-	382

Source: own research

3. Representative items

As it can be seen in the Table. no. 3, after the selection, only **125** articles were correspondent to the searching terms, provided only by two of the journals taken to study, the other two not providing any. It seems that publication such as Evenimentul Zilei and Jurnalul Național, didn't pay attention in the 2012-2015 period to those kind of subjects, most probably not incurring interest for the specifics and the format of the publication. That is why, considering these issues, in the subsequent stages these journals will be eliminated and only the newspapers Adevărul and România Liberă will be kept as source of analysis.

Table no. 3 The number of items representative for searching terms

The number of items representative for searching terms	Evenimentul Zilei	Adevărul	România Liberă	Jurnalul Național	Total
Women theft	-	122	-	3	125

Source: own research

Considering the research recommendations regarding the volume of the semantic body (between 100 and 200 items for each search term), although in some of the years took in account for the present study, we may notice an absence of the subject in the media landscape, correlated with certain time periods, that will be further highlighted, 125 is a sufficient amount of items to formulate pertinent conclusions about the image provided by the media about women thief.

4. Occurrence frequency and comparative analysis of the articles in newspapers

A comparative analysis, by years, was made in order to see the differences in addressing the subject. It followed to observe the occurrence frequency of articles about women thief, related to the year of apparition and the number of the newspaper in the selected journals.

Table no. 4 Comparative analysis - occurrence frequency / year / number of articles in newspapers

Occurrence frequency / Newspaper				
Searching terms	Reference year	Adevărul	Jurnalul Național	Total
Women theft	2012	62	1	63
	2013	27	1	28
	2014	23	1	24
	2015	10	1	11

Source: own research

Even at an empirically level it can be easily noted, that the only newspaper really interested in presenting the phenomenon is Adevărul, Jurnalul Național having only 3 press articles published regarding this subject, in a four years period. What is interesting about this paper is the fact that the number of words used in articles increased from 143 in 2012, to exceeding 600 words in the following years, which means that although the volume was little, the interest in the subject was high.

5. Gender of the persons who wrote the article

Regarding the way that data to be analyzed were systematize, returning to debate issues about the gender of the author, it can be observed that from the total of 125 articles selected after the searching process, the gender distribution looks as presented in the table below.

Table no. 5 Gender of the authors

Number of articles in the press according to gender of the author												
Searching terms	Evenimentul Zilei			Adevărul			România Liberă			Jurnalul Național		
	M	F	N	M	F	N	M	F	N	M	F	N
Women theft				44	48	30				2		1

Source: own research

There are articles written by males, articles written by females and articles by an unknown authors considered as neutral (N) and a summary analysis on the origins of articles, relevant for the searching terms, in the publications included by the study, reveals that the proportion of articles written by males and published during the four years in Adevărul, is 44 articles, to 48 written by females and 30 unsigned (neutral) and Jurnalul Național 5 / F, 5 / F and 6 / N. As it can be seen Adevărul has an almost equal number of articles written by men and women. The articles without specified author, although numerous are not relevant in this quantitative analysis.

6. Number of words used in all the articles

Another criterion used to systematize the data was the number of words used to describe the subject referring to searching terms in the articles (Bryman, 2001). In four years the number of words used, in the written media in order to describe the antisocial behavior of women consisting in theft offences was 25.320 words. The articles published in Adevărul contained between 61 and 667 words, only 13 had under 100 words, the most of them (67 articles) had between 100 and 200 words per written article, 28 articles between 200 and 300 words, 8 between 300 and 400, 3 between 400 and 500 words, 2 between 500 and 600 words and only one with over 600 words.

Table no. 6 Number of words used in all the articles

Number of used words					
Searching terms	Occurrence frequency / Newspaper				
	Evenimentul Zilei	Adevărul	România Liberă	Jurnalul Național	Total
Women theft		23996		1324	25320

Source: own research

. The most majority of the articles (the ones which are containing between 100 and 200 words) are news, short articles where the ideas are briefly communicated as short informative message, without being developed or interpreted (Krippendorff, 1980).

7. The section of the paper

Of very high importance, for the relevance of the research, is the section of the newspaper where the articles using this amount of words were published. As we can see below Adevărul have published the highest number of articles in the Local section, covering the subject by gaining information from all areas of the country and by that ensuring accuracy and objectivity to the perception of the public about the subject.

Table no. 9 The section of the papers in wich the articles are published - Adevărul

Adevărul								
Newspaper section / Number of articles								
Searching terms	Locale	News eveniment	News București	News social	News sport	Internațional	Life Style	Moldova social
Women theft	110	7	3	1		1		

Source: own research

As for Jurnalul Național the sections are few and insignificant. (Table. no. 8)

Table no. 8 The section of the papers in wich the articles are published – Jurnalul Național

Jurnalul Național			
Newspaper section / Number of articles			
Știri			Politică
Searching terms	Observator	Externe	Reportaje
Women theft	2	1	

Source: own research

8. Conclusions

It seems, that over the period considered for the present study, media coverage and interest on the subject of women committing theft offenses seemed to lower, since from one year to another the number of articles had diminished from 62 in year 2012, to less than half in 2013 and 2014 and only 10 articles in 2015.

The reason may be the decreasing of this type of crime committed by women as a result of overcoming economic decline or the disappearance of the sensational appearance of such news by the emergence of the familiarization effect and therefore the increasing tolerance towards this kind of social events. These findings may be subject to further research requiring extensive analysis on the appearance, disappearance, causes and effects of this phenomenon.

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