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### ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the transformation of art reporting and art criticism within the contemporary digital media environment, with a particular focus on the Croatian media landscape. The research starts from the premise that the relationship between art, media, and the public has been significantly reshaped by processes of digitalization, platformization, algorithmic visibility, and the digital attention economy. In this context, art is no longer mediated exclusively through traditional forms of cultural journalism, such as reviews, interviews, reports, or essays, but increasingly through hybrid communicative forms shaped by the need for visibility, immediacy, emotional engagement, and audience interaction. The central research problem concerns the changing conditions under which art and artists are represented in the media, and the extent to which critical and analytical discourse can be sustained in an environment dominated by click-based metrics and platform logic. The dissertation explores how media narratives about art are produced, structured, and circulated, and how they oscillate between cultural interpretation, promotional discourse, and attention-oriented communication. It also investigates whether art criticism has disappeared from contemporary media or whether it has been displaced, transformed, and rearticulated within new formats and communicative contexts. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is interdisciplinary and draws on communication studies, cultural theory, discourse theory, mediatization theory, and studies of cultural journalism and art criticism. Media are not approached as neutral channels of information transmission, but as active agents in the construction of cultural meaning, visibility, and value. The dissertation understands cultural journalism as a field in which informational, evaluative, promotional, and affective dimensions often overlap. Within this framework, clickbait is not interpreted solely as a degraded or manipulative form of communication, but as a structural symptom of the digital attention economy. It reflects the conditions of media production in which visibility, circulation, and audience engagement become

central measures of relevance. The dissertation also reconsiders the role of art criticism in contemporary media. Historically, art criticism has functioned as a mediating practice between artwork and audience, grounded in interpretation, contextualization, evaluation, and public debate. However, in the current digital media environment, this role is increasingly challenged by accelerated production rhythms, shortened formats, platform metrics, and the growing influence of promotional communication. The study therefore asks not only whether art criticism still exists, but under what conditions it can remain socially relevant, critically meaningful, and communicatively effective.

Methodologically, the dissertation employs a qualitative multi-method research design. Three complementary methods were used: semi-structured interviews, media content analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists, editors, public relations professionals, and artists in order to gain insight into professional perspectives on digital visibility, media logic, cultural value, and the changing role of art criticism. The interview findings provide an important contextual layer, revealing how different actors involved in the production and mediation of art perceive the pressures and possibilities of the contemporary media environment. The second methodological component is a qualitative content analysis of 370 online media articles related to art and culture. The articles were collected from two of the most widely read Croatian online news portals, Index.hr and 24sata.hr, over a defined six-month period. The analysis examined variables such as media outlet, authorship, tone, emotional intensity, reporting type, communicative function, dominant frame, clickbait presence, critical depth, dominant actor, and visibility mechanisms. This phase made it possible to identify dominant patterns in Croatian online art reporting and to examine the structural characteristics of media coverage. The third methodological component is critical discourse analysis, conducted on a selected subsample of 30 articles. The selection was based on patterns identified in the content analysis, particularly headline structure and dominant discursive characteristics. The discourse analysis focused on how art-related topics are linguistically and rhetorically constructed, with attention to strategies such as sensationalization, personalization, emotionalization, curiosity gaps, cultural evaluation, promotional discourse, and cultural identity. This phase enabled a deeper interpretation of the discursive mechanisms through which art is framed, simplified, legitimized, or made visible. The empirical findings show that contemporary art reporting in Croatian digital media cannot be reduced to a single dominant model. Instead, several overlapping models of art reporting coexist. The first is a visibility-driven or clickbait-oriented model, structured around attention, immediacy, and headline attractiveness. In this model, art becomes newsworthy when it can be associated with surprise, controversy, celebrity, emotional appeal, or recognizable cultural references. The second is a promotional or public relations-oriented model, in which media coverage often takes the form of announcements, institutional communication, event promotion, or affirmative presentation of cultural products. The third is a cultural-evaluative model, which retains elements of traditional cultural journalism but often

adapts them to more accessible, narrative, and emotionally engaging formats. The fourth is an analytical-critical model, closest to the classical understanding of art criticism, but relatively limited in the analyzed sample. The fifth and most representative model is the hybrid model of art reporting, in which journalistic, promotional, evaluative, emotional, and clickbait-oriented elements converge within the same media text. The findings indicate that art criticism has not disappeared but has been reconfigured. Analytical and critical discourse continues to exist, but it often appears in hybridized forms, embedded within formats shaped by visibility, brevity, personalization, and promotional circulation. This means that the central issue is not a simple opposition between clickbait and criticism, but the transformation of the conditions under which criticism can appear, circulate, and remain relevant. The dissertation therefore argues that the frequently invoked narrative of the decline of criticism is analytically insufficient. A more precise interpretation points to displacement, fragmentation, and adaptation. The content analysis reveals that art-related media coverage is strongly influenced by attention-oriented strategies. Clickbait elements, emotionalization, and personalization appear as important mechanisms through which media texts attempt to attract and retain audience attention. At the same time, these strategies often contribute to the simplification of complex cultural content and the reduction of interpretative depth. Articles with stronger visibility mechanisms tend to rely more heavily on emotionally charged headlines, personalized framings, and simplified narrative structures. This suggests that digital reach and discursive simplification are closely connected. The discourse analysis further demonstrates that media texts about art are frequently organized through hybrid discursive configurations. Promotional discourse is often naturalized as journalistic information, cultural evaluation is softened or personalized, and emotional appeal is used to make artistic or cultural topics more accessible and engaging. Sensationalization and curiosity gaps function as tools for attracting attention, while personalization shifts the focus from artistic work to individual biography, celebrity, or subjective experience. Cultural value is therefore not only described but actively constructed through language, framing, and narrative organization. The interview findings confirm that these transformations are not merely textual but structural. Journalists and editors recognize the pressure of digital metrics, algorithmic visibility, and audience engagement. Public relations professionals emphasize the need to translate artistic content into media-friendly narratives, while artists frequently perceive media representations of their work as selective, simplified, or overly dependent on entertainment value. Across all participant groups, there is an awareness that cultural communication is shaped by the tension between artistic complexity and the demand for visibility. One of the main contributions of this dissertation is the development of a conceptual model of contemporary art reporting based on empirical findings. The model illustrates the interaction between structural media conditions, discursive strategies, and emerging models of art reporting. It shows how the digital attention economy, algorithmic visibility, and platform metrics shape

discursive strategies such as sensationalization, emotionalization, personalization, curiosity gaps, and promotional discourse. These strategies, in turn, produce different models of art reporting, which most often converge within a dominant hybrid model. The model also identifies potential future formats for art reporting, including analytical podcasts, narrative video essays, interpretative social media threads, and long-form hybrid digital criticism. The dissertation contributes to the theoretical understanding of cultural journalism by reconceptualizing art criticism as a dynamic and adaptive communicative practice rather than a fixed genre. It also contributes methodologically by combining interviews, content analysis, and critical discourse analysis within a single interpretative framework. Practically, it offers recommendations for media professionals and art organizations, emphasizing the need to balance visibility with analytical depth, to distinguish more clearly between promotional and critical discourse, and to develop formats that can attract audiences without abandoning interpretation and contextualization. Ultimately, the dissertation argues that the future of art criticism does not depend on a return to traditional models alone. Rather, it depends on the capacity of cultural journalism and art criticism to adapt to new media conditions while preserving their core function: the critical interpretation, contextualization, and meaningful mediation of art within the public sphere. In this sense, the relationship between clickbait and criticism should not be understood as a simple opposition, but as a field of tension in which the future of cultural journalism is being negotiated.

Key words: art criticism; cultural journalism; clickbait; digital attention economy; media narratives; discourse analysis; algorithmic visibility; hybrid media formats

POVZETEK

## **UMETNOST IN UMETNIKI MED CLICKBAITOM IN KRITIKO: MEDIJSKI NARATIVI V SODOBNEM DIGITALNEM OKOLJU**

Disertacija obravnava preobrazbo poročanja o umetnosti in umetniške kritike v sodobnem digitalnem medijskem okolju s posebnim poudarkom na hrvaškem medijskem prostoru. Izhaja iz predpostavke, da so digitalizacija, platformizacija, algoritmična vidnost in ekonomija pozornosti pomembno preoblikovale odnos med umetnostjo, mediji in javnostjo. V takšnem okolju umetnost ni več posredovana izključno skozi tradicionalne oblike kulturnega novinarstva, kot so kritike, intervjuji, poročila ali eseji, temveč vse pogosteje skozi hibridne komunikacijske oblike, ki jih oblikujejo potrebe po vidnosti, hitrosti, čustveni privlačnosti in interakciji z občinstvom. Osrednji raziskovalni problem se nanaša na spremenjene pogoje, v katerih so umetnost in umetniki predstavljeni v medijih, ter na vprašanje, v kolikšni meri je mogoče ohraniti kritični in analitični diskurz v okolju, ki ga vse bolj določajo klikovne metrike, algoritmi in platformna logika. Disertacija raziskuje, kako nastajajo, se strukturirajo in krožijo medijski narativi o umetnosti ter kako nihajo med kulturno interpretacijo, promocijskim diskurzom in komunikacijo, usmerjeno v pritegnitev pozornosti. Hkrati preučuje, ali je umetniška kritika iz sodobnih medijev izginila ali pa se je preoblikovala, razpršila in ponovno vzpostavila v novih formatih in komunikacijskih kontekstih. Teoretski okvir disertacije je interdisciplinaren in povezuje komunikologijo, kulturno teorijo, teorijo diskurza, teorijo mediatizacije ter raziskave kulturnega novinarstva in umetniške kritike. Mediji v disertaciji niso obravnavani kot nevtralni prenašalci informacij, temveč kot aktivni akterji pri oblikovanju kulturnega pomena, vidnosti in vrednosti. Kulturno novinarstvo je razumljeno kot področje, v katerem se pogosto prepletajo informativne, evalvativne, promocijske in afektivne dimenzije. V tem okviru clickbait ni razumljen zgolj kot degradirana ali manipulativna oblika komunikacije, temveč kot strukturni simptom digitalne ekonomije pozornosti. Razkriva pogoje medijske produkcije, v katerih vidnost, kroženje vsebin in angažma občinstva postajajo osrednja merila relevantnosti. Disertacija ponovno premisli tudi vlogo umetniške kritike v sodobnih medijih. Zgodovinsko gledano je umetniška kritika delovala kot posredovalna praksa med umetniškim delom in občinstvom, utemeljena na interpretaciji, kontekstualizaciji, vrednotenju in javni razpravi, v sodobnem digitalnem medijskem okolju pa to vlogo vse bolj izzivajo pospešeni produkcijski ritmi, krajši formati, platformne metrike in naraščajoč vpliv promocijske komunikacije. Raziskava zato ne sprašuje le, ali umetniška

kritika še obstaja, temveč pod kakšnimi pogoji lahko ostane družbeno relevantna, kritično smiselna in komunikacijsko učinkovita. Metodološko disertacija uporablja kvalitativni večmetodni raziskovalni pristop. Uporabljene so tri komplementarne metode: polstrukturirani intervjuji, analiza medijske vsebine in kritična diskurzivna analiza. Polstrukturirani intervjuji so bili izvedeni z novinarji, uredniki, strokovnjaki za odnose z javnostmi in umetniki z namenom pridobiti vpogled v profesionalne perspektive o digitalni vidnosti, medijski logiki, kulturni vrednosti in spreminjajoči se vlogi umetniške kritike. Ugotovitve iz intervjujev zagotavljajo pomembno kontekstualno raven, saj razkrivajo, kako različni akterji, vključeni v produkcijo in posredovanje umetnosti, razumejo pritiske in možnosti sodobnega medijskega okolja. Drugi metodološki del predstavlja kvalitativna analiza vsebine 370 spletnih medijskih člankov, povezanih z umetnostjo in kulturo. Članki so bili zbrani na dveh najbolj branih hrvaških spletnih novičarskih portalih, Index.hr in 24sata.hr, v določenem šestmesečnem obdobju. Analiza je zajela spremenljivke, kot so medij, avtorstvo, ton, čustvena intenzivnost, tip poročanja, komunikacijska funkcija, prevladujoči okvir, prisotnost clickbaita, kritična globina, prevladujoči akter in mehanizmi vidnosti. Ta faza je omogočila prepoznavanje prevladujočih vzorcev v hrvaškem spletnem poročanju o umetnosti ter analizo strukturnih značilnosti medijskega poročanja. Tretji metodološki del je kritična diskurzivna analiza, izvedena na izbranem podvzorcu 30 člankov. Izbor je temeljil na vzorcih, prepoznanih v analizi vsebine, zlasti na strukturi naslovov in prevladujočih diskurzivnih značilnostih. Diskurzivna analiza se je osredotočila na to, kako so umetnostne teme jezikovno in retorično oblikovane, pri čemer je posebno pozornost namenila strategijam, kot so senzacionalizacija, personalizacija, emocionalizacija, radovednostna vrzel, kulturno vrednotenje, promocijski diskurz in kulturna identiteta. Ta faza je omogočila globljo interpretacijo diskurzivnih mehanizmov, skozi katere je umetnost uokvirjena, poenostavljena, legitimirana ali narejena vidna. Empirične ugotovitve kažejo, da sodobnega poročanja o umetnosti v hrvaških digitalnih medijih ni mogoče pojasniti z enim samim prevladujočim modelom. Nasprotno, soobstaja več prekrivajočih se modelov poročanja. Prvi je model, usmerjen v vidnost oziroma clickbait, ki temelji na logiki pozornosti, neposrednega angažmaja občinstva in privlačnosti naslovov. V tem modelu umetnost postane novičarsko relevantna takrat, ko jo je mogoče povezati s presenečenjem, kontroverzo, zvezdništvom, čustveno privlačnostjo ali prepoznavnimi kulturnimi referencami. Drugi je promocijski oziroma PR-usmerjeni model, v katerem medijsko poročanje pogosto prevzema obliko napovedi, institucionalne komunikacije, promocije dogodkov ali afirmativne predstavitve kulturnih produktov. Tretji je kulturno-evalvativni model, ki ohranja elemente tradicionalnega kulturnega novinarstva, vendar jih pogosto prilagaja dostopnejšim, narativnim in čustveno privlačnim formatom. Četrti je analitično-kritični model, ki je najbližji klasičnemu razumevanju umetniške kritike, vendar je v analiziranem vzorcu razmeroma omejen. Peti in najbolj reprezentativen je hibridni model poročanja o umetnosti, v katerem se v istem medijskem besedilu združujejo novinarski, promocijski, evalvativni,

čustveni in clickbait elementi. Ugotovitve kažejo, da umetniška kritika ni izginila, temveč se je preoblikovala. Analitični in kritični diskurz še vedno obstaja, vendar se pogosto pojavlja v hibridiziranih oblikah, vgrajenih v formate, ki jih določajo vidnost, kratkost, personalizacija in promocijsko kroženje. Osrednje vprašanje zato ni preprosto nasprotje med clickbaitom in kritiko, temveč preobrazba pogojev, pod katerimi se lahko kritika pojavlja, kroži in ostaja relevantna. Disertacija zato trdi, da pogosto ponavljana teza o zatonu kritike ni analitično zadostna. Natančnejša interpretacija kaže na premestitev, fragmentacijo in prilagoditev kritike novim medijskim razmeram. Analiza vsebine razkriva, da je medijsko poročanje o umetnosti močno zaznamovano s strategijami, usmerjenimi v pozornost. Clickbait elementi, emocionalizacija in personalizacija se kažejo kot pomembni mehanizmi, s katerimi medijska besedila poskušajo pritegniti in zadržati pozornost občinstva. Hkrati te strategije pogosto prispevajo k poenostavitvi kompleksnih kulturnih vsebin in zmanjšanju interpretativne globine. Članki z izrazitejšimi mehanizmi vidnosti se pogosteje opirajo na čustveno nabite naslove, personalizirane okvire in poenostavljene narativne strukture. To kaže, da sta digitalni doseg in diskurzivna poenostavitev tesno povezana. Kritična diskurzivna analiza nadalje pokaže, da so medijska besedila o umetnosti pogosto organizirana skozi hibridne diskurzivne konfiguracije. Promocijski diskurz je pogosto naturaliziran kot novinarska informacija, kulturno vrednotenje je omiljeno ali personalizirano, čustveni apel pa se uporablja za večjo dostopnost in privlačnost umetnostnih ali kulturnih tem. Senzacionalizacija in radovednostne vrzeli delujejo kot orodja za privabljanje pozornosti, personalizacija pa premika pozornost z umetniškega dela na biografijo, zvezdnitvo ali subjektivno izkušnjo. Kulturna vrednost tako ni zgolj opisana, temveč se aktivno konstruira skozi jezik, uokvirjanje in narativno organizacijo. Ugotovitve iz intervjujev potrjujejo, da te preobrazbe niso zgolj besedilne, temveč strukturne. Novinarji in uredniki prepoznavao pritisk digitalnih metrik, algoritmične vidnosti in angažmaja občinstva. Strokovnjaki za odnose z javnostmi poudarjajo potrebo po prevajanju umetniških vsebin v medijsko privlačne narative, umetniki pa medijske predstavitve svojega dela pogosto doživljajo kot selektivne, poenostavljene ali pretirano odvisne od zabavne vrednosti. V vseh skupinah sodelujočih je prisotno zavedanje, da kulturno komunikacijo oblikuje napetost med umetniško kompleksnostjo in zahtevo po vidnosti. Eden ključnih prispevkov disertacije je oblikovanje konceptualnega modela sodobnega poročanja o umetnosti, ki temelji na empiričnih ugotovitvah. Model prikazuje interakcijo med strukturnimi medijskimi pogoji, diskurzivnimi strategijami in nastajajočimi modeli poročanja o umetnosti. Pokaže, kako digitalna ekonomija pozornosti, algoritmična vidnost in platformne metrike oblikujejo diskurzivne strategije, kot so senzacionalizacija, emocionalizacija, personalizacija, radovednostna vrzel in promocijski diskurz. Te strategije nato proizvajajo različne modele poročanja, ki se najpogosteje združujejo v prevladujočem hibridnem modelu. Model obenem prepoznava možne prihodnje formate poročanja o umetnosti, med njimi analitične podkaste, narativne videoeseje, interpretativne niti na družbenih omrežjih in dolgotrajno hibridno digitalno kritiko. Disertacija prispeva k teoretskemu

razumevanju kulturnega novinarstva s tem, da umetniško kritiko rekonceptualizira kot dinamično in prilagodljivo komunikacijsko prakso, ne pa kot fiksni žanr. Metodološko prispeva z združevanjem intervjujev, analize vsebine in kritične diskurzivne analize v enoten interpretativni okvir. Na praktični ravni ponuja priporočila za medijske strokovnjake in umetnostne organizacije, pri čemer poudarja potrebo po uravnoteženju vidnosti in analitične globine, jasnejšem razlikovanju med promocijskim in kritičnim diskurzom ter razvoju formatov, ki lahko pritegnejo občinstvo, ne da bi opustili interpretacijo in kontekstualizacijo. Disertacija nazadnje ugotavlja, da prihodnost umetniške kritike ni odvisna zgolj od vrnitve k tradicionalnim modelom. Odvisna je predvsem od sposobnosti kulturnega novinarstva in umetniške kritike, da se prilagodita novim medijskim pogojem, pri tem pa ohranita svojo temeljno funkcijo: kritično interpretacijo, kontekstualizacijo in smiselno posredovanje umetnosti v javni sferi. Razmerje med clickbaitom in kritiko zato ne sme biti razumljeno kot preprosto nasprotje, temveč kot polje napetosti, v katerem se danes oblikuje prihodnost kulturnega novinarstva.

Ključne besede: umetniška kritika; kulturno novinarstvo; clickbait; ekonomija pozornosti; medijski narativi; diskurzivna analiza; algoritmična vidnost; hibridni medijski formati