

Teorije zavjere u medijima.

Gunčević, Tena

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2019

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Croatian Studies / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet hrvatskih studija**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:111:902890>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-05-12**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of University of Zagreb, Centre for Croatian Studies](#)





UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
CROATIAN STUDIES
COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

Tena Gunčević

Conspiracy Theories in the Media

BACHELOR THESIS

Zagreb, 2019



UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
CROATIAN STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Tena Gunčević

Conspiracy Theories in the Media

BACHELOR THESIS

Mentor: Spomenka Bogdanić, Lecturer

Zagreb, 2019

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Definition and Famous Conspiracy Theories.....	5
2.1. Definition of Conspiracy Theory	5
2.2. Famous Conspiracy Theories	7
2.3. Connotation Regarding Famous Conspiracy Theories.....	8
3. Conspiracy Theories in the Media	10
3.1. How is Conspiracy Theory Presented in the Media?	10
3.2. Insight into the Method of the Media Representation.....	12
3.2.1. Disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370	12
3.2.2. The Death of Adolf Hitler	13
3.2.3. Staged Apollo Moon Landing	14
4. Analysis of the Articles about Conspiracy Theories.....	16
4.1. Analysis of the Conspiracy Theory: <i>The Sun</i>	17
4.2. Analysis of the Conspiracy Theory: <i>The New York Times</i>	18
4.3. Analysis of The Conspiracy Theory: Conclusion	19
5. Conclusion.....	20
6. Bibliography	21

1. Introduction

Modern society relies mostly on logical thinking, facts and common sense. In the world where people socialise via Internet platforms and social media, one can easily be led into relying on the facts presented by the mass media. People are used to believing everything they are shown. Providing an example, one of the most used quotes nowadays is *'Pic or it did not happen'*, meaning that people do not question the truthfulness of the images or the statements.

On the one hand, following the rules of the government, the law and the culture breed inevitable consequences - people follow the trends and the majority of media consumers are afraid to be different, they embrace uniformity. Whenever someone has a different opinion, statement, appearance, etc., they are often teased, especially if they state their opinion publicly.

On the other hand, a fair number of individuals are willing to assert their opinions, even when they differ from the opinion of the majority. They question illogical thinking and, when in doubt, they critically analyse various information. They often provide an argument and proof as to why something is controversial. Notwithstanding their valid arguments and evidence, they are often criticised because they do not follow the mass criteria, tradition and popular opinions.

The main intention of this paper is to provide examples, facts and definitions connected to conspiracy theories in the media. In the first chapter, I will define the term conspiracy theory and provide examples of famous conspiracy theories. In the second chapter, I will talk about the role conspiracy theories have in the media, while comparing and analysing articles about conspiracy theory. In the third chapter, I will carry-out a detailed analysis of a conspiracy theory in a tabloid and compare it to the report of the same conspiracy theory written on a news portal. At the end of the paper, I will sum up everything and form a conclusion.

2. Definition and Famous Conspiracy Theories

In the first chapter, introduction into the thesis was presented. In the current chapter, the definition, origin and historical background of the term conspiracy theory will be provided. Moreover, famous conspiracy theories will be sorted into recognisable categories. An example of the most notable conspiracy theory of each given category will be described, providing the basic information about that conspiracy theory. Lastly, a connotation of famous conspiracy theories will be given.

2.1. Definition of Conspiracy Theory

Oxford Dictionary defines conspiracy as: ‘A secret plan by a group of people to do something harmful or illegal.’ The origin of the word *conspiracy* comes from Late Middle English, regarding an Anglo-Norman French word ‘*conspiracie*’. The word ‘*conspiracie*’ is an alternation of the old French word ‘*conspiration*’, which is based on the Latin word ‘*conspirare*’

Furthermore, Oxford Dictionary provides a detailed analysis of the word *conspiracy*. The word *conspiracy* can be divided into two parts: *con* and *spirare*. The first part of the word, *con*, is translated as *together*. Furthermore, the other half of the word, *spirare*, is translated as the verb *to breathe*. Synonyms of the verb *to conspire* are: *to plot* and *to agree*. While observing the origin and synonyms of the word *conspiracy*, one can deduce that the term is related to something secret and unlawful.

In addition, Oxford Dictionary provides a definition for another relevant term: *conspiracy theory*. Concisely, the conspiracy theory is: ‘The belief that a secret conspiracy is responsible for a particular event.’ A person who studies and examines conspiracy theories is defined as a conspiracy theorist.

Ted Goertzel (1994) held a survey in which he contributed to the subject with interesting results about beliefs in conspiracy theories amongst citizens of New Jersey, United States of America. In the summary of the article, Goertzel states the following:

A survey of 348 residents of southwestern New Jersey showed that most believed that several of a list of ten conspiracy theories were at least probably true. People who believed in one conspiracy were more likely to also believe in others. Belief in conspiracies was correlated with anomia, lack of interpersonal trust, and insecurity about employment. Black and Hispanic respondents were more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than were white respondents. Young people were slightly more likely to believe in conspiracy theories, but there were few significant correlations with gender, educational level, or occupational category. (Goertzel, 1994)

Nowadays, conspiracy theories are incorporated into everyday life to such an extent that one can find a very detailed conspiracy theory about the popularity of the term conspiracy theory, declares Robert Brotherton (2017: 9 - 12). Brotherton explains that the nation of United States of America believes in the conspiracy theories to a much greater extent than other countries worldwide.

Brotherton claims that, although the Americans are very likely to believe in the truthfulness of conspiracy theories, Europeans, especially residents of the United Kingdom, are suspicious of the truthfulness of the conspiracy theories. He goes even further and completes his statement with the thought that it is not just Westerners, but the whole world that believes in conspiracy theories. Brotherton describes believing in conspiracy theories *a global phenomenon* (2017: 11).

Different approaches to defining a conspiracy theory are presented by Aaron John Gulyas (2016: 11 - 25). Gulyas made a significant point when he discussed that, throughout the history, conspiracy theories were never considered to be credible enough to reveal disinformation. Conspiracy theories were always seen as controversial material which has to be discussed critically.

Nowadays, a conspiracy theory is considered to be a challenging story about provocative current or historical event, informs Gulyas (2016: 24 - 25). The particularities of a conspiracy theory are its criticism, consistency and persistency. Gulyas instructs that there are several important guidelines which are fundamental when defining a provocative event as a conspiracy theory. Those are a prominent stand of narrative, a historical context in which a conspiracy theory emerged and a connection between a conspiracy theory and the wider mass culture.

2.2. Famous Conspiracy Theories

While the conspiracy theorists do investigate all aspects of life, they are oftentimes drawn to studying certain fields. Those areas are usually presented to media consumers via new or traditional media. The most commonly recurring fields of conspiracy theorists' interest are:

- Government
- Politics
- Space
- Extra-terrestrial activity
- Advanced technology
- Terrorism
- Deaths of famous people

As Gulyas (2016: 31) summarises, addressing Michael Barkun (2003), the essence of almost every conspiracy theory is the assertion that everything is connected. Gulyas highlights the main objective, stating the central aspect of conspiracy theories in general:

No event happens in isolation. Similarly, no event is truly insignificant, random, or merely unlucky. Every death is suspicious, every utterance of prominent government or business figures is freighted with sinister meaning, and every act of government is part of a wide web of deceit designed to enslave humanity. (Barkun: 2003)

The example and interpretation of the following conspiracy theories, sorted into categories, will be presented: disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, death of Adolf Hitler, and allegedly fabricated Apollo Moon landing.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 is one of the world's greatest unsolved mysteries. *Time* (2018) published an article in which a journalist described the known facts of disappearance and investigated the story behind the pilots' suicidal attempt. The plane took off from Kuala Lumpur and was heading to Beijing with 227 passengers, including 2 infants and 12 crew members. At 12:14 A.M. on March 8th, 2014, Malaysia Airlines lost contact with MH370 close to Phuket Island in the Strait of Malacca. Allegedly, the last words that were heard from the

pilot, or co-pilot, 7 hours prior to plane disappearing were: ‘Good night Malaysian three seven zero.’ (Time, 2018).

Adolf Hitler, known as *the Führer*, was a Nazi leader in World War II. He assassinated, executed and ordered murders of countless people. Historical proofs state that he committed suicide by drinking a bottle of cyanide:

According to reports, Hitler committed suicide like a rat in one of his bunkers, biting a cyanide capsule and shooting himself in the head, with his wife/long-time mistress Eva Braun Hitler beside him (...) He was then carried out and burned in the garden. When they saw that his body was not fully destroyed, they just decided to bury him in a bomb crater, hurrying to get away from that site (The List Café, 2017).

Hitler’s and Braun’s corpses were burned and, consequently, too damaged to provide enough evidence. Forensics never concluded the case due to the lack of evidence.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (further: NASA) Moon landing is, and always will be, one of the biggest achievements in the human history. However, a significant number of conspiracy theorists argue that Neil Armstrong never went into the space.

2.3. Connotation Regarding Famous Conspiracy Theories

All prior conspiracy theories had undeniable associations and connotations. When compared to Gulyas’s (2016: 24 - 25) fundamental instructions on how to recognise a conspiracy theory, clear connection can be detected.

Firstly, listed conspiracy theories have a prominent stand of narrative, meaning that they are portrayed as an interesting story. Likewise, all conspiracy theories are open to interpretation, updates and research. By managing a narrative, states Gulyas, one grows its popularity.

Secondly, the registered conspiracy theories have an important historical context in which they emerged. Previous statement implies that all conspiracy theories have stable historical event which secures the truthfulness of facts and evidence. Along with that, all

conspiracy theories are related to historical event which is of great importance to most of the world's population, writes Gulyas.

Thirdly, the listed conspiracy theories have a connection with the mass culture. To explain, one can declare with high certainty, that most of the world's population is familiar with the described conspiracy theories. In addition, continues Gulyas, people probably have an opinion about all registered conspiracy theories which leaves place for updates and additions of the new content. By adding up fresh matter, a new aspect of old conspiracy theory is initiated.

Regarding the media and media consumers, one can easily conclude that instructions on how to recognise a conspiracy theory are also indicators of which conspiracy theory will gain greater popularity. If an article has a narrative, historical background and if it's connected to the mass culture, it will presumably attract audience attention.

Likewise, the subject of conspiracy theories is a fertile ground for journalists and media corporations because of its provocative nature. The described characteristics of a popular conspiracy theory only benefits the matter and makes the article more appealing for media consumers.

To summarise, the term *conspiracy theory* is, notwithstanding its origin, controversial. During the history, conspiracy theories became an alternative for expressing an unpopular opinion. The practice continues to this day, as people are analysing and criticising suspicious and controversial current or historical events. Most conspiracy theories are arranged into recognisable categories.

An advantage of conspiracy theories is the possibility of finding numerous information and evidence. That advantage promotes media content about conspiracy theories, which maintains and enhances popularity of the subject in the media. Furthermore, a conspiracy theory usually has three fundamental factors, which if inspected in detail, could also help support the topic of conspiracy theories in the media.

3. Conspiracy Theories in the Media

In the second chapter, conspiracy theories were defined, sorted into recognisable categories, examples and information were given and described, and connotation of the famous conspiracy theories was provided.

In the third chapter of the thesis, present-day situation of conspiracy theories in the media will be inspected. Likewise, a media article for conspiracy theories will be composed in a way that provides insight into the method of the media representation.

3.1. How is Conspiracy Theory Presented in the Media?

It is a well-known fact that traditional and new media play a significant role in the development of the conspiracy theory phenomena. During the time, momentous events became recognisable conspiracy theories.

With the development of the new media, especially the Internet, online platforms and social media, conspiracy theorists have found a way to connect and develop ideas, as well as find evidence to support their theories. Naturally, historical and present-day conspiracy theories affected people's opinion of certain events and historical facts, which provided never-ending media material.

Even though we live in the age when conspiracy theories are very popular, that does not imply that conspiracy theorists were not actively researching throughout the history. The only difference is that conspiracy theories were not represented in the traditional media. Gordon S. Wood (1982: 411) argues that, while belief in contemporary conspiracy theories mirrors paranoia, belief in historical conspiracy theories is understandable, if not rational.

Throughout the history, conspiracy theorists were often mocked, judged or, sometimes, diagnosed with mental illnesses due to their interest in conspiracy theories. Consequently, conspiracy theorists could not provide enough convenient material for the media corporations and journalists. Conspiracy theories were mostly presented in the media if they stated something

scandalous. Nevertheless, theorists were prone to research, especially in socially and politically challenging environment.

Additionally, conspiracy theorists are nowadays almost always present in societal crisis situations, as stated in the essay written by Jan-Willem van Prooijen and Karen M Douglas (2007). That implies that their stories are included in the media more than ever, especially if a conspiracy theory is about political and social event or crisis.

The Internet is a safe place for conspiracy theorists. Most online portals introduce their Internet audience with articles about conspiracy theories. However, journalists and editors regularly write an article with a pure purpose of entertainment, not to educate or give the audience an opportunity to investigate.

In other words, the purpose of the articles about conspiracy theories is the main reason why they are mostly popularised in magazines or tabloids. After a brief investigation of the online media, one can conclude that the articles about conspiracy theories are introduced into the far-reaching, news online media only if the conspiracy theory is about a certain politician or a political affair.

Because conspiracy theorists are not being taken seriously, it is much easier for them to attract the audience via social media. For instance, YouTube is the main media and social platform on which famous conspiracy theorists operate. One of the most famous you tubers and conspiracy theorists is Shane Dawson. His conspiracy theories are being watched by more than 10-20 million viewers per video. Due to that, he managed to raise awareness about certain serious subjects, for instance, child molesting in Hollywood. The reasoning behind social platforms, such as YouTube, being favoured amongst conspiracy theorists is the usage of forms of simulation: vision or hearing.

In the traditional media, television, radio and newspapers, conspiracy theories are not frequently displayed in the present-day. The reasoning behind that could be the lack of media space. Traditional media have the reputation and obligation of reporting only about topics which are of national interest. Moreover, journalists and editors in traditional media are usually under the pressure of moguls who suppress any form of controversy.

3.2. Insight into the Method of the Media Representation

A media article for the following conspiracy theories is arranged:

- Disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370
- The Death of Adolf Hitler
- Staged Apollo Moon landing

The aim of conspiracy theories is to provide an insight into the method of the media representation. To finalise the research, an article is chosen for every conspiracy theory in order to present general insight into the portrayal of conspiracy theories in the media.

3.2.1. Disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370

Conspiracy theorists have numerous theories about the disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370. An educational article which contains an in-depth analysis was published by *The Week*.

The first conspiracy theory is that the United States Government took down the plane. Peter McMahon, a mechanical engineer and amateur crash investigator, spoke to the public and journalists about his discovery of the alleged remains of the plane. He stated for *The Week* that he found the remains when he was exploring *the Google Maps* at the location which was never investigated.

The second conspiracy theory is that the plane was hijacked and remotely controlled until the moment it crashed into the Indian Ocean. The idea behind this conspiracy theory is that the plane was carrying something that was never meant to arrive at the destination. Furthermore, the second conspiracy theory adds up to the theory of the mysterious passenger. When the news about the plane crash was first announced, the plane officials announced that there were 239 passengers. The plane officials continued, revealing that they are not sure who is the passenger who was not on the official passenger list, as it is stated in *The Week*.

Analysing the approach of *The Week*'s article of the conspiracy theory surrounding the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, one can conclude that the author of the article brought reasoning which was finalised after detailed research of the subject. The author presented a list of specific evidence which is supported by the statements of experts.

The author listed conspiracy theories and explained, providing examples and facts, why the conspiracy theory may be true. The author never imposed their opinion onto the media consumer, but rather, noted verified facts. Considering the described matter, one can conclude that *The Week* addressed the conspiracy theory keeping in mind that the topic itself is controversial. Due to that, the news portal decided to be objective and discreet while finalising and publishing the article.

3.2.2. The Death of Adolf Hitler

Conspiracy theorists have a few pieces of evidence that they use to prove that Adolf Hitler never committed suicide. Robin Ramsay (2006: 12) claims that no one really knows how he died. One can assume that he drank cyanide, while others could claim that he shot himself due to the hole in the skull which historians believe was his.

Digital media *Ranker* published a specific research about a conspiracy theory regarding Adolf Hitler's death. Among the list of statements, *Ranker* guided its article in the direction of investigating the conspiracy theory of Hitler's body-double. During his lifetime and career, Adolf Hitler had many body-doubles. Conspiracy theorists often state that, if Hitler wanted to fake his own death, killing one of the doubles was not out of the question. The fact that some people claimed to have seen him after his alleged death only contributes to the conspiracy theory that his double was forced to commit suicide.

As an explanation, *Ranker* continues with the matter that the conspiracy theory about Hitler's body-double would not be surprising. The reasoning behind that is historical evidence which describes the cases of certain Nazi leaders escaping to Argentina after World War II. A docudrama about this conspiracy theory was recorded and it ends with a list of names of people claiming they saw, served, or knew Hitler while he was in South America. Witnesses provided similar detailed arguments. (*Ranker*, 2018)

The author of *Ranker's* article was aware that the subject of Hitler's death was controversial. Moreover, while deciding on the approach to the subject of conspiracy theories surrounding Hitler's death, a detailed research was carried-out. The author of the article had a clear vision of how to arrange the article. Controversial facts were presented, accompanied by detailed explanation of each evidence.

The article provokes media consumers to continue researching on their own, especially after such a provocative and controversial way of ending the article. Still, *Ranker*, together with the author of the article, defends itself from accusations of giving false information. Reasoning behind that lies in the fact that the author supported every statement with detailed evidence and opinion of an expert.

3.2.3. Staged Apollo Moon Landing

The article on the portal *Listverse* illustrates the conspiracy theory of fake Moon landing. The author of the article states that the Moon landing was shot at a secret location to prove the United States' dominance and victory over the Soviet Union in the space race (Listverse, 2012). Recent studies, presented in the article on the online portal *Listverse*, show that around 20% of Americans do not believe that the Moon landing was real. The main reason is the fact that NASA never invested into the second trip to the Moon and does not have real arguments as to why they have not gone back.

Much controversy was raised about the undefined object which can be seen in the helmet of the astronaut as he is taking a picture on the Moon. The author of the article in *Listverse* writes about a conspiracy theory which states that the undefined object resembles studio lights which are used in professional film studios to light up a certain object or a person.

Secondly, another big piece of evidence for the conspiracy theorists is the famous *C rock*. Among the many pictures which were taken on the Moon, there is a photography of a rock taken by one of the astronauts. On the surface of the rock, letter C can be clearly seen.

Many conspiracy theorists, an idea encouraged by the *Listverse*, claim that the letter C marks the number of the props used on a set which a crew member forgot to turn the right way.

To conclude, the author published a controversial topic in order to attract consumers' attention. Long list of facts was included in the article and all of them are presented objectively and in detail. Towards the end, the author of *Listverse's* article suggested, but never confirmed, that the Moon landing was staged.

Besides that, the author of the article does not include an expert's opinion or statement in the article. All evidence is stated to be collected from numerous conspiracy theorists. The lack of expert's opinion can be seen as a disadvantage of the approach to the subject. Nevertheless, the author remained objective and his primary role was to be a narrator who presents evidence and a possible outcome.

To sum up, the preferred function of conspiracy theories in the media are entertainment and exploitation of controversial events with the purpose of writing the article. Firstly, if an author decides to write a serious article about a widely known or controversial conspiracy theory, opinion or statement of an expert is desirable and preferred. Secondly, if the sole purpose of the article about a conspiracy theory is entertainment, less serious approach to the subject serves its purpose.

4. Analysis of the Articles about Conspiracy Theories

In the third chapter, an insight into the world of media and conspiracy theories was explained. In the fourth chapter, an analysis of the tabloid *The Sun* and a news portal *The New York Times* will be given. While analysing articles about the same conspiracy theories, connections and the main points will be provided. For the template, a well-known conspiracy theory about Hillary Clinton, former American president candidate, hiring her body-double during important events, was chosen.

To provide an insight into the situation, important facts about the conspiracy theory will be explained. During her presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton was often confronted with accusations of hiding her serious medical condition. After attending the 9/11 memorial service in New York, Hillary Clinton was caught on camera collapsing while entering a vehicle. She was taken into a nearby apartment to rest and two hours later, she appeared in front of the building, looking seemingly well.

Afterwards, pictures started circling on social media, accusing Hillary Clinton of faking her presence after collapsing at the 9/11 memorial service. Large number of conspiracy theorists started noticing differences between Clinton and the woman who claimed to be her. Conspiracy theorists believed that the woman was Hillary Clinton's body-double, Teresa Barnwell. Hillary Clinton rejected all the accusations, stating that the reason of her collapsing was dehydration and that she recovered soon after.

Clinton's explanation encouraged a large amount of conspiracy theories, most of which were focused on questioning why she was not admitting that she was suffering from a, possibly serious, medical condition. In addition, conspiracy theorists wanted to comprehend why Hillary Clinton was hiding that her body-double occasionally impersonates her.

Since the occurrence happened during the presidential election campaign, it was chosen to be the topic of numerous articles. British tabloid *The Sun* wrote about the subject, as well as American news portal *The New York Times*. During an analysis of the conspiracy theory, the following guidelines will be inspected: headline, multimedia, usefulness of information and general perspective.

4.1. Analysis of the Conspiracy Theory: *The Sun*

The Sun is British tabloid newspaper. *The Sun* has its online edition, which is free and available to the Internet media consumers. Oxford Dictionary defines a tabloid as: ‘A newspaper of this size with short articles and a lot of pictures and stories about famous people, often thought of as less serious than other newspapers.’ The article was written two days after Clinton’s collapse, on 13th September 2016.

The headline of the article was: ‘SEEING DOUBLE? Hillary Clinton’s body double conspiracy sends internet into a frenzy amid claims actress Teresa Barnwell was paraded on camera after 9/11 collapse’. After a first glance, one can conclude that most of the key-words and important clues were included in the headline. Most of the information is written in the title, including the name of possible body-double. The headline is created using big font, capital letters at the beginning and a question mark. The intention of the headline was, seemingly, to attract the attention of media consumers.

A fair amount of multimedia material is used in the article. For example, below the title, one can easily access a video of Hillary Clinton’s body-double in front of the building. The rest of the article contains numerous photographs, including Clinton’s alleged body-double, a picture of Teresa Barnwell, comparison of Clinton and Barnwell, pictures from the event and the video at the end of the article. It is worth mentioning that a picture from Twitter was also embedded into the article, together with its caption. Considering the fact that *The Sun* is a tabloid, the amount of multimedia material is not surprising.

One can deduce that most of the valuable information is given to the media consumer in the headline. While analysing the article, one can conclude that narrative was expanded, but the author had the purpose of entertaining and maintaining the hold over readers’ attention.

General impression that the media consumer is receiving while reading the article is that *The Sun* wants to draw the attention on the key-points of the event they are presenting. In addition, a large number of photographs, banners, related articles and recommendations which pop-up while reading the article, could distract the reader and draw the attention from the important information.

Regarding the subject of conspiracy theories, the author of the article does not deny or confirm the accusations or the possibility that the event is a conspiracy theory. Moreover, upon detailed inspection, one can conclude that the term *conspiracy theory* is used to make a situation more controversial and relevant.

4.2. Analysis of the Conspiracy Theory: *The New York Times*

The New York Times is an American newspaper, which can be approached via the online form. The Internet edition of the newspaper is free and available to users. The article about the conspiracy theory about Hilary Clinton's body-double was published a day after the 9/11 memorial service, on 12th September 2016.

The headline of the article was: 'Did you Hear the Latest About Hillary?' One can confirm that the headline is very simple, yet appealing. It does not reveal the topic of the article, but it will draw attention of the media consumer and spark their curiosity, thus attracting them to read a possibly intriguing article.

Only one photograph is present in the article. The picture is rather simple, and it displays Hillary Clinton's alleged body-double. After inspecting a possible cause of the matter, one can conclude that the author of the article wanted to emphasise that, in this case, the text is more important than the picture. Yet, the picture is controversial, and it will provoke media consumers to access the article if they are familiar with the topic.

The text is a mixture of informative article and author's comment. Moreover, the article presents assumptions that the conspiracy theory is true, but also balances the topic with enough information that one can derive their own conclusion.

On the one hand, the article is cohesive and contributes to the informative side of the topic by providing a media consumer with relevant and valuable information. The author describes the event, situation and story from the beginning to the end, including both facts and evidence. On the other hand, the author's comments and subjective approach, which can be noticed while reading the article, reveal indications of the author's opinion.

Overall, the article in the online edition reflects enough factors for one to conclude that *The New York Times* is the news portal which is connected to traditional journalism and form of producing media content. The layout of the article gives an impression of holding a newspaper and implicates that the topic of the article is serious.

4.3. Analysis of The Conspiracy Theory: Conclusion

Upon inspecting and analysing the articles, one can conclude that every media corporation has its own approach to the presentation of the story. Essentially, some media corporations have the policy of attracting the attention of media consumers by controversial key-words and multimedia. Differently, other media corporations respect and follow the templates of traditional journalism.

Regarding the subject of conspiracy theories, one can conclude that the main purpose of conspiracy theories in the media is to entertain and draw the attention of the audience to the article. Nevertheless, some journalists still chose to approach the subject with serious attentions. However, sometimes the term *conspiracy theory* is used to attract media consumers due to its controversy.

To finalise, media corporations are prone to using controversial subjects, events or topics in order to make more profit. Sometimes, certain events are characterised and presented in a specific way in order to draw the attention of media consumers. Conspiracy theories are not the exception to the rule.

5. Conclusion

To summarise, a conspiracy theory is a belief that some covert but influential organisations are responsible for an unexplained event. Conspiracy theorists are people who tend to rely on logical details, proofs and pieces of evidence to establish truthfulness of their theories.

The audience of the online media and social platforms is becoming more involved into the world of conspiracy theories. Because of the opportunity of being able to self- investigate, people are becoming more open-minded to the possibility of understanding the purpose of conspiracy theories.

The list of some of the most famous conspiracy theories could be established as following:

- The Aviation of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370
- The Death of Adolf Hitler
- 9/11 – plane crashing into The World Trade Centre Twin Towers
- The Apollo Moon landing
- Secret Societies: The Illuminati

On the one hand, media investigates into the world of conspiracy theories on a regular basis. Nonetheless, a conspiracy theory must be controversial in order to be formed as news or an article. On the other hand, under present-day conditions and media convergence, the culture of conspiracy theories is establishing a safe ground in the new media.

To conclude, belief in conspiracy theories is ambitiously strong and determined. The basis for popularity of conspiracy theories are controversial history, background and recognition. Most likely, new media and social platforms play an essential role in the growing popularity of conspiracy theories, as they allow people to exchange their ideas. Present-day situation and events are fertile ground for the development of the conspiracy theorists' community.

6. Bibliography

1. *10 THEORIES ABOUT THE DEATH OF ADOLF HITLER* (2018.) The List Cafe, <http://www.thelistcafe.com/10-theories-about-hitlers-death> (visited on 6th September 2018).
2. Barkun, M. (2003.) *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 9th edition, Berkeley: University of California Press.
3. Brotherton, R. (2015.) *Suspicious Minds: Why We Believe Conspiracy Theories*, 1st edition, London: Bloomsbury Sigma.
4. Fox, J. (2012.) „10 Reasons the Moon Landings Could Be a Hoax“, *ListVerse*, <https://listverse.com/2012/12/28/10-reasons-the-moon-landings-could-be-a-hoax/> (visited on 6th September 2018).
5. Goertzel, T. (1994.) „Belief in Conspiracy Theories“, *Political Psychology*, sv. 15 (4): 731 - 742.
6. Gulyas, A. J. (2016.) *Conspiracy Theories: The Roots, Themes and Propagation of Paranoid Political and Cultural Narratives*, 1st edition, Jefferson: McFralnd & Company Inc.
7. Harrison, D. (2018.) „8 Arguments Conspiracy Theorists Use To Say Hitler Survived World War II“, *Ranker*, <https://www.ranker.com/list/evidence-hitler-may-have-survived-wwii/david-harrison> (visited on 6th September 2018).
8. Hornby, A.S. (2010.) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 8th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
9. Jenkins, A. (2018.) „Experts Say Missing Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 Was Intentionally Crashed“, *Time*, <http://time.com/5277317/malaysian-airlines-flight-370-mh370/> (visited on 4th September 2018).
10. Locket, J. (2016.) *SEEING DOUBLE? Hillary Clinton body double conspiracy sends internet into a frenzy amid claims actress Teresa Barnwell was paraded on camera after 9/11 collapse*, *The Sun*, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1774098/hillary-clinton-body-double-conspiracy-sends-internet-into-a-frenzy-amid-claims-actress-teresa-barnwell-was-paraded-on-camera-after-911-collapse/> (visited: 9th September, 2018).
11. *MH370 conspiracy theories: what happened to the missing Malaysia Airlines flight?* (2018.) *The Week*, <http://www.theweek.co.uk/mh370/58037/mh370-conspiracy-theories-what-happened-to-the-missing-plane> (visited on 7th September 2018).
12. Ramsay, R. (2006.) *Conspiracy Theories*, 1st edition, Hertfordshire: Pocket Essentials.

13. Tufekci, Z. (2016.) *Did You Hear the Latest About Hillary?* The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/13/opinion/campaign-stops/did-you-hear-the-latest-about-hillary.html> (visited: 9th September 2018).
14. Van Prooijen, J. - W., Douglas, K. M. (2017.) "Conspiracy theories as part of history: The role of societal crisis situations", *Memory Studies*, sv. 10 (3): 323 - 333.
15. Wood, G. S. (1982) „Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, sv. 39 (3): 401 - 441.