

FACULTY OF MASS MEDIA COMMUNICATION

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia

MEGATRENDS AND MEDIA

home
office
entertainment



**Monika Prostináková Hossová
Jana Radošinská
Martin Solík
(eds.)**

FMK
Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie
Faculty of Mass Media Communication

Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

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Conference Proceedings
from the International Scientific Conference
held online on 21st April 2021,
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Trnava
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MEGATRENDS AND MEDIA: Home Officetainment

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MEGATRENDS AND MEDIA: Home Officetainment

International Scientific Conference, 21st April 2021

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Megatrends and Media is an international scientific event organised by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM). The conference is supported and attended by media theorists, media scholars, social scientists, media and marketing researchers, as well as media professionals from Slovakia and many other countries. Regardless of the conference's main topic that changes on yearly basis, its goal always remains the same – to present, critically discuss and disseminate current theoretical knowledge and practical experience related to media and the latest development trends in media production and consumption.

The 16th annual international conference *Megatrends and Media* (the conference's main title has been used since 2011, the event had previously been called *On Problems of Media Communication*, later *Mass Media Communication and Reality*, and then *Media, Society, Media Fiction*), took place on 21st April 2021 and was held online due to lockdown measures in Slovakia imposed in relation to COVID-19 pandemic. The main discussion session is available via <https://fmk.sk/megatrends-and-media/megatrends-and-media-2021/> and also at FMK UCM's *Facebook* page: <https://sk-sk.facebook.com/FMK.UCM/>

The discussion sessions were divided into four sections as follows:

- Section 1: *Infotainment*
- Section 2: *Edutainment*
- Section 3: *Marketainment*
- Section 4: *Digitainment*

The conference's Scientific Board and Organising and Programme Committee were proud to welcome many regular and just as many new participants, as well as esteemed foreign guests from Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	13
Infotainment	17
Evaluating the Film ‘Hey There!’ Which Has Been Shot during the Covid-19 Quarantine in the Context of “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses”	18
<i>Gülten Arslantürk, Filiz Erdoğan Tuğran</i>	
Labor Force Mobility – Understanding the Needs and Motives, Evidence from the Republic of Croatia during the Covid-19 Pandemic	26
<i>Višnja Bartolović, Jerko Glavaš, Sanela Ravlić</i>	
Vaccination Discourse on Social Media: Preliminary Notes on Theory, Method and Ethical Challenges	41
<i>Anita Dremel, Gordana Lesinger, Juraj Jurlina</i>	
Historical Film: Eternal Struggle between the Facts and Myths	56
<i>Laco Halama, Zora Hudíková</i>	
The Relationship between the Price of Real Estate in Slovakia and the Basic Interest Rate	68
<i>Róbert Halenár</i>	
Media Representation of Topics Related to Scandals in the Catholic Church.....	75
<i>Anna Hurajová</i>	
Covid-19 in Media as an Alien: The Topos of “Threat from Out There”	81
<i>Martin Charvát, Jan Jirák</i>	
Pandemic, Technology, Television: Popular Television during the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic (Croatian TV)	89
<i>Tatjana Ileš, Andrea Zakšek</i>	
Photography in the Era of Smartphone Journalism	104
<i>Eva Jonisová</i>	
Auditive Space as an Information Channel	118
<i>Patrik Kolenčík, Zora Hudíková</i>	
Opportunities of Podcasting during Pandemic in Social Media Environment	131
<i>Jana Kozmonová</i>	
Podcast – A Modern Form of Original Audio Formats?	142
<i>Viera Krúpová, Zora Hudíková</i>	
Utilizing the Dark Social and Echo Rooms in the Expense of Truth: The Case of “Clubhouse” (Celebrityship vs. Citizenship).....	155
<i>M Selahattin Okuroğlu, Turancan Şirvanlı</i>	
Portrayal of Journalistic Profession in the Superhero Movie <i>Venom</i>	164
<i>Jana Radošinská, Zuzana Kvetanová</i>	
Narrativization and Naturalization of the Life with Covid-19 in the Czech Radio News	175
<i>Renáta Sedláková, Marek Lapčík</i>	

Debunking: The Method of Uncovering Hoaxes and Fake News	191
<i>Magdaléna Švecová, Anna Kačincová Predmerská</i>	
A Painting Exhibition as a Personal Multimodal Diary: Example of the Facebook Page “Guy De Montlaur”	202
<i>Marina Zagidullina</i>	
Edutainment	211
Communication Challenges of Distance Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic in Croatia	212
<i>Alta Pavin Banović, Hrvoje Mesić</i>	
Reflection of Environmental Topics in the Broadcasting of Public Television	229
<i>Dušan Blahút, Matej Majerský</i>	
Spreading the Culture of Fear in Croatian Online Media: Analysis of the Coronavirus First Wave	236
<i>Marina Đukić, Tina Škrljac</i>	
Artistic Text and Combined Genres in Press for Children.....	252
<i>Danuša Faktorová</i>	
Current State of Cyberbullying in Selected Educational Institutions in Slovakia	270
<i>Monika Prostináková Hossová, Žofia Košťálová</i>	
Treasure Chest: How Micro-Headings Create Cognitive Frames (on the Example of the Educational Web-Site “Arzamas”)	287
<i>Arina Medvedeva</i>	
God Online.....	297
<i>Radek Mezulánik</i>	
Reflections on the Criminal Law Consequences of Media Behavior during the Corona Crisis	309
<i>Stanislav Mihálik</i>	
Using Facebook Applications in Teaching English Online	321
<i>Dmytro Poberezhnyi</i>	
Impact of Distance Education and Absence of Organized Physical Activities on Posturae and Spine in School Aged Children	327
<i>Marina Potašová, Róbert Rusnák, Zuzana Hrčková, Martin Komár; Peter Mačej, Radka Komárová</i>	
The Identification of University Students with Online Teaching in the Second Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic.....	336
<i>Ondřej Roubal</i>	
Media Platforms of Discussion about the Aesthetics of the 1920s Photography in Czechoslovakia within the Contexts of Europe.....	346
<i>Jozef Sedlák, Petra Cepková</i>	
Clubhouse Application as an Effective Tool for Media Students	356
<i>Marek Šimončič, Kristián Pribila</i>	

Marketainment.....	365
Social Media Marketing: Implementation of Guerrilla Marketing among Instagram Influencers	366
<i>Iva Buljubašić, Ivana Nobilo, Ena Jambrečina</i>	
Inevitable Changes in Internal and External Communication of Regional Self-Government Bodies during Corona Crisis	379
<i>Martin Halmo, Andrea Tománková</i>	
Analytical View of Consumer Patterns of Behavior in Searching through Mobile Communication Platforms in E-Commerce Conditions	387
<i>Jakub Horváth, Radovan Bačik, Richard Fedorko</i>	
Aspects of Communication of Territory towards the Population during the Pandemic	398
<i>Denisa Jánošová, Renáta Sádecká, Lenka Labudová</i>	
The Way of Marketing Communication Data Visualization in the Context of the Groundswell.....	406
<i>Michal Kubovics, Anna Zaušková</i>	
Generation Z as a Target of Mobile Apps Advertising	414
<i>Patrik Lenghart, Andrea Lesková</i>	
Advertisement Text as Semiotic Construal.....	421
<i>Nataliya Panasenko, Romana Mudrochová</i>	
Corporate Social Responsibility during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Croatia	439
<i>Marija Šain</i>	
Perception of the Ethical Aspect of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment	453
<i>Róbert Štefko, Nella Svetozarovová, Ludovít Nastišin</i>	
Digitainment	465
New Normal: Digital Leadership.....	466
<i>Axel Müller, Alena Müller</i>	
Economic Contribution of the Video Game Industry and New Trends during the Covid-19 Pandemic	477
<i>Marta Borić Cvenić, Marija Tolušić, Zoran Žalac</i>	
Digital Games and Smart City	491
<i>Kristína Dzureková</i>	
Being Digital with My Daughter: A Continual Search for Positive Effects of Digital Games.....	500
<i>Tomáš Farkaš</i>	
Cyberstalking and Cybergrooming as Risks of Communication in Cyberspace and Their Legislative Regulation by Terms in the Slovak Republic	516
<i>Vladimíra Hladíková, Zuzana Mažgútová</i>	

Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand	528
<i>Dinko Jukić</i>	
When Game Is the Exercise and Exercise Is the Game: Design Analysis of Ring Fit Adventure	544
<i>Miroslav Macák</i>	
Reflection of Marvel’s Spider-Man Games in the Context of Current and Upcoming Media Trends	551
<i>Zdenko Mago</i>	
Why We Need Fiction during the Covid-19 Pandemic? Videogames: A Sketch for a Genre Typology	563
<i>Hrvoje Mesić, Snježana Barić-Šelmić</i>	
New Opportunities for Virtual and Augmented Reality during the Covid-19 Pandemic	581
<i>Ján Proner, Dušan Blahút</i>	
Artificial Intelligence in Music Production.....	590
<i>Marek Šimončič, Lenka Kajanovičová</i>	
Adaptation to Information Technology and the Risks of Excessive Use of Smartphone.....	599
<i>Marcela Šarvajcová</i>	
Psychological and Physiological Anxiety and Stress in Competitive E-Sports Settings.....	607
<i>Nina Urukovičová</i>	
The Emergence of Digital Footprints and Digital Heritage in the Age of Big Data	618
<i>Vojtěch Záleský</i>	
Editorial Policy.....	630

PREFACE

Dear Colleagues, Dear Members of Academic Community,

We are proud to present conference proceedings associated with the 16th annual international scientific conference *Megatrends and Media*, organised by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM). The last year's Preface written by Martin Solík and Zuzana Kvetanová really did not underestimate how serious COVID-19 is and what kinds of threats and inconveniences might be ahead of us. Organising *Megatrends and Media 2020* was indeed strange and definitely 'out of ordinary'. And still, probably all of us secretly hoped that this year would be different – normal again, so to say. Instead, keeping *Megatrends and Media* 'alive' in 2021 turned out to be even more complicated due to 'Second Wave' and the related health crisis in Slovakia that followed very quickly. Our aim to offer the scholarly community a day resembling 'normal' academic life with everything that goes with it was thus difficult, but still not impossible to fulfil. Sure, we possess all the means and technologies necessary to organise an online conference. The true challenge lies in doing things differently; after all, many other conferences are now 'online' and there are hardly any surprising features left to offer. It has become increasingly difficult to 'stand out', to come up with something original.

Yet, we tried; hence this year's conference title, which is 'Home Officetainment'. It is true that the title itself is not that big of a deal. However, what is truly important is the idea hiding behind it. And this year's idea is to discuss the 'hybrid' nature of everyday life in the age of COVID. We have heard much about hybrid wars, hybrid warfare, hybrid 'intelligence games' or even hybrid media culture. Nevertheless, this hybridity is expanding across all aspects of our lives, because what was once different and thus easily distinguishable is now becoming a diverse combination of pastime activities, ordinary obligations, business engagements and education-related responsibilities. Over the last eighteen months or so, for most of us all these duties and pleasures of the everyday have become inseparable. In 2020, millions of people literally started to live their lives not WITH media by their side and in their hands, but THROUGH media. And now, some of us would be unable to do our jobs, see our relatives or diversify the dull feeling of staying home most of the time WITHOUT media. We are well aware that capitalising words is entirely non-academic, maybe even aggressive and rather childish. On the other hand, in this case we ask the esteemed reader to understand. After all, what else should we do to explain the birth of (home) 'officetainment' than outlining its true nature?

Joining infotainment, democratainment and other kinds of anything/entertainment hybrids established a few decades ago, (home) 'officetainment' seems to be just another *portmanteau* expression that reflects the late modern tendency to create new, cool and journalism-friendly words by blending seemingly unrelated expressions with different meanings. At first glance, it seems there is hardly anything original to point out. However, if we look at the issue at hand from other point of view, the academic one, we have no other option than to acknowledge that never, ever before has it been so difficult to separate the aspects of human life, which are obviously different in nature or even contradictory.

COVID-19 has confined us to our homes. Many people with no experience with working from home have done their best to learn how to do so, and very quickly – while also overseeing their children’s education and taking care of older family members in need of help. Most of all social contacts have become virtual. Intelligent mobile devices, personal computers and laptops have turned into the centres of our small indoor universes. The acts of exploring business ventures, sharing moments with friends and families, trying to learn something new, striving to obtain what is needed and seeking entertainment are now inseparable, centred around the media devices available inside our households. The ever-present threat of a tech failure has become one of our worst nightmares.

As we believe, the term (home) ‘officetainment’ goes beyond stating that our ways of life have changed, probably forever. It expands the role media play on a society-wide scale, changing the principles of producing, distributing and consuming media content. Education is affected considerably as well; never before has it been so difficult to focus on studying, because a plethora of entertainment possibilities is available in a second, thanks to the very same device(s) we use to learn. Knowledge gaps (or “digital divides”) are expanding instead of shrinking, since too many children and adolescents with little to no access to digital technologies cannot receive full-featured education. Marketing specialists face numerous challenges as well – after all, it is infinitely more difficult to promote goods, services and experience when those who should be interested in them are oversaturated by digital advertising attacking them while they work, study, have fun and/or socialise. Digital entertainment itself seems to thrive in our new paradigm of life, but this does not mean the media business accompanying it has nothing to worry about. Let us mention at least global semiconductor shortage or production struggles experienced by developers of digital games.

Just like last year, interesting keynote speakers from Slovakia and abroad helped us to fill the imaginary void created by lack of social contacts, as we all know the socialising aspect is what makes academic events so valuable – both in terms of exchanging and critically assessing knowledge and establishing priceless contacts. This year’s keynote speeches and discussions were shared via *Facebook* live streaming and our website. Discussions that followed only strengthened our already firm conviction that the pandemic may be all kinds of horrible, but it can teach us many things as well. For example, how to make sure an online academic event will FEEL as if we met in the same lecturing hall.

The main programme was introduced by Martin Solík, who also offered his brief presentation of the latest issue of the renowned scholarly journal *Communication Today*. He was followed by Ľudmila Čábyová, Dean of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava, and her opening speech. The first to give a keynote speech was Iveta Radičová, the former Slovak Prime Minister and renowned sociologist. She talked about the idea of digital democracy in relation to the media environment. Václav Moravec, the Czech journalist and media theorist, also outlined the sociological framework of the digital era, sharing his opinions on ‘infodemic’ as the key phenomenon of so-called postfactual society. Henrich Krejča, the director of TV Markíza’s department of news and opinions, offered his practical experience related to making news in the age of corona and, at the same time, under pressure of the Internet and social media. Martin Klus, the state secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, explained the conference participants what kinds of challenges diplomacy has to face during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Jörg Matthes, the Austrian media and communication expert, uncovered many of the relations between how we use digital media, the COVID-19 crisis and human happiness (or its lack thereof). Another foreign guest, Evgeny Kozhemyakin, the Russian corporate communications specialist, presented his ideas about what he called “new visual ethics” associated with online corporate communications and digital media in general. A creative and artistic approach to the discussed topic was applied by Branislav Macko, the creative director of the marketing agency *Ponyhouse*, who talked about the general tendency of today – hating everything and everyone, especially online, and, more importantly, about how to respond to such hateful content. Using the situation with the Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V and its questionable arrival to Slovakia as a fitting example, Tomáš Škarba, a FMK UCM’s PhD. candidate and journalist working for *Rádio Expres*, discussed the topic of hybrid information operations. Another speech, which was related to foreign (political) affairs, fake news and those who spread it, was given by Martin Rajec, a foreign affairs reporter affiliated with RTVS, the Slovak public service broadcaster. The main programme also included a debate hosted by Pavel Bielík, a journalist and FMK UCM’s PhD. candidate. The discussion was centred on podcasts and how to create them professionally. Pavel Bielík’s guests were Jana Maťková, an editor the daily newspaper *SME* and host of the news podcast *Dobré ráno*, and Dávid Tvrdoň, a product manager and host of the technological podcast *Klik*.

As usual, the main topic of this year’s conference was formally divided into four sections, i.e., in accordance with partial problems the conference papers aim to address. Even though their authors were unable to present them personally, now for the second year in a row, the conference proceedings are still divided into four sections, in accordance with thematic focus of the individual contributions:

- Section 1: Infotainment
- Section 2: Edutainment
- Section 3: Marketainment
- Section 4: Digitainment

The proceedings consist of 53 papers written in English. They have been reviewed and carefully selected to represent the conference’s complexity and scholarly objectives. The papers are written by media scholars and professionals from nine different countries, including Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated many things. However, what we regret most is not being able to organise *Marián Matyáš’s Pomegranate* (again). This award ceremony is held annually during the conference *Megatrends and Media*. It is very personal and touching, and not only for all people affiliated with FMK UCM. The award is named after Marián Matyáš (1978 – 2007), a media theorist and highly successful young scholar, one of the first graduates of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication (2002), and a lecturer at the same institution (2002 – 2007). Later, becoming one of FMK’s Vice-Deans, Marián helped to set our current ambitions and the academic principles we respect today and will always respect in the future. *The Pomegranate* was first awarded in 2008, i.e., approximately a year after Marián Matyáš’s untimely passing. The award is presented annually to our students, graduates or colleagues, whose scholarly accomplishments or important media-related performances contribute immensely to the development of our

faculty, and thus honour Marián Matyáš's extraordinary professional skills and personality. So, we remember – both Marián and the award named after him. If the pandemic situation will not stop us from doing so (again), this year's *Pomegranates* will be awarded during the annual international scientific conference *Marketing Identity 2021*, which will take place in November 2021.

Dear members of academic communities, dear colleagues and friends; this may sound a bit banal or maybe even redundant, but once again, we would like to share our sincere thanks. First, we thank all 'FMK people' making this conference (and its proceedings) happen in such a difficult or even next-to-impossible situation. Second, we appreciate the efforts and hard work of the domestic and foreign scholars affiliated with the Scientific Board of *Megatrends and Media* and/or with its Organising and Programme Committee. Given the ongoing pandemic, which has struck Slovakia severely, and all the related and unrelated struggles we have been through, we especially appreciate our colleagues, speakers and participants' helping hands, words of support and pieces of positive feedback. As we believe, this worldwide health crisis has shown us very clearly how important it is to understand the new *status quo* – the fact that we now live our lives within media-driven physical/virtual spaces that merge family life, work, education, business, health care, entertainment and basically everything else we are interested in. We have been forced to give up many things, but not our conference; at least not entirely. Let us believe that there will be a much-desired turnaround in 2022, this time back towards living without fear, constant anxiety and necessary restrictions. As we once used to.

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Jana Radošinská, PhD.

*Member the Organising Committee of Megatrends and Media
Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava*

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EVALUATING THE FILM ‘HEY THERE!’ WHICH HAS BEEN SHOT DURING THE COVID-19 QUARANTINE IN THE CONTEXT OF “IDEOLOGY AND THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES”

Gülten Arslantürk – Filiz Erdoğan Tuğran

Abstract:

The times of pandemic is a new way of experiencing life. Therefore, all the equipment that was used to live a life has become exceptional or has made the people make use of things with a new kind of perspective. The film *Hey There!* which has been shot and designed by one of the prominent Turkish directors called Reha Erdem was taken during the COVID-19 quarantine by only using the *Zoom* application and it was released in the Mubi platform in March 2021. Within the scope of the film, it will be considered how the industrial opportunities of cinema arising from the pandemic are evaluated. This study aims to analyse this film by using text analysis in the context of how ideology called individuals by isolating them within the scope of Louis Althusser’s view.

Key words:

Althusser. COVID-19. *Hey There!*. Ideological State Apparatuses. Power Relations.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which first occurred in the year 2020, has made a large impact on the world’s social economic and cultural conditions. Under these circumstances, the practices of communication have also been changed. The scale of using the network and the communication technologies have been much wider than before. Therefore, the meaning of being ‘there’ has made a large difference in social lives as being online has mostly been described to be consolidated or being socialised at the same time. So, the times of quarantine can be assumed as both being ‘alone’ and also being socialized via online technologies. The institutionalization has been reformed by the help of online technologies which also created new types of digital inequalities. These inequalities have made the subjects more vulnerable than ever which also means that there has been a lack of feeling secure. Because the dichotomy between ‘being at home and working from home’ has made the difference between public sphere and private sphere hazier. The constant insecurity and precarity can be assumed to cause another kind of flow of ideology within the scope of the online platforms. In this study ideology is more tried to be explained not just in a negative meaning but more in a way that it is reproduced due to the subjects’ decisions and how subjects deal and cooperate with the power relations.

Therefore, this study firstly tries to explain the ideological framework of Althusser by using one of his most known books *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. At this point ideology “calls” and says “Hey There!” to subjects who always feel responsible for this call. On the other hand, there are further academic discussions about how subjects negotiate with power relations and that ideology has an opportunity to be a result of these struggles of hegemony. To get in touch with this theoretical framework, this study will also mention the studies of Gramsci and Foucault. So, the means of consent is tried to be explained during the conditions of the pandemic by using a film as a case study. Because in this period of time, it is obvious that the ideological state apparatuses and how it is interpreted by the subjects have become an important issue to think about. This study aims to find the path of ideology by the help of a film called *Hey There!* which was shot during the pandemic in Turkey. It has been available on the platform MUBI since 13th March 2021. On the other hand, this film can be evaluated more as a production of the quarantine circumstances. Therefore, this case is

especially chosen because it is a reflection and a different view of the pandemic. There are two focuses of this study. The first one is to express how the pandemic has made a difference in the filmmaking industry and the second one is to discuss the online forms of the ideological apparatuses and the surveillance that has been possible via *Zoom* and other kinds of online opportunities. This is also the actual reason why this film is being chosen. The film mentioned above has been examined via textual analysis to discover the facts of the pandemic experienced in Turkey.

1 Ideological State Apparatuses and “The Call”

Althusser’s theoretical view on ideology is mainly based on structuralism. Therefore, his criticism is actually about humanism and that the thought of being rational has been more important than anything. This means that Althusser does not fully agree with the thought that individual wills are defined as variables that determine history only by themselves.¹ He thinks that this perspective would be an ignorance of the objective movement of history. In his opinion, ideology flows among subjects by these structures that are mostly constructed by the help of the state. The state is assumed to give all citizens an identity to embrace which can be figured out in two ways: The first one is the “oppression” apparatuses of the state which can be accepted as using the legitimate forces like law-enforcement officers; police, the military, etc. and the second one is the ideological state apparatuses which rely on “consent”.²

Ideological state apparatuses work by the cohesion of the subjects according to Althusser. This can be assumed as a much more invisible way of consent. Althusser tries to explain this situation with the concept of “unconsciousness”.³ He argues that subjects are articulated to ideology in an unconscious way. So, it is said that “*ideology is an explanation of the relationship between a person and his/her ‘world’*”. According to Althusser this separation cannot be defined, explained and lived in a conscious way among subjects. Therefore, he tries to explain the relationship of ideology and the subjects with an analogy of fish & sea: “*For the simplest expression of Althusser’s ideology, it is necessary to make an analogy to the water in which the fish live in. As long as there is water, there are fish. But the fish is actually in the water because it has nowhere else to go. For fish, water is everywhere, and fish is in it. The main problem is that the fish is not aware of the water in which it lives. It thinks that the whole world is water.*”⁴

According to this quote, it is possible to say that ideology is the reason why subjects become as they are. On the other hand, it can be assumed as a perfect illusion for subjects to accept themselves as subjects. Because of this unconsciousness, people get the feeling to feel free in their choices which is the actual reason to obey the social construction that are organized by the tools explained above in a consent.⁵ In the literature of Althusser, this consent is manufactured via the media, the schools and the main education taken from the family, etc. But it is obliged to mention that this division of oppression and consent is much more a functional way of dividing these two categories. It is not always clear as it seems in social life where consent stops and oppression begins or vice versa. There can be times when the hierarchical forms of

¹ ÇAM, Ş.: *Medya Çalışmalarında İdeoloji – Epistemolojik ve Metodolojik Sorunlar*. Ankara : De ki Yayınları, 2008, p. 40.

² ALTHUSSER, L.: *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları*. İstanbul : İthaki Yayınları, 2008, p. 159.

³ SANCAR, S.: *İdeolojinin Serüveni – Yanlış Bilinç ve Hegemonyadan Söyleme*. Ankara : İmge Kitabevi, 2020, p. 54-55.

⁴ KAZANCI, M.: Althusser, İdeoloji ve İletişimin Dayanılmaz Ağırlığı. In *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 2002, Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 86.

⁵ MCLELLAN, D.: *İdeoloji*. İstanbul : İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012, p. 35.

patriarchy cause inequalities and a form of using legitimate forces or even violence in a family to change a behaviour which cannot be accepted as a consent. Meanwhile online media technologies can also cause surveillance among followers which have the possibility to make the subjects feel oppressed.

At this point, Althusser's thoughts on ideology have become a great tool to understand how the ideological apparatuses actually work. According to his ideas, ideology can be assumed as a representation of subjects where all the subjects actually work with a cohesion. Because of this reason the thoughts of Althusser can be viewed as a form of structuralism where he thinks that the subjects constantly return to the 'call' of the state. This call actually does not give them an opportunity not to obey. In his arguments he says that whenever police or one of the oppression apparatus calls someone in the street with the word: "Hey There?" he says that there is not an option for the citizen not to give an answer to the one that calls which automatically gives them the fear of being guilty.⁶ Therefore Althusser tries to make the discussion clear by the help of one single word: "Calling!". In this case, ideology is the one who constantly calls the subjects by giving them an identity and a 'name'. This type of identity makes the subjects feel responsible for the authority that is calling. Therefore, ideology can only be reproduced as long as subjects feel interiorized with their identity. The second strategy of the ideological state apparatuses is giving names to these identities. This is a way of causing awareness and giving statuses in a society. These statuses mean both responsibilities, obligations and rights which can depend on the social stratification that the subject belongs to like; Turkish, Christian, student, soldier, mother, man, etc.⁷ The statuses that are explained here are assumed to be stabilized with a specific kind of attribution attached by the ideological means. However, this can also cause being in an unwanted position or being stigmatized like; guilty, criminal, old, child according to what the disadvantage is in the condition. The argument of Althusser and how he explains the ideological state apparatuses has been an important field of study in social sciences. It also helps to explain the positioning of the state in the relationship of oppression and consent together which gives readers an opportunity to have a wider view of the Marxist literature in a different way of thinking. However, the way he describes ideology has mostly been criticized for not seeing the role of the subject. This is also because of the structuralist view he thinks within.

Therefore, it would be reasonable to add a small discussion about the role of the "subject" to this study. Actually, Gramsci has lived before Althusser and therefore his views cannot be accepted as a contradiction to his thoughts. On the other hand, Gramsci uses the term "hegemony" which combines "oppression and consent" as a way of struggling subjects in a so-called arena. This point of view makes the argument take a further step than the state and opens a window to a micro scale of power relations that are called as being everywhere in Foucauldian studies.⁸ Gramsci uses the term "hegemony" also to respect the importance of superstructure as well as the infrastructure.⁹ In this point of view the relationship among subjects can more be accepted in a strategic and tactical way which also has a potential of disobedience and resistance at the same time.

⁶ REHMANN, J.: *İdeoloji Kuramları – Yabancılaşma ve Boyun Eğme Güçleri*. İstanbul : Yordam Kitap, 2015, p. 167.

⁷ SANCAR, S.: *İdeolojinin Serüveni – Yanlış Bilinç ve Hegemonyadan Söyleme*. Ankara : İmge Kitabevi, 2020, p. 52.

⁸ FOUCAULT, M.: *Cinselliğin Tarihi*. İstanbul : Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2010, p. 72-73.

⁹ ÖZÇAĞLAYAN, M., YAVUZ ÇAKICI, F.: Gramsci'nin hegemonya kuramı bağlamında nükleer karşıtı hareketin milliyet gazetesindeki temsiliyeti. In *İnsan ve İnsan*, 2000, Vol. 6, No. 21, p. 647. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/776340>>.

2 Evaluating “Hey There!” According to Althusser’s “Ideological State Apparatuses”

According to Althusser, from the moment of their birth, power surrounds people like air and has a set of devices to put them in the shape they want in every aspect of their lives. Althusser calls these Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses. These devices, which serve to spread the above-mentioned ideology and to discipline people, ensure the continuity of the established order of societies. Althusser says that the power uses a phrase like “hey you” and with this summons, almost everyone who is subject to power can turn and look at themselves. He will call it “calling” and convey that the citizens cannot be indifferent to this call. In the Spinozist sense, the people whom the clergy can call because they are sinners, the kings can call because they are slaves, and the modern power turns into citizens whom they can call because of their debts. What is meant by debt here is both inside and outside of the economic context, from the moment of birth, a person owes their citizenship to the country of their identity, freedom, being a citizen and so on. Therefore, they will not be indifferent to this call and will look back. The film *Hey There!*, which has been shot and designed by one of the prominent Turkish directors called Reha Erdem, was taken during the COVID-19 quarantine by only using the *Zoom* application. The movie tells about a network of fraudsters who have adopted the calling practices of the power as a tool for them, trying to defraud people through the *Zoom* application on the axis of a world order that has made it compulsory to use *Zoom* during the quarantine period: “*It was only a matter of time before COVID-19 made its way into cinema. Director Reha Erdem’s latest film Seni Buldum Ya! (released in English as Hey There!) deals with the pandemic in the best of ways: by letting it shape the film’s form rather than dominating its content.*”¹⁰

The film begins with Felek, from the 4th Division, visiting people’s houses without asking for any permission on the *Zoom* application. These *Zoom* meetings, where we will learn about the characters separately throughout the film, take up the whole film. Throughout the film, viewers witness how each character is called with the language of power. Felek starts the meeting by saying that “*I speak to you on behalf of 4th Division Cyber Steel Control, and that you are involved in some crimes*”, except for his talks with his boss Kerim. Thanks to the metaphor that refers to the language of this power, detailed information about how the characters are called and the characteristics of the characters are presented to the audience in a wide range. While some of these characters immediately look back at Felek’s call, some of them show a skilful resistance, even subtly fighting Felek and catching him off guard. However, as in every ruling, the face of the rulership is shown as Felek in the scope of this film, and behind it is the character of Kerim, which we can see as the brain of this criminal organization. Kerim, as the planner of the crime, constantly deceives Felek during the film, while he skilfully avoids Felek’s demands from him, he will excuse the pandemic process and the loss of his relatives. He uses all these complaints to try to get closer to Felek, but on the other hand, Felek constantly sees a woman questioning her presence in the background of the camera in Kerim’s house, but Kerim constantly lies about her. In fact, Felek is also vulnerable to Kerim and is deceived and cannot have the money he deserves. The people that Felek deceived and got their money from deposit the money into Kerim’s account, as he says, he is on the banned list of banks and is not allowed to open an account. Whenever Felek asks for money, Kerim either distracts him or does not want to give the money on the pretext that I have lost my relative.

¹⁰ SHARPE, K. B.: “*Hey There!*” Turns Pandemic into Dark Comedy Gold. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <<https://www.duvarenglish.com/hey-there-turns-pandemic-into-dark-comedy-gold-article-56719>>.

The first person that Felek was a guest of through the *Zoom* application was Cemil who lives alone, retired from the land registry office five years ago, collected quite a few deeds through various means. He is a married guy but he is not living with his wife anymore. This man is the first person whom we saw in the beginning of the movie. We know some of the information we have learned about Cemil thanks to Felek, and the rest, Cemil himself tells him at once, due to the moments when Felek is silent. Cemil thinks that Felek is a prosecutor, a judge or a police officer, and fearing both the voice and the silence of the government, he tells his whole story without leaving Felek too much effort. He effortlessly falls into Felek's trap and voluntarily agrees to transfer money to his bank account after each meeting in order to launder his crimes. In this context it is obvious that the first victim immediately obeys the rules of the so-called state even though he does not know which department the interlocutor he speaks to. This situation can be an obvious way of giving an answer to the call. So being stigmatized as a criminal by the state would be a reasonable fact for this subject to approve himself as a criminal. The second person Felek hosted was Seçkin Tanık, who worked in the *TRS Bank* as chief of foreign exchange department. During Felek's silence, she conveys her story to the audience in all its details. Seçkin, a woman in her 30s, does not regret what she did, unlike Cemil. Far from being a criminal after her second meeting with Felek, she wants Felek to provide psychological counselling to her, and she begins to set the conditions herself by transforming the language of the power according to her own interests. For the remainder of the movie, she pays him for every conversation with Felek, and gets rid of her burdens by telling him her life story in a way that justifies her.

The third person who hosted Felek, Nurperi Solmaz, she's a doctor and she was involved in a nearly fatal liposuction case. While Felek introduces Nurperi to us in this way, Nurperi implicitly avoids the accusations. By saying that she is not a doctor, she knows how to pass Felek's silences skilfully. Nurperi, a 35-year-old woman, makes Felek fall in love with her and trust her while exhibiting a flirtatious attitude throughout all the speeches. Finally, Felek, who broke down the bridges with his boss Kerim, comes to the stage where he will give Nurperi's account number to all the people he defrauded. Although Nurperi does not seem to like this plan at first, she later gives herself away with the new outfit she receives at each meeting. When Felek tries to meet her face to face, a Foucauldian incident takes place and it is not possible for him to confront false power. The fourth person that Felek is a guest at her house is Arzu, whose crime is determined as forging a document by Felek. Arzu, who is understood to be a retired woman in her 60s, emphasizes emphatically that almost everyone falsifies documents and that this is a very insignificant detail besides the other crimes she has committed. Arzu, far from suffering remorse, takes the business forward enough to propose partnership to Felek. She says she wants to work with her, emphasizing that she will give her some names and that they will divide the profit. The fifth person Rıfat hosted Felek's house, is an archaeologist and Felek's boss Kerim's old partner. He is known as the treasure hunter. His crime is stated as he went in on the land with a bulldozer and struck gold. Despite having previously worked with Kerim in this fraud business, Rıfat falls into the trap of Felek and agrees to pay him money to erase his crimes. However, after doing some research, he realizes that Felek is Kerim's employee, and the double-edged knife state of the government is this time dropping Felek into his trap. Rıfat threatens Felek and wants his money back. Although Felek states that the money is in Kerim's account, Rıfat does not want an agreement and puts Felek in difficult situations. Even though he speaks to his boss about the situation, things start to get mixed up when he doesn't get a positive response.

The sixth person that Felek is a guest in his house is Tuba, she is an academician, the crime he committed is conveyed from his own mouth as follows: *“I changed a student’s grade from F to C. I reported to my ex-husband Fehmi who reported the construction of my summer house, so I reported to the rectorate that he was abusing his students.”* Even before Felek blames her, she does not seem very regretful while declaring her own crimes. Throughout the film, the only person that we do not know whether Felek has fallen into the trap is the character Tuba. Although she says she will admit her crimes and deposit money, it remains unclear whether she committed this action or not. It is observed that she passed the talks she made with Felek through dances and songs. The seventh person that Felek is a guest of is a girl named Ceren. It happens as a result of Ceren’s father’s request from Kerim. Ceren, who stayed at her friend’s house during the quarantine period, refuses to listen to her father and doesn’t want to return to her home. Kerim asks Felek to frighten her and make her go home. The most crucial dialogues of the movie emerge in these two encounters. Felek, who thinks that the girl will be afraid immediately, is defenceless against her strange words, Ceren, who acts like a little girl or a slightly depraved woman, threatens Felek with immorality and to report him to the police. Felek quickly ends his conversation with Ceren, but this is not their last meeting. Ceren then suddenly opens her Zoom application while Felek is taking a bath, and Felek is surprised what to do. He quickly comes out of the bathtub, wrapped in a towel, and a very interesting dialogue takes place between them.

F: *“How the hell did you get on here?”*

C: *“You’re not the only smart one you know! I know how to get into someone’s computer, too.”*

F: *“Look here Ceren!”*

C: *“Don’t even start with the threats, baby. You neither have the brains nor the body for it.”*

F: *“What the hell do you want from me? Whatever you want... Don’t go home, sleep on the streets. Do whatever the hell you want. Just leave me alone. We’re done here.”*

C: *“Now I found you, let’s have some fun!”*

F: *“Are you trouble? Hey!”*

C: *“I need some psychological support!”*

F: *“What are you, some kind of virus?”*

C: *“Some kind.”*

F: *“What’s your problem, huh?”*

C: *“My problem, problem baby is wanting to breach the top layers of the system”*

F: *“What the hell do I have to do with the top layers of the system? What do you want from me?”*

C: *“You’re an extension of it. We are sick of living in the World of the old, the experienced, the know-it-all, the powerful, the armed, the ignorant, the sly, the moral, the unloving, the domineering! The pitiable top layer of the...”*

This dialogue between Felek and Ceren takes shape as an important detail in which the film’s title is mentioned both in Turkish and in foreign languages. While Felek still thinks that he can scare Ceren, he actually falls into a trap and makes her an enemy. The person in front of him understood that he spoke the language of power, but she did not heed the calls of Felek, and she will not hang it anymore, because Ceren is tired of this world she experienced where the rulers are old people. Ceren signals to the audience that the world order will change both as a girl and as a young individual.

Conclusion

The movie *Reha Erdem* shot during the quarantine process of the pandemic uses all technological possibilities and at the same time deals with how new technology is a means of spreading a new pressure and ideology in people's lives. The *Zoom* application, which has an important place in people's lives especially during the pandemic process, has also become the state's newest ideological tool. Therefore, criminal organizations will also recognize the power that the government sees, and *Zoom* application will be preferred as the new execution place, and they will not hesitate to use the language of the government when they want to establish authority over people and get their money. The home, which is the intimate area where people feel most secure and vulnerable, suddenly becomes a public sphere as if CCTV cameras entered the house. Security forces, who had previously been able to enter the house with a knock on the door and search permits, created a permeability that could instantly penetrate into the house due to Internet technologies and legal uncertainties in this area. This caused illegal organizations rather than the government to take advantage of this opportunity. However, they will learn very quickly that this permeability is not bilateral thanks to the Z generation and women. Just like when you look in the mirror, you see that your axis in the mirror is looking at you, from the moment Felek has the opportunity to observe people through the *Zoom*, he makes it clear that others like him can observe him. As a critique of Althusser, the idea that the oppressive apparatus and ideological apparatuses of the state are actually two parts of a whole should be discussed. Because, both in real life and in the movie, the government uses the ideological apparatus of the state as an element of repression. In the case of Felek and his boss, it seems impossible not to read or see this through new media technologies. In the face of these new media technologies, not only are people fragile against power, but also power over people is fragile.

Erdem seems to deliberately highlight female identity throughout the film. The famous Turkish Singer Orhan Gencebay's song named *Now I Found You!* is performed by a female singer during the film. During his interview published in Mubi right after the movie, Erdem stated that he did this intentionally. According to him, the potential power to resist the language of power exists in both women and youth. In the movie, Felek states that while talking to his boss, he has difficulty in deceiving women, but unlike them the men are immediately caught in his trap. Throughout the film, many female characters have given very interesting responses to the masculine language or the language of Felek, which can be seen as the language of power. Seçkin became Felek's employer at one point, Arzu wanted to partner with him, Ceren dropped him into his own trap, and Nurperi deceived him by making him fall in love with her. Felek, who wanted to meet with Nurperi at the last period of the film, wandered the streets with flowers in his hand, but could not reach her, and when he contacted her again, it was realized that Nurperi did not even mention which city she lives in. At this point, we seem to have had a small prediction of what happens when fluid forms of power encounter gaseous forms of resistance. Power has changed over time; Althusser speaks of the self-functioning and internalization of power by means of the oppressive and ideological apparatuses of the state. Foucault, on the other hand, will accuse the current government of hypocrisy. In this context, he thinks that resistance is unlikely, he says that there is no power to knock on its door and ask for an account. At this point, today's power is much more invisible than him, much more dangerous, much more fluid. At this point of fluidity, there is a place where it joins with Althusser, the state's oppressive apparatus and ideological devices produce the social like parts of a whole, produce what can be said and construct the human being. However, this ingenious and almost spontaneous flow is constantly renewing itself. Without even realizing it, individuals drift with this current and change direction as the flow changes direction. With the 2020 COVID-19

pandemic process, it was once again noticed that the power did not delay in producing new channels to flow, new waterways and new dams immediately adapted to this new life. During the film, Erdem offers a witness to the audience through one of these new channels, the *Zoom* application. This small hegemonic portrait he presented has also opened the door to some minor resistances. While the film itself gave hope to the audience, the ending of the film was left open-ended, just like power, like the individuality, sociality, or like modernity, the filmic flow ended in flow as an endless project.

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LABOR FORCE MOBILITY – UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS AND MOTIVES, EVIDENCE FROM THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

A highly educated workforce has a unique role in the development of today's economy and society. The research was conducted among the student population (five different scientific fields) in the Republic of Croatia, from May to July 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The subject of the research are the attitudes and preferences of students (N=356) about the variables of the future workplace. Based on the conducted research, the following variables indicate readiness for migration outside the Republic of Croatia: financial independence, professional development in the workplace, career advancement, social capital (migrant networks abroad and knowledge of a foreign language). On the other hand, no statistically significant difference was identified among respondents from different scientific fields in their readiness to migrate due to financial independence, professional development in the workplace, career advancement, and migrant networks abroad (natural sciences, technical sciences, biomedicine and health, humanistic sciences, social sciences). Statistically significant difference between the two groups in variable knowledge of a foreign language was identified (among students who are studying in technical sciences and students who studying in social sciences).

Key words:

Career Advancement. COVID-19 Pandemic. European Union. Financial Independence. Highly Skilled Migrations. Migration. Professional Development. Social Capital.

Introduction

Brain drain denotes the discrepancy between investment in education and the subsequent effects that should be achieved through it. Investing in education of the population in developing countries does not result in the economic growth of the country that is investing in education if the highly educated population leaves this country. This term appears in the literature of the 1960s.¹ Over the past two decades, migration trends have more than tripled compared to the period between 1990 and 2010. This is especially true for the migration of highly skilled workforce, which is in demand worldwide, unlike other groups of migrants.² In addition to advancement and career motives, migrants nowadays look for adventure and a better quality of life.³ Although the mobility of young people is seen as a tool for reducing present inequalities among the EU member states, the outcome is not the same in all member states: some lose investment in human capital formation, others benefit from it, especially in terms of long-lasting migration of highly educated professionals. Young, highly educated individuals migrate to avoid adverse economic and social circumstances in domicile countries.⁴ Dohlman et al. systematize studies published from 2000 to 2016 related to

¹ CARRINGTON, W. J., DETRAGIACHE, E.: How Extensive Is the Brain Drain?. In *Finance and Development*, 1999, Vol. 36, No. 2. No pagination. [online]. [2021-03-01]. Available at: <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/1999/06/carringt.htm>>.

² ÖZDEN, Ç.: *Moving for Prosperity: Global Migration and Labor Markets*. [online]. [2021-03-01]. Available at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/moving-for-prosperity>>.

³ See: HABTI, D., ELO, M.: *Global Mobility of Highly Skilled People: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Self-Initiated Expatriation*. New York : Springer, 2018.

⁴ See: HEMMING, K. et al.: Structural Framework Conditions and Individual Motivations for Youth-Mobility: A Macro-Micro Level Approach for Different European Country-Types. In *Migration Letters*, 2018, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 45-59. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.proquest.com/openview/03b3014e2d3849b038a29e88b7b1ec00/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=456300>>.

migrations of doctors from countries whose resources are lower in comparison to countries with more developed resources. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (five levels) was used to group migration reasons and respondents were classified according to the country they come from. The tendency to migrate is driven by a desire to improve educational and professional opportunities, which applies to middle-income countries, among which the Republic of Croatia is also mentioned.⁵

Engineers and technicians, senior managers and executives, entrepreneurs, scientists, and students are identified as highly educated migrants.⁶ Developed countries are trying to attract highly qualified IT professionals, engineers, scientists, and medical staff.⁷ The Republic of Croatia is ranked among the first three countries of the European Union from which most doctors emigrate due to a better standard of living, higher income, better working conditions, and professional development possibilities.⁸ According to the projection of the European Commission, population migrations and depopulation place the Republic of Croatia in the group of countries that will be the most affected by the aforementioned unfavourable demographic trends, which will cause a decrease in population from 19.1% to 20.4%. Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary, and Poland are also one of these most affected countries.⁹ Countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and the Republic of Croatia, are exporters of workers to other developed countries. All of the abovementioned countries, as well as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, have significant rates of health workers going abroad. They are educated in their own country, and they start working abroad afterwards.¹⁰ At the macro-level, some of the main push and pull factors of migration are the income level and the economic environment, the labour market situation, working conditions and the quality of life, institutions and stability.¹¹ Human capital is transferred through migration to countries that have not invested in its creation, while the countries of origin of the highly educated young workforce are losing investment in their education. The research by Emilsson and Mozetič confirms that the migration and career paths of young, highly educated Latvians and Romanians in Sweden can be divided into three groups: the first group of highly educated young migrants whose jobs are in line with their levels of education. The second group spends some time in Sweden investing in additional education and then finds a job in line with the newly acquired educational outcomes. The third group refers to young highly educated migrants who did not invest in the development of their own potential to fit the specific needs of this country during their stay in Sweden. In this

⁵ DOHLMAN, L. et al.: Global Brain Drain: How Can the Maslow Theory of Motivation Improve Our Understanding of Physician Migration?. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2019, Vol. 16, No. 7. No pagination. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://dx.doi.org/10.3390%2Fijerph16071182>>.

⁶ See: MAHROUM, S.: Europe and the Immigration of Highly Skilled Labour. In *International Migration*, 2001, Vol. 39, No. 5, p. 27-43.

⁷ See also: KOSLOWSKI, R.: Selective Migration Policy Models and Changing Realities of Implementation. In *International Migration*, 2014, Vol. 52, No. 3, p 26-39.

⁸ For more information, see: GRUBER, E. et al.: Migration of Croatian Physicians in the Global Context. In *Medicina Fluminensis*, 2020, Vol. 56, No. 2, p. 88-96.

⁹ LUTZ, W. et al.: *Demographic and Human Capital Scenarios for the 21st Century: 2018 Assessment for 201 Countries*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/15226/1/lutz_et_al_2018_demographic_and_human_capital.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Migration and Brain Drain*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/657051570692065211/World-Bank-ECA-Economic-Update-Fall-2019>>.

¹¹ *Study on the Movement of Skilled Labour*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv:82866>>.

way, the third group is either unemployed or has a job suitable for workers with lower qualifications.¹²

A survey conducted in Romania among people under 20 years shows that young people have a tendency to international migration. The young Romanians prefer the United Kingdom, as well as some famous cities and regions rich in cultural and social events. The UK is perceived as a suitable country for studying, one's own development, and the possibility to increase earnings. Young respondents in the survey assess jobs in Romania as precarious, poorly paid, and insufficient.¹³ The main reasons for the migration of the young people from the new EU member states are higher salaries abroad, the possibility of ensuring a better quality of life abroad, and precarious jobs in the country in which they live. Among the motivators for the first migrations, variables related to the future job were identified: higher salaries abroad, better career opportunities, development of new skills at work, a better quality of life, and previous experience of employment in precarious jobs in the domicile country.¹⁴ A survey conducted among highly qualified workers and graduates from Turkey, regarding the migration to the Federal Republic of Germany, showed that young and highly qualified professionals are attracted to variables from the group of economic factors: opportunities for better careers, employment, a better quality of life.¹⁵ In a sample of 6,377 young highly educated Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, and Portuguese, it was identified that career reasons and the quality of life represent a key role among young respondents when taking the migration into consideration.¹⁶ Over 60% of the respondents in the Republic of Croatia rate their satisfaction with the financial situation in households quite low.¹⁷ Some of the pull migration factors for young people are job opportunities that interest them, higher wages and related financial independence, better working conditions and a better standard of living, as well as the opportunity to work in their profession.¹⁸ The research from 2011 conducted on a sample of young people in Ireland indicates that over 55% of young Irish people want to live outside

¹² See: EMILSSON, H., MOZETIČ, K.: Intra-EU Youth Mobility, Human Capital and Career Outcomes: The Case of Young High-Skilled Latvians and Romanians in Sweden. In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2019, Vol. 47, No. 8, p. 1-18.

¹³ See: SUCIU, M., FLOREA, C.: An Empirical Study on the Migration among Young Skilled and Creative People. In *Amfiteatru Economic Journal*, 2017, Vol. 19, No. 46, p. 727-741.

¹⁴ SANDU, D., TUFİŞ, P.: *Spheres of Life in Youth Migration Processes: A Multicountry and Multilevel Approach*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dumitru-Sandu/publication/331224446_Spheres_of_Life_in_Youth_Migration_Processes_a_Multicountry_and_Multilevel_Approach_1/links/5c6d264892851c1c9deee3eb/Spheres-of-Life-in-Youth-Migration-Processes-a-Multicountry-and-Multilevel-Approach-1.pdf>.

¹⁵ OĞUZHAN OKUMUŞ, M.: *How Berlin Attracts the Turkish "New Wave": Comparison of Economic and Socio-Cultural Pull Factors for Highly Skilled Immigrants (Working Paper No. 142/2020)*. Berlin : Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin, Institute for International Political Economy, 2020, p. 20. [online]. [2021-01-10]. Available at: <<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/217223/1/1698136617.pdf>>.

¹⁶ See also: BARTOLINI, L., GROPAS, R., TRIANDAFYLIDOU, A.: Drivers of Highly Skilled Mobility from Southern Europe: Escaping the Crisis and Emancipating Oneself. In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2017, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 652-673.

¹⁷ MEDGYESI, M., ZÓLYOMI, E.: *Job Satisfaction and Satisfaction in Financial Situation and Their Impact on Life Satisfaction*. Brussels : European Commission, 2016. [online]. [2021-01-10]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marton_Medgyesi/publication/319980515_Job_satisfaction_and_satisfaction_in_financial_situation_and_their_impact_on_life_satisfaction_Social_Situation_Monitor_Research_Note_62_016_Directorate-General_for_Employment_Social_Affairs_and_Inclus/links/59c4d6a90f7e9bd2c0050c1b/Job-satisfaction-and-satisfaction-in-financial-situation-and-their-impact-on-life-satisfaction-Social-Situation-Monitor-Research-Note-6-2016-Directorate-General-for-Employment-Social-Affairs-and-Incl.pdf>.

¹⁸ ÖZDEN, Ç.: *Moving for Prosperity: Global Migration and Labor Markets*. [online]. [2021-03-01]. Available at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/moving-for-prosperity>>.

Northern Ireland in the future.¹⁹ The results of the survey conducted among 1st and 5th year medical students shows that 81% of respondents were already thinking about working abroad during their studies (reasons: lack of jobs in the home country, better working conditions and better quality of life, better opportunities for professional advancement, greater salaries, and better opportunities for additional training.²⁰ Both the previous experience of migration by parents or fathers and the tertiary level of education of mothers, are positive predictors in making decisions about student migration.²¹ In the research of the migration intentions of Romanian mechanical engineering students the main drivers of migration turned out to be economic reasons (work in their professions, career advancement, desire to improve their own financial situation) and the existence of a migrant network (family members living and working abroad).²² The more educated young people are, the more they think about mobility. They also express a greater tendency for mobility in the future if they or their parents have had previous experience of mobility and if they already have friends, relatives, and colleagues somewhere abroad (existence of a social or migrant network).²³ Another study related to youth and mobility exhibits similar findings. It indicates that previous experience of youth mobility generates future decisions related to migration. The migration is more likely if the individuals are more educated and if the unemployment rates are higher.²⁴

1 Research Questions, Objectives and Hypotheses

The following set of research questions, research objectives, and research hypotheses is presented:²⁵

- Research question 1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between the need for financial independence and the intention to leave the region where respondents live after graduating in higher education?
- Research objective 1: Through research it is necessary to identify whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the need for financial independence and migration intentions after graduating in higher education.
- **H1: The need for financial independence is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.**
- Research question 2: Is the need for professional development in the workplace correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education?

¹⁹ See: CAIRNS, D., SMYTH, J.: I Wouldn't Mind Moving Actually: Exploring Student Mobility in Northern Ireland. In *International Migration*, 2011, Vol. 49, No. 2, p. 135-161.

²⁰ See also: SANTRIC-MILICEVIC, M., et al.: First-And Fifth-Year Medical Students' Intention for Emigration and Practice Abroad: A Case Study of Serbia. In *Health Policy*, 2014, Vol. 118, No. 2, p. 173-183.

²¹ See: PLOPEANU, A. et al.: Exploring the Migration Intention of Romanian Students in Economics. In *Prague Economic Papers*, 2020, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 330-350.

²² See: GHERHEȘ, V., DRAGOMIR, G., CERNICOVA-BUCA, M.: Migration Intentions of Romanian Engineering Students. In *Sustainability*, 2020, Vol. 12, No. 12. No pagination. [online]. [2021-03-01]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/12/4846>>.

²³ See, for example: HERZ, A. et al.: Are You Mobile, Too? The Role Played by Social Networks in the Intention to Move Abroad among Youth in Europe. In *Migration Letters*, 2019, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 93-104.

²⁴ See: VAN MOL, C.: Migration Aspirations of European Youth in Times of Crisis. In *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 10, p. 1303-1320.

²⁵ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

- Research objective 2: To identify whether the need for professional development in the workplace is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.
- **H2: Need for professional development in the workplace is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.**
- Research question 3: It is necessary to identify whether the need for career advancement is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education?
- Research objective 3: To identify whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the need for career advancement and the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.
- **H3: Need for career advancement is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.**
- Research question 4: Is there a connection between knowledge of a foreign language and migration intentions of students after graduation in higher education?
- Research objective 4: To identify whether there is a statistically significant correlation between knowledge of a foreign language and migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.
- **H4: Knowledge of a foreign language is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.**
- Research question 5: Is the availability of a migrant network abroad correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education?
- Research objective 5: To identify whether the availability of a migrant network abroad is correlated with the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.
- **H5: The availability of a migrant network abroad is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.**
- Research question 6: Is there a statistically significant difference between respondents from different scientific fields of study in readiness for migration in order to achieve financial independence?
- Research objective 6: To identify a statistically significant difference between respondents from different scientific fields of study in readiness for migration in order to achieve financial independence.
- **H6: A statistically significant difference was identified between respondents from different scientific fields of study in their readiness for migration in order to achieve financial independence.**

2 Results

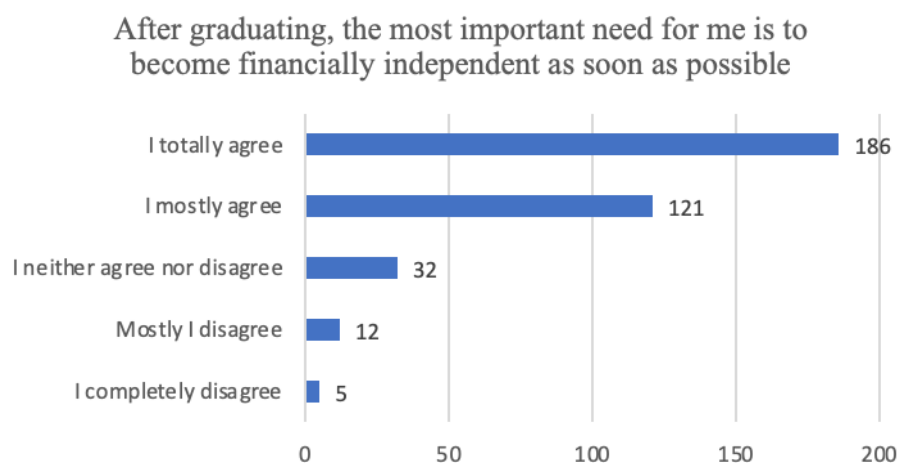
The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was used to test the normality of data distribution. All observed variables have a distribution of responses different from normal distribution and non-parametric statistical methods will be used; the Spearman's Rho coefficient was used to prove correlations ($p < .05$), and the Kruskal Wallis test was used to test the differences between k-independent samples ($p < .05$). Data was analysed in SPSS software package. Basic data on the sample of respondents (descriptive statistics):²⁶

a) Gender structure of respondents: male respondents 42.4%, female respondents 57.6%.

²⁶ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

- b) Distribution of respondents by scientific field of study:
- in natural sciences (physics, mathematics, geology, chemistry, biology, physics) study 5.3% of respondents;
 - in technical sciences (architecture, town planning, engineering, electrical engineering, shipbuilding, construction, computing, etc.) study 50.8% of respondents;
 - in medicine and health (medical, veterinary, dental, pharmaceutical) study 9.8% of students;
 - in humanities (philosophy, theology, history, art, archaeology, ethnology, anthropology) studying 13.8% of students in the sample;
 - in social sciences (economics, law, political science, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, speech therapy, kinesiology, demography) study 20.2% of students in the sample.
- c) Distribution of respondents by the year of study they are currently attending:
- 72.2% of respondents are studying in the 2nd or 3rd year of undergraduate study;
 - 27.8% of respondents are studying in the 2nd year of graduate study.

H1: The need for financial independence is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.



Graph 1: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti–problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 108. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

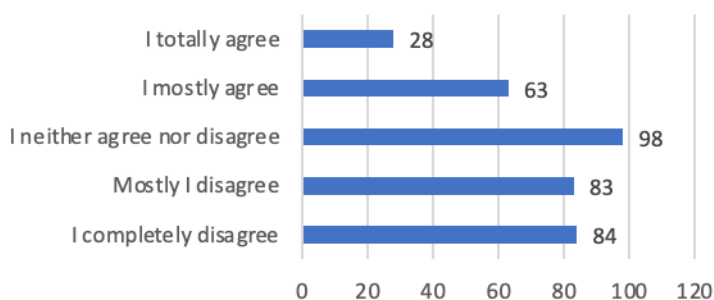
Table 1: Descriptive statistics

After graduating, the most important need for me is to become financially independent as soon as possible		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	4.32	
Std. Error of Mean	0.047	
Median	5	
Mode	5	
Std. Deviation	0.878	
Variance	0.771	
Range	4	

Minimum	1
Maximum	5

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 107. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

I intend to migrate (after graduation) to other countries that attract me



Graph 2: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 102. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

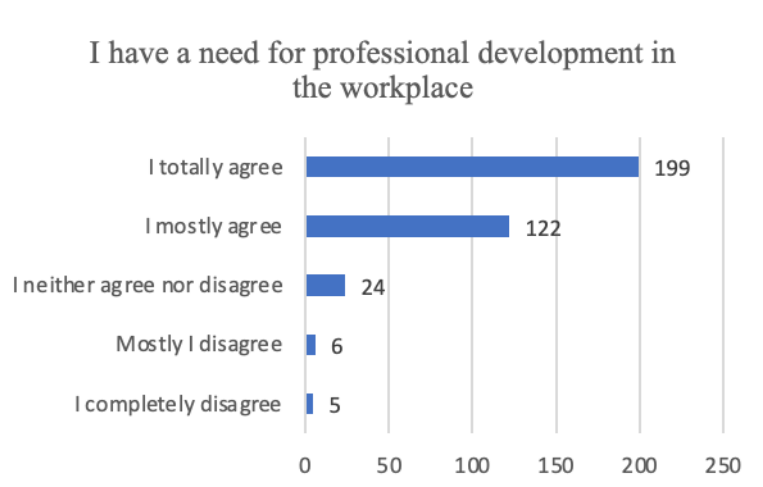
I intend to migrate (after graduation) to other countries that attract me		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	2.63	
Std. Error of Mean	0.066	
Median	3	
Mode	3	
Std. Deviation	1.239	
Variance	1.535	
Range	4	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	5	

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 101. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

A statistically significant positive correlation between the need for financial independence and the migration intention of students for migrations outside the Republic of Croatia was identified (Spearman's $Rho = .124$, $p = .019$). Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.²⁷

²⁷ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

H2: Need for professional development in the workplace is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.



Graph 3: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 121. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

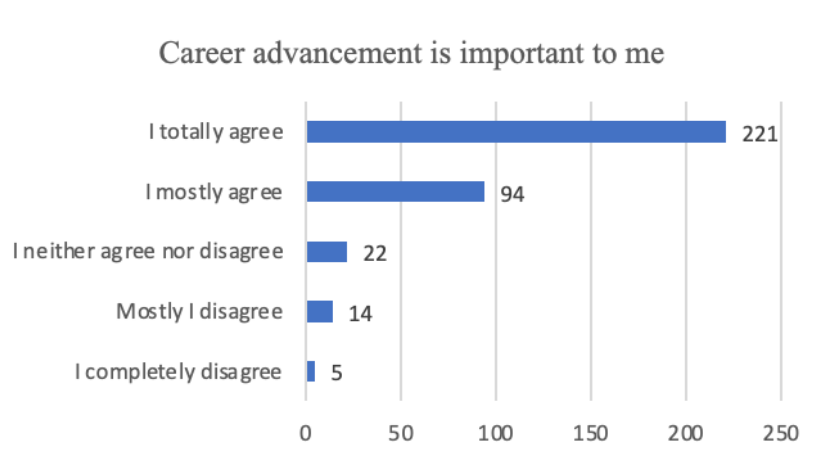
I have a need for professional development in the workplace		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	4.42	
Std. Error of Mean	0.043	
Median	5	
Mode	5	
Std. Deviation	0.806	
Variance	0.649	
Range	4	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	5	

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 120. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

A statistically significant correlation was identified between the migration intentions of students outside the Republic of Croatia and the need for professional development in the workplace (Spearman’s Rho = .108, p = .043). Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.²⁸ Kruskal Wallis H(4)=3.329, p=.504. No statistically significant differences were identified between the groups in the observed variable (grouping variable: scientific field of study).

²⁸ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

H3: Need for career advancement is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.



Graph 4: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 114. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

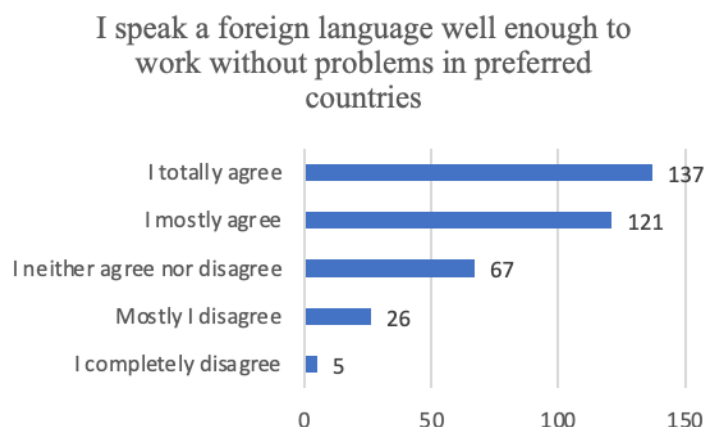
Career advancement is important to me		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	4,44	
Std. Error of Mean	0.047	
Median	5	
Mode	5	
Std. Deviation	0.881	
Variance	0.776	
Range	4	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	5	

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 114. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

A statistically significant positive correlation was identified between the need for career advancement and the migration needs of students outside the Republic of Croatia (Spearman's $Rho = .153$, $p = .004$). Hypothesis 3 is confirmed.²⁹ Kruskal Wallis $H(4) = 4.39$, $p = .35$. No statistically significant differences were identified between the groups in the observed variable (grouping variable: scientific field of study).

²⁹ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

H4: Knowledge of a foreign language is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.



Graph 5: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 109. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics

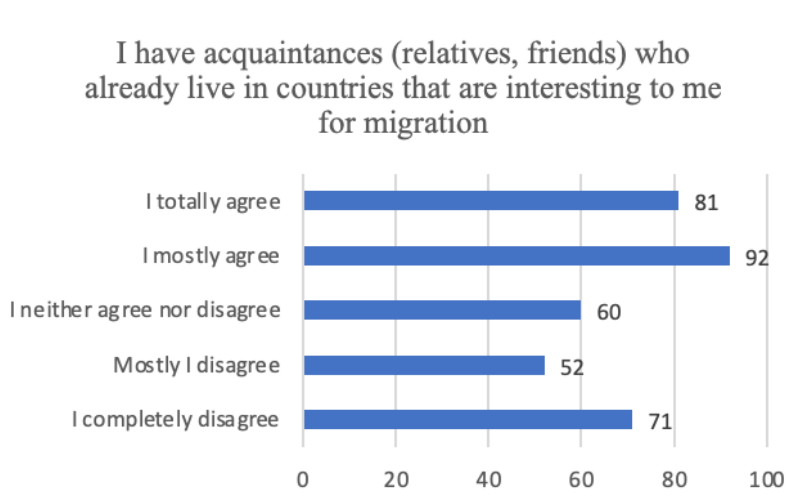
I speak a foreign language well enough to work without problems in preferred countries		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	4.01	
Std. Error of Mean	0.053	
Median	4	
Mode	5	
Std. Deviation	0.997	
Variance	0.994	
Range	4	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	5	

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 109. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

A statistically significant positive correlation between the assessment of foreign language proficiency and the migration intentions of students outside the Republic of Croatia was identified (Spearman’s $Rho=.149$, $p=.005$). Hypothesis 4 is confirmed.³⁰ Kruskal Wallis $H(4)=9.595$, $p=0.48$. Statistically significant difference between the two groups in the observed variable was identified (among students who are studying in the technical science and students who are studying in social science).

³⁰ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

H5: The availability of a migrant network abroad is correlated to the migration intentions of students after graduating in higher education.



Graph 6: Distribution of respondents by Likert scale

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 111. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics

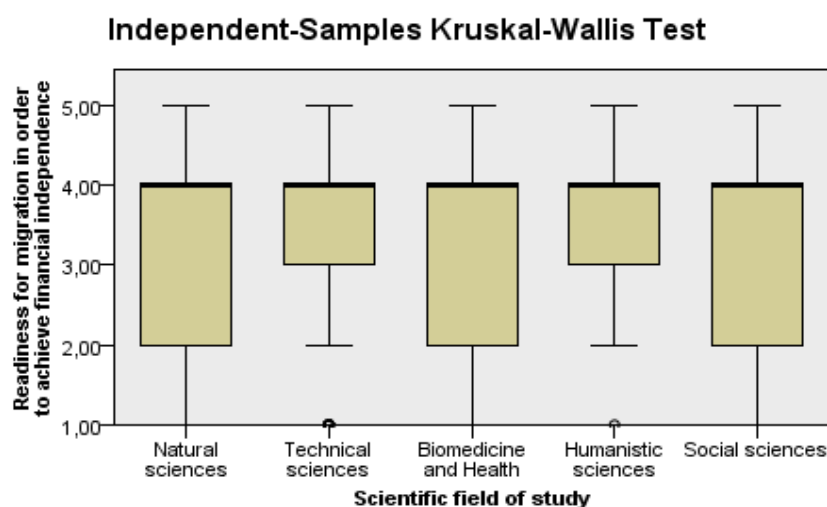
I have acquaintances (relatives, friends) who already live in countries that are interesting to me for migration		
N	Valid	356
	Missing	4
Mean	3.17	
Std. Error of Mean	0.077	
Median	3	
Mode	4	
Std. Deviation	1.446	
Variance	2.09	
Range	4	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	5	

Source: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020, p. 110. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

A statistically significant positive association between the existence of a network of acquaintances abroad and migration intentions of students outside the Republic of Croatia was identified (Spearman's $Rho = .147$, $p = .005$). Hypothesis 5 is confirmed.³¹ Kruskal Wallis $H(4) = 6.76$, $p = .15$. No statistically significant differences were identified between the groups in the observed variable (grouping variable: scientific field of study).

³¹ See: BARTOLOVIĆ, V.: *Radna snaga budućnosti – Problemi i prilike studentske populacije*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Osijek : University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, 2020. 172 p. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/efos%3A3686>>.

H6: A statistically significant difference was identified between respondents from different scientific fields of study in their readiness for migration in order to achieve financial independence.



Graph 7: Kruskal Wallis Test

Source: Own processing.

Readiness for migration in order to achieve financial independence: $N=356$, $\text{Min-Max}=1-5$, $\text{Mean}=3.45$, $\text{Std. Dev.}=1.18$. Kruskal Wallis $H(4)=1.733$, $p=0.78$. No statistically significant differences were identified between the groups in the observed variable in their readiness to migrate in order to achieve financial independence (grouping variable: scientific field of study). Hypothesis 6 is rejected.

Conclusion

The mobility of the highly educated workforce has intensified in the last 20 years, although brain drain as a term has existed in the literature since the 1960s. Youth mobility, as a tool of reducing existing inequalities among the EU member states, has different consequences: countries from which young highly educated individuals emigrate lose national investment in intellectual capital formation, and countries where young people immigrate benefit from migrations of highly educated individuals. The phenomenon of mobility of a highly educated workforce has been in the focus of researchers for a long time, as visible by the number of published papers, especially in the last two decades. Also, the focus of researchers is increasingly turning to the student population because studies have shown that students, even while studying, think about migrating to other countries where they estimate that the conditions for work and advancement are better. Lately, a new scientific area has been opening, and some researchers are starting to research the motives that would make young highly educated people stay in the domicile regions, which is a new turn in the research of this phenomenon.

A study on student migration intentions conducted in the Republic of Croatia ($N=356$) during the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that the following variables have migration potential: financial independence, professional development at work, career development, social capital (presence of migrant networks abroad and knowledge of a foreign language). Considering that

the research was conducted among students of five different scientific fields (natural sciences, technical sciences, biomedicine and health, humanistic sciences, social sciences), no statistically significant difference was found among respondents from different scientific fields in their readiness to migrate due to financial independence, professional development in the workplace, career advancement, and migrant networks abroad (natural sciences, technical sciences, biomedicine and health, humanistic sciences, social sciences). Statistically significant difference between the two groups in variable knowledge of a foreign language was identified (among students who are studying in the technical science and students who studying in the social science). The results of the research are in line with the previous research before the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendation for further research refers to the need to repeat the research after the COVID-19 pandemic, with new generations of the student population, to determine whether there is a difference between groups of respondents in the observed variables, given their age and affiliation to the particular scientific field.

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VACCINATION DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA: PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THEORY, METHOD AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to present the overview of literature insights and research findings pertaining to the new media specificities, vaccination discourse on social media and ethical aspects of using them in social science research. These findings will serve us for the development of the analytic framework for conducting a semantic network analysis and multimodal critical analysis of vaccination discourse in two *Facebook* groups in Croatia. The paper is part of the objectives set within the project The Impact of the Internet and Internet Social Networking Sites on the Attitudes and Decisions about Vaccination, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation. The goals are to map pro and anti-vaccination points of view and arguments, identify influencers, look into the factors motivating anti-vaccination attitudes on social media, and analyse prevailing sentiments, themes, resistant concepts and/or arguments. Strategies and measures to overcome misinformation and vaccine hesitancy are thereby of continuous interest.

Key words:

Croatia. Facebook. Hesitancy. Internet. Network. Social Media. Vaccination.

Introduction

Although vaccination has advanced and significantly improved public health by reducing not only disease and death, but also disability and inequity throughout the world over the past hundred years,¹ there is a range of negative attitudes about vaccination appearing globally, varying from mild scepticism over hesitancy to refusal. When it comes to information literacy, communication or trust, social sciences are needed to assist medical professionals in an attempt to minimize the threat of anti-vaccination phenomenon to global public health. The vaccination discourse differs depending on the context and is influenced by information from a wide range of various sources. Traditionally, healthcare professionals presented the main trustworthy and legitimate source of information, and traditional media mainly relied on them. The information from friends, relatives or colleagues were influential, not only during in-person conversations but also via the Internet and social media.² Contemporary context of access to technology and high-speed Internet has enabled social media to become a relevant information-sharing and opinion-making space. Social media has changed the communication landscape, exposing individuals to an ever-growing amount of information while also allowing them to create and share content. Although vaccine scepticism is not new, social media has amplified public concerns and facilitated their spread globally.

One of the biggest problems with health information on the Internet is that valid and reliable sources are hard to find.³ Although news media dependency has had a strong and consistent effect on risk perceptions resulting from exposure to TV news, newspaper reports, and Internet news, this relationship does not necessarily translate to protective behavioural

¹ ANDRE, F. E. et al.: Vaccination Greatly Reduces Disease, Disability, Death and Inequity Worldwide. In *Bull World Health Organ*, 2008, Vol. 86, No. 2, p. 140-146.

² TRAN, B. X. et al.: Media Representation of Vaccine Side Effects and Its Impact on Utilization of Vaccination Services in Vietnam. In *Patient Prefer Adherence*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 12, p. 1723.

³ DA SILVA E., TOLEDO, M. M.: Internet and COVID-19: Information and Misinformation. In *InterAmerican Journal of Medicine and Health*, 2020, Vol. 3, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.iajmh.com/iajmh/article/view/107/140>>.

intention. Rather, only TV news media dependency has traditionally had a significant impact on vaccination intentions, but this does not translate to newspaper and Internet news source dependency. Despite the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, there are conflicts regarding vaccines and differences in perspectives between experts and ordinary citizens. Because the media today easily amplify information, the confusion of the general public is aggravated and the phenomenon of vaccine hesitancy can be intensified.⁴ Studies⁵ cite digital newspapers with health sections, as well as news agencies as the most influential. Private blogs have less public influence. However, there are also relevant influencers on social networks, and *Facebook* and *Twitter* for example have therefore become important in public health, since in recent years the publication of tweets about vaccines has grown considerably. Individuals may create and share content through social media without editorial or expert intervention, which can lead to surging vaccine hesitancy and plunging public trust in vaccines, especially when it comes to novel pathogens in need of quickly developed vaccines as is the case with SARS-CoV-2.⁶ Social media may present an important platform for debating, discussing, and disseminating information about vaccines, and our aim is to analyse the role they play in vaccination-related public debates and discussions on *Facebook* in Croatia, in order to provide a locally embedded empirical study, posterior to this paper.

In this paper we aim to review existing literature reporting results from research on vaccination discourse online, specifically on social media, in order to be able to formulate a research instrument for conducting semantic network analysis and multimodal critical analysis of vaccination discourse in two *Facebook* groups in Croatia. The research is performed within the wider project on the impact of the Internet and Internet social networking sites on the attitudes and decisions about vaccination, funded by the *Croatian Science Foundation*. The proposal, including an array of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodological approaches, was granted funding early in 2019 and saw its relevance rocket in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our general goals are to map pro and anti-vaccination points of view and arguments, identify influencers, look into the factors motivating anti-vaccination content generation on social media, and analyse prevailing sentiments, themes, resistant concepts and/or arguments appearing in online content on *Facebook* in Croatia. We thereby wish to contribute to the interdisciplinary reflection on specific policies and steps that can be taken to overcome or reduce misinformation and vaccine hesitancy. In three chapters we discuss firstly the specificities of online environment, particularly social media as social networking sites, regarding the creation, interpretation and impact of vaccination-related content. Secondly, we focus on the methods used to analyse online vaccination discourse and provide insight into relevant similar research. Finally, but not less importantly, we look into the ethical challenges appearing when using social media as a research data source.

Our results show that communicating vaccination content on social media bears considerable influence on attitudes, that ideological isolation, community-based authority and echo chambers are of relevance, that discursive framing is relevantly tied to social values. Concerning the thematic level, we have discovered there is confrontation of lay and expert

⁴ JUNG, M.: Challenges of Vaccinations in the Era of New Media Communication. In *The Health Care Manager*, 2018, Vol. 37, No. 2, p. 142.

⁵ CUESTA-CAMBRA, U., MARTINEZ-MARTINEZ, L., NINO-GONZALES, J. I.: An Analysis of Pro-Vaccine and Anti-Vaccine Information on Social Networks and the Internet: Visual and Emotional Patterns. In *El profesional de la información*, 2019, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 12. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://revista.profesionaldelainformacion.com/index.php/EPI/article/view/epi.2019.mar.17/43665>>.

⁶ PURI, N. et al.: Social Media and Vaccine Hesitancy: New Updates for the Era of COVID-19 and Globalized Infectious Diseases. In *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, 2020, Vol. 25, No. 10, p. 1.

perspectives, mistrust in vaccines and institutions, concerns about safety and pharmaceutical profit interests, etc. appearing in quite a few studies, and that emotional narratives around anti-vaccination sentiments are relatively more represented online. The results also revealed that critical online vaccination discourse analysis can serve policy and that specific ethical issues need to be reflected upon when using social media as a source of research data.

1 New Media Surrounding and Influence on Vaccination Attitudes

The Internet has accelerated the speed of information and broken-down barriers.⁷ It is a seemingly infinite repository of information that has become integral in supporting our individual decision-making processes.⁸ The utilization of information warfare on the Internet is a broad issue that has little hope of general resolution.⁹ As the Internet appears to be a relatively more preferred news media channel for seeking risk information, it appears useful to examine how the public may utilize different online venues – including social media channels – to develop their risk perceptions, protective intentions, and protective behaviours.¹⁰ Social media platforms are Internet-based applications that enable communities of users to create, interact, and share with others, with multiple platforms for different content-types. Social media is not merely an information tool but also represents a continuously evolving social environment directly influenced by how individuals produce and share content, and interact with each other. For the purpose of this review, we consider social media as not simply a means of communication but also a space within which individuals socialize and organize.¹¹

Online media are a critical factor of influence on the formation of attitudes in many areas of modern society, which is why their proper use plays an important role in strengthening vaccine confidence and which may further contribute to improvement of public health.¹² Current concerns about vaccination resistance often cite the Internet as a source of vaccine controversy.¹³ The various formats of participation and diffusion of information on the Internet (websites, chatrooms, petitions, social media, wikis, etc.) are tools which facilitate

⁷ STAHL, J. P. et al.: The Impact of the Web and Social Networks on Vaccination. New Challenges and Opportunities Offered to Fight against Vaccine Hesitancy. In *Médecine et Maladies Infectieuses*, 2016, Vol. 46, No. 3, p. 117.

⁸ CLARK, P. A. et al.: Vaccinations and the Influence of Social Media in the United States. In *Journal of Neonatology & Clinical Pediatrics*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 42, p. 5. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.heraldopenaccess.us/openaccess/vaccinations-and-the-influence-of-social-media-in-the-united-states>>.

⁹ WILSON, S. L., WIYSONGE, C.: Social Media and Vaccine Hesitancy. In *BMJ Global Health*, 2020, Vol. 5, No. 10, p. 6. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/5/10/e004206.full.pdf>>.

¹⁰ CAROLYN, A. L., CAROLYN, L.: Effects of News Media and Interpersonal Interactions on H1N1 Risk Perception and Vaccination Intent. In *Communication Research Reports*, 2013, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 134.

¹¹ KARAFILLAKIS, E. et al.: Methods for Social Media Monitoring Related to Vaccination: Systematic Scoping Review. In *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 2021, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 2. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2021/2/e17149/>>.

¹² MELOVIC, B. et al.: The Impact of Online Media on Parents' Attitudes toward Vaccination of Children – Social Marketing and Public Health. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2020, Vol. 17, No. 16, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/16/5816/htm>>.

¹³ GRANT, L. et al.: Vaccination Persuasion Online: A Qualitative Study of Two Provacine and Two Vaccine-Sceptical Websites. In *JMIR Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2015, Vol. 17, No. 5, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26024907/>>.

organized action against public health recommendations and extend its reach.¹⁴ Many studies¹⁵ suggest hesitant attitudes to vaccination are prevalent online, whereby vaccination hesitancy is defined as an expression of concern or doubt about the value or safety of vaccination. When hesitancy is prevalent, ensuring compliance and high coverage rates may not be enough to ensure that vaccination is sustainable in the future.¹⁶ The decision not to vaccinate comes from a multitude of different factors, including the lack of awareness, misinformation, mistrust, rather than for instance information deficit, and they can be stimulated by social media influences that claim false facts about the success of vaccines.¹⁷ The public health community must not merely work to suppress misinformation by establishing its own social media presence, but also make efforts to compliment and utilize established channels to stop the flow of anti-vaccine rhetoric.¹⁸ Online media today represent the crucial factor of influence on formation of attitudes in different areas, and that is why their proper use has important role in strengthening trust in vaccines and improvement of public health.¹⁹

Studies report²⁰ that the way information is shared and sought on *Facebook* can create an isolated, sentimentalized information context, which favours immediacy and emotion over robust scientific evidence. The study introduces the concept of cognitive authority held by *Facebook* group members regardless of the lack of expertise or evidence provided in posts. There is frequent mixture of evidence, opinion and emotion, and anonymity is typically maintained to allow individuals to express their views freely. Some researchers²¹ pay attention to reaching large audiences and rapid information propagation, whereby users however follow or like other users or groups of their interests in a self-selected manner, at the same time avoiding content with which they do not agree. Consequently, a unique network of content and interactions within the broader network appears, not rarely clustered within the so-called echo-chambers. Furthermore, insights from social media data may inform interventions that take into consideration the cognitive, moral, psychological, and political values of people hesitant towards vaccination, building general confidence by appealing to their values.²²

¹⁴ WARD, J. K., PERETTI-WATEL, P., VERGER, P.: Vaccine Criticism on the Internet: Propositions for Future Research. In *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, 2016, Vol. 12, No. 7, p. 1924. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21645515.2016.1146430>>.

¹⁵ See: YAQUB, O. et al.: Attitudes to Vaccination: A Critical Review. In *Social Science & Medicine*, 2014, Vol. 112, p. 1-11. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953614002421>>.

¹⁶ ROALKVAM, S. et al.: *Protecting the World's Children: Immunisation Policies and Practices*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 192.

¹⁷ CLARK, P. A. et al.: Vaccinations and the Influence of Social Media in the United States. In *Journal of Neonatology & Clinical Pediatrics*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 42, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://heraldopenaccess.us/openaccess/vaccinations-and-the-influence-of-social-media-in-the-united-states>>.

¹⁸ ZHONGYI, G. et al.: A Vaccine Crisis in the Era of Social Media. In *National Science Review*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 9.

¹⁹ MELOVIC, B. et al.: The Impact of Online Media on Parents' Attitudes toward Vaccination of Children – Social Marketing and Public Health. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2020, Vol. 17, No. 16, p. 5. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/16/5816/htm>>.

²⁰ See: MA, J., STAHL, L.: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Anti-Vaccination Information on Facebook. In *Library and Information Science Research*, 2017, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 303-310. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0740818817300774>>.

²¹ See also: GIESE, H. et al.: The Echo in Flu-Vaccination Echo Chambers: Selective Attention Trumps Social Influence. In *Vaccine*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 8, p. 2070-2076. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X19315634>>.

²² KALIMERI, K. et al.: Human Values and Attitudes towards Vaccination in Social Media. In LIU, L., WHITE, R. (eds.): *WWW'19: Companion Proceedings of the 2019 World Wide Web Conference*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2019, p. 253.

Vaccine-promoting organizations are working to curb the influence of anti-vaccination content, but face obstacles using social media, including fast-paced change, limited resources, insufficient organizational buy-in, reaching audiences, exploiting social media listening, and measuring impact.²³ Consequently, they may miss opportunities to counter misinformation, connect with groups low in vaccine confidence, and determine diverse audience responses. They lack strong evidence linking social media strategies with behaviour change, and have difficulty understanding silent audiences.

Studies²⁴ examined videos from *YouTube* and found that 65% of them expressed an anti-vaccine sentiment; with only 5.6% produced by government professionals and 36.8% containing no scientific evidence. Among the top *YouTube* videos selected based on search words COVID-19 and coronavirus, 27.5% of videos contained non-factual information and had at the time over 60 million views. The authors concluded that there is self-reinforcement as anti-vaccine content engenders more user engagement (likes and replies, for example). This situation suggests that there may be only illusion of debate on online platforms, with actually reinforced previous opinions and so called ideologic isolation at work in practical effects. Not unexpectedly, recently interest in the rapid spread of COVID-19 and resultant global pandemic has become a focus of intense social media discourse. Studies show²⁵ that there is a COVID-19 related tweet every 45 milliseconds and the hashtag #coronavirus is rapidly becoming the second most used in 2020. Existing research has demonstrated²⁶ that exposure to vaccine-critical websites and blogs negatively impacts intention to vaccinate by comparing perceptions of vaccine risks of those exposed to control websites versus vaccine-critical websites. They found that even short exposure (five to ten minutes) to vaccine-critical content increased the overall perception of vaccine risk. Along similar lines, Ahmed et al.²⁷ demonstrated that the use of *Twitter* and *Facebook* as sources of health information has a significant negative association with vaccine uptake. Bhattacharyya et al.²⁸ designed a social network simulation model. They disseminated content on adverse effects of vaccination and the results they obtained showed that there were outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses with a more protracted course (up to 150% longer duration).

It is evident in numerous studies that there is a disproportion in online content representation in favour of vaccination hesitancy as opposed to uptake. The reasons customarily listed for this pertain to a possibly biased population sample, characterized by misperceiving the benefits and side effects of vaccination and at the same time lacking familiarity

²³ STEFFENS, M. S. et al.: Using Social Media for Vaccination Promotion: Practices and Challenges. In *Digital Health*, 2020, Vol. 6, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2055207620970785>>.

²⁴ BASCH, C. E. et al.: The Role of YouTube and the Entertainment Industry in Saving Lives by Educating and Mobilizing the Public to Adopt Behaviors for Community Mitigation of COVID-19: Successive Sampling Design Study. In *JMIR Public Health Surveillance*, 2020, Vol. 6, No. 2. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2020/2/e19145/>>.

²⁵ BRENNEN, S. et al.: *Types, Sources, and Claims of COVID-19 Misinformation*. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation>>.

²⁶ See: BETSCH, C. et al.: Opportunities and Challenges of Web 2.0 for Vaccination Decisions. In *Vaccine*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 25, p. 3727-3733.

²⁷ AHMED, W. et al.: COVID-19 and the 5G Conspiracy Theory: Social Network Analysis of Twitter Data. In *JMIR Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2020, Vol. 22, No. 5. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.jmir.org/2020/5/e19458/>>.

²⁸ BHATTACHARYYA, S., VUTHA, A., BAUCH, C. T.: The Impact of Rare but Severe Vaccine Adverse Events on Behaviour-Disease Dynamics: A Network Model. In *Scientific Reports*, 2019, Vol. 9. No. 1. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-43596-7>>.

with the consequences of vaccine-preventable disease.²⁹ This may lead to the overestimation of risks, as they are seen as tangible and more immediate compared to the more abstract potential benefits of disease prevention. What has also been noted in previous research³⁰ is that fake information or misinformation on social media get to be portrayed using vivid sentimental narratives, which are more appealing than evidence-based medical literature. Thereby “fuzz-trace theory” is frequently applied to explain that individuals integrate information through both verbatim detailed memories and basic-meaning gist memories which contain the bottom-line basic meaning. Decisions are usually made based on gist memories and gist posts are more likely shared.

2 Discourse Analysis and Social Media

Social media data is an important and useful source of information for developing a complete understanding of a group’s web presence.³¹ Social media has an important role in the spread of information, misinformation, and disinformation about vaccines. Multiple studies have been conducted to monitor vaccination discussions on social media. However, there is currently insufficient evidence on the best methods to perform social media monitoring.³² Monitoring vaccine-related conversations on social media could help us to identify the factors that contribute to vaccine confidence in each historical period and geographical area.³³ Social media users commonly rely on external information to convey ideas, support claims, and serve information needs.³⁴ Public social media sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* provide rich sources of information regarding the dynamics, discourse characteristics, and networked dimensions of the anti-vaccination movement, making social media a significant sight for further scholarly analysis.³⁵ Digital data from social media can assist researchers and policymakers in understanding better the psychological profile, moral worldviews, but also the discourses underlying anti-vaccinationism on a larger scale. Such insights may inform interventions that take into consideration the cognitive, moral, psychological, and political values that are more likely to appeal to the vaccine-hesitant people.³⁶

²⁹ See: CALLENDER, D.: Vaccine Hesitancy: More Than a Movement. In *Hum Vaccin Immunother*, 2016, Vol. 12, No. 9, p. 2464-2468.

³⁰ See: BETSCH, C. et al.: Opportunities and Challenges of Web 2.0 for Vaccination Decisions. In *Vaccine*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 25, p. 3727-3733.

³¹ NINKOV, A., VAUGHAN, L.: A Webometric Analysis of the Online Vaccination Debate. In *Journal of Association for Information Science and Technology*, 2017, Vol. 68, No. 5, p. 1286.

³² KARAFILLAKIS, E. et al.: Methods for Social Media Monitoring Related to Vaccination: Systematic Scoping Review. In *JMIR Public Health Surveillance*, 2021, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2021/2/e17149/>>.

³³ PIEDRAHITA-VALDES, H. et al.: Vaccine Hesitancy on Social Media: Sentiment Analysis from June 2011 to April 2019. In *Vaccines*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 28, p. 1. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-393X/9/1/28/htm>>.

³⁴ SINGH, L. et al.: *A First Look at COVID-19 Information and Misinformation Sharing on Twitter*. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340332054_A_first_look_at_COVID-19_information_and_misinformation_sharing_on_Twitter>.

³⁵ SMITH, N., GRAHAM, T.: Mapping the Anti-Vaccination Movement on Facebook. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2017, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 1311.

³⁶ KALIMERI, K. et al.: Human Values and Attitudes towards Vaccination in Social Media. In LIU, L., WHITE, R. (eds.): *WWW'19: Companion Proceedings of the 2019 World Wide Web Conference*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2019, p. 249.

In reviewing literature on important points on conducting discourse analysis of vaccination content needed for our study of *Facebook* groups in Croatia, several points on discourse studies in social sciences have been found. Discourse is language in use and it does not merely reflect the social processes but it participates in the construction of social reality.³⁷ Critical focus in discourse analysis has a particular added aim to not only identify how content is produced, disseminated and interpreted, but also to point out the power and influence of particular framing and narratives, and to analyse their potential societal and institutional functions and effects. Critical discourse analysis is interested in revealing ideology and power in verbal discourses.³⁸ Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) involves adopting a critical stance to examine the multi-dimensional construction of meaning, the underlying choices, assumptions and biases of such constructions, and the power relations that shape them.³⁹ As a qualitative analytical approach, MCDA is based on the assumptions that we can identify discourses through the analysis of texts in a given context; that language is never neutral and that meaning is shaped by and can affect power.⁴⁰ MCDA focuses on how language is used in interactive and sociocultural contexts; it offers a framework for cross-disciplinary critical discourse analysis and is adequate to analyse the far-ranging information objectives, modes, forms, and contexts facilitated by social media platforms.⁴¹ Many approaches to critically analysing discourse in social sciences draw from Fairclough,⁴² who puts accent on the links between the micro and macro levels, or the links between text and society, and offers a three-layer model of critical discourse analysis which incorporates the levels of text production, text distribution and hegemony, or correspondingly, the levels of description, interpretation (process of discursive practice), and explanation (analysis of social practices).

Numerous studies have been consulted⁴³ and some methodological and analytical points potentially useful for our future analysis have been found. These points include the notions of reductionism and cognitive authority which frame participants' tendency to impute a causal relationship between vaccination and harm, and to focus on the single issue of vaccination in absence of other factors. The unit of analysis in MCDA and semantic network studies is typically an individual posting or comment, and coding is performed based on selected criteria or research questions. Researchers try to validate the codes by firstly independently coding aware of the context, and then coherence is debated and consensus achieved through the process of repeated checking and discussion. Topics, information character (lay/expert)

³⁷ TALJA, S.: Analyzing Qualitative Interview Data: The Discourse Analytic Method. In *Library and Information Science Research*, 1999, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 460, 474.

³⁸ WANG, J.: Criticising Images: Critical Discourse Analysis of Visual Semiosis in Picture News. In *Critical Arts*, 2014, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 265.

³⁹ GIBSON, A. F., LEE, C., CRABB, S.: Reading between the Lines: Applying Multi-Modal Critical Discourse Analysis to Online Constructions of Breast Cancer. In *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2015, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 272.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 275.

⁴¹ See: WANG, J.: Criticising Images: Critical Discourse Analysis of Visual Semiosis in Picture News. In *Critical Arts*, 2014, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 264-286.

⁴² See, for example: FAIRCLOUGH, N.: *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Study of Language*. New York : Longman Group, 1995.

⁴³ See: KANG, G. J. et al.: Semantic Network Analysis of Vaccine Sentiment in Online Social Media. In *Vaccine*, 2017, Vol. 35, No. 29, p. 3621-3638.; MA, J., STAHL, L.: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Anti-Vaccination Information on Facebook. In *Library and Information Science Research*, 2017, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 303-310. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0740818817300774>>; ORR, D., BARAM-TSABARI, A., LANDSMAN, K.: Social Media as a Platform for Health-Related Public Debates and Discussions: The Polio Vaccine on Facebook. In *Israel Journal of Health Policy Research*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 34, p. 1-11. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://ijhpr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13584-016-0093-4#citeas>>.

and emotion/sentiments are typically analysed, as are reasons given in argumentation (fear, adverse effects, safety, autism, toxicity, even conspiracy theories, etc.). Vaccination criticisms is often found to be encompassing themes of safety, personal freedom, and pharmaceutical and medical scepticism. The concepts of e-self or thematic personas also appear, and their types are sometimes differentiated as types of social media accounts that are consistent in their use of specific topics, discourses and language patterns. Several studies recognise greater cohesiveness in positive vaccine sentiment compared to the less-connected network of negative vaccine sentiment. The positive sentiment network characteristically centres around communicating health risks and benefits, highlighting medical concepts, whereas the negative or hesitant network tends to centre around vaccine industry, mainstream media, pharmaceutical companies, etc., and is frequently framed around scepticism and distrust. To conclude, the multimodal critical analysis of discourse and of semantic networks surrounding pro-vaccination and vaccination hesitant or anti-vaccination content in online social media can relevantly improve our understanding of the scope and variability of beliefs and attitudes toward vaccines, as well as complex factors motivating vaccination hesitancy in public health online social media communication, with the final aim to boost vaccine confidence and uptake.

3 Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Using Social Media as a Research Data Source

Facebook and other similar online environments have made it easy and practical to observe individuals and groups. Although this has great potential and presents new opportunities for social science research, it undeniably introduces new ethical challenges.⁴⁴ Key ethical issues in social media research refer to recruitment, collecting data from sources of varying levels of privacy, anonymity of subjects, confidentiality and informed consent. Even though the number of social media research in social sciences is rapidly increasing, clear ethical guidelines for such research are missing. There is no specific regulatory guidance and few resources to guide institutional review boards (IRBs) or researchers on the use of social media for research recruitment.⁴⁵ In the following section we will review different argumentations and strategies for solving some important ethical and methodological questions used in previous relevant studies.

Gelinas et al.⁴⁶ propose that social media recruitment should be evaluated in substantially the same way as ‘offline’ recruitment. A more familiar offline variant or equivalent of the social media technique being proposed should be identified, along with substantive ethical considerations that bear on the offline version, along with any ways the online version differs from the more traditional offline equivalent. This difference should be evaluated in terms of relevant ethical norms and considerations. The authors are therefore suggesting ‘normalizing’ social media recruitment techniques while remaining sensitive to new aspects. Social scientists are often not sure whether collecting publicly available data from websites like

⁴⁴ See: KOSINSKI, M. et al.: Facebook as a Research Tool for the Social Sciences: Opportunities, Challenges, Ethical Considerations, and Practical Guidelines. In *American Psychologist*, 2015, Vol. 70, No. 6, p. 543-556.

⁴⁵ See: ANDREWS, C.: Social Media Recruitment: The Opportunities and Challenges Social Media Provides in the Realm of Subject Recruitment. In *Applied Clinical Trials*, 2012, Vol. 21, No. 11. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://www.appliedclinicaltrials.com/view/social-media-recruitment/>>.

⁴⁶ GELINAS, L. et al.: Using Social Media as a Research Recruitment Tool: Ethical Issues and Recommendations. In *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 2017, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 3.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. requires participants' consent and IRB approval.⁴⁷ Kosinski et al. argue that using public data from *Facebook* data should not require participants' consent if the following conditions are met:

- The data was knowingly made public by the individuals.
- Data is anonymized.
- There is no interaction with the participants in the sample.
- No information that is to be published or used to illustrate the results of the study can be attributed to a single individual.⁴⁸

If the research is only observational (meaning that there is no direct interaction with participants), it is very important to determine whether the proposed project meets the criteria of human subjects research, and subsequently, whether institutional review is needed. A human subject is defined as a living individual about whom data is obtained through interaction or identifiable private information. If the access to social media content is public, information is identifiable but not private, and information gathering does not require interaction with the person who posted it online, it can be argued that proposed project does not constitute the human subjects research. Therefore, this kind of research involving observation of public behaviour can be exempted from IRB review. This is not the case when the information obtained is recorded in a way that subjects can be identified through the identifiers, or if there is any disclosure of subjects' responses outside the published research that could place subjects at any sort of risk or do them any kind of damage. This argumentation can be applied to websites such as *Facebook* or *LinkedIn*, provided that only publicly available profiles were evaluated to make collective observations.⁴⁹

Because the access to these social networking sites and their data is becoming increasingly restricted as more and more users set their profiles and content as 'private', some studies have confirmed excluding private data from their analysis, while other studies discussed the limitations of such exclusion and the distorted view it creates. Some previous studies have argued they were exempt from institutional or ethical review because they only analysed public data which, as previously mentioned, cannot be considered as human research subjects. The problem is that even when ethical approval has been obtained, questions about anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent still remain.⁵⁰ It is clear that protecting participants' online identities requires much more caution than with offline research. To illustrate, direct quotations from participants sometimes aren't possible because a simple search engine can trace and identify the original source. Some researchers sought some kind of informed consent via the *Facebook* group moderators, trying to ensure that participants of the group would know what the study is about and make it possible for them to object

⁴⁷ See: SOLBERG, L.: Data Mining on *Facebook*: A Free Space for Researchers or an IRB Nightmare? In *Journal of Law, Technology and Policy*, 2010, Vol. 2010, No. 2. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2182169>; WILSON, R. E., GOSLING, S. D., GRAHAM, L. T.: A Review of Facebook Research in the Social Sciences. In *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2012, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 203-220.

⁴⁸ See: KOSINSKI, M. et al.: Facebook as a Research Tool for the Social Sciences: Opportunities, Challenges, Ethical Considerations, and Practical Guidelines. In *American Psychologist*, 2015, Vol. 70, No. 6, p. 543-556.

⁴⁹ See: MORENO, M. A. et al: Ethics of Social Media Research: Common Concerns and Practical Considerations. In *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 9, p. 708-713.

⁵⁰ KARAFILLAKIS, E. et al.: Methods for Social Media Monitoring Related to Vaccination: Systematic Scoping Review. In *JMIR Public Health Surveillance*, 2021, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 2. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2021/2/e17149/>>.

or withdraw from the group during the observation period. Pounds et al.⁵¹, for example, did exactly that and reported that no one objected within their agreed time frame, while some participants had a positive reaction to their research of their *Facebook* support group for diabetics. Stommel and de Rijk⁵² did a meta-analysis which included 132 articles published in discourse analysis-oriented journals between January 2017 and February 2020. They found that two thirds of the articles did not discuss ethical issues, mostly claiming the data collected (mostly from sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*) was publicly available, and decisions made by authors of the articles that did discuss ethical issues varied substantially. Studies they analysed commonly only referred to how others dealt with or discussed ethical issues in similar situations. On the other hand, most quotations were anonymized, but retrievability of posts was often not considered. In most cases it was argued that informed consent was not required, while approval from research ethics committees was regarded unnecessary. Issues concerning users' expectations and intentions, freedom of choice, possible harm, sensitive topics, and vulnerable groups were rarely discussed.

Judicial concerns related to ethics and/or copyright are yet another important dimension. They were rarely discussed, which is unusual given the increasing attention for the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). These regulations require a legitimate ground for the processing of personal data. This can be consent, or that information is or was manifestly made public, which could be valid for public posts on some social media platforms. Nevertheless, rights of subjects need to be safeguarded and they should be notified about the research taking place and that they can exert specific rights.⁵³ Evidently, studies using social media as a research data source require distinct approaches to ethical considerations, depending on the nature of research questions, objectives and sensitivity of the targeted population. A meta-analysis reported that dialogical character of social media should be used more frequently and more attention needs to be given to the unique ethical issues of ambiguity of boundaries between public and private.⁵⁴ Researchers and ethics review boards should work together to develop expertise in evaluating the design of such studies. Naturally, vaccination attitudes studies that use data from social media can also raise other methodological issues. Karafillankis et. al. have done a meta-analysis of such studies and showed that the main objective from majority of studies was to better understand how vaccination is portrayed on social media, whether through the analysis of online discourses or sentiments, or by looking at how information is produced, shared and engaged with.⁵⁵ Different sorts of monitoring tools were used to extract data from social media platforms, including: manual browser search tools, social media application program interfaces and automated monitoring. It is quite important to understand that data extracted from social media platforms have notable limitations. They are often not representative of the entire online discourses around vaccination, meaning that researchers should be careful with

⁵¹ POUNDS, G., HUNT, D., KOTEYKO, N.: Expression of Empathy in a Facebook-Based Diabetes Support Group. In *Discourse, Context and Media*, 2018, Vol. 25, p. 34-43.

⁵² STOMMEL, W., DE RYJK, L.: Ethical Approval: None Sought. How Discourse Analysts Report Ethical Issues around Publicly Available Online Data. In *Research Ethics*, 2021, Vol. 17, No. 1. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1747016120988767>>.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ GUSTAFSON, D. L., WOODWORTH, C. F.: Methodological and Ethical Issues in Research Using Social Media: A Metamethod of Human Papillomavirus Vaccine Studies. In *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 2014, Vol. 14, No. 127. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://bmcmredresmethodol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2288-14-127#citeas>>.

⁵⁵ KARAFILLAKIS, E. et al.: Methods for Social Media Monitoring Related to Vaccination: Systematic Scoping Review. In *JMIR Public Health Surveillance*, 2021, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 2. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2021/2/e17149/>>.

generalizations. Due to browser and user interface limitations, studies that used manual browser search functions were more time-consuming and collected less data over smaller periods of time than those accessing the automated application program interfaces or software. Also, while most studies used the terms “negative”, “positive”, or “neutral” in their analysis of sentiments expressed towards vaccination, each study defined these in a somewhat different way, which might have influenced findings, interpretations and conclusions.⁵⁶

Conclusion

For the purposes of concluding remarks, significant anti-vaccination content can be said to be frequently shared across social media. Although there is much recent research, especially instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, existing evidence is preliminary, but strongly suggests that exposure to the online content sceptical to vaccination safety may directly and indirectly impact vaccination opinions and beliefs. The posts and comments on the social media suggest that there is an active and versatile debate on vaccinations online and that online social media platforms seems to facilitate discussion.⁵⁷ The voices on social media can be generally treated as authentic as they are not under direct media or political influence. This is why the research on vaccination discourse online may be useful to social and public health policy. The impact of such research is potentially even bigger, when the fact is considered that discourse does not merely reflect the situation, but constructs it and frames perception and interpretation in a certain way, not without ideological implications.

This review study has shown that there is frequent misinformation and that expert position is not without scepticism or questioning, if present at all. Also, there are phenomena of community cognitive authority, echo chambers, ideological isolation, vivid emotional narratives in anti-vaccination content, which is more represented compared to pro-vaccination content. This leads to the conclusion that measures and policies for reducing vaccination hesitant attitudes and protecting public health should consider making health workers and experts accessible on social media, equipped to provide the information, support and advice sought by the public. The control of the platform over the distribution of misinformation is also mentioned ever more frequently. Awareness raising regarding the harmful effects of infectious diseases and the promotion of education, health and scientific literacy and critical responsibility when creating, disseminating and interpreting online content are also permanent tasks of us all.

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⁵⁶ KARAFILLAKIS, E. et al.: Methods for Social Media Monitoring Related to Vaccination: Systematic Scoping Review. In *JMIR Public Health Surveillance*, 2021, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 2. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://publichealth.jmir.org/2021/2/e17149/>>.

⁵⁷ See: ORR, D., BARAM-TSABARI, A., LANDSMAN, K.: Social Media as a Platform for Health- Related Public Debates and Discussions: The Polio Vaccine on Facebook. In *Israel Journal of Health Policy Research*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 34, p. 1-11. [online]. [2021-04-03]. Available at: <<https://ijhpr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13584-016-0093-4#citeas>>.

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HISTORICAL FILM: ETERNAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE FACTS AND MYTHS

Laco Halama – Zora Hudíková

Abstract:

The article examines the genre of historical film. It evaluates its documentary and historiographical possibilities, compares the relationship and value of written and visualized history for historical research, popularization, and teaching of history. It differentiates the approach to the processing of historical themes in documentary filmmaking and feature films. It evaluates the possibilities of cinematographic processing of historical events in comparison with the written description and the possibilities of cooperation of filmmakers with historians in film production. It also calls for a substantial expansion of the means of expression provided by digital production (CGI). Subsequently, it also deals with the possible role of the creator – director of film work and his responsibility for respecting historical facts, in the context of dynamically evolving technology, and its use in the circumstances of unlimited possibilities of digital production.

Key words:

CGI. Cinematic History. Film. Film Production. History. Historical Movie.

Introduction

Hundreds of films have been made all around the world for more than a century, trying to appeal to audiences of all generations. The source of inspiration for many creators and producers is the depiction of historical topics in various forms: films about ground-breaking historical events, war conflicts, important politicians, artists, athletes – simply themes depicting real stories from the past. The subjects of our interest are feature films with a theme that relates to a historical event, personality, or real story and to assessment of the relationship between written and film historiography, with emphasis on the proportions of historical fidelity, truthfulness, and relevance of film usability as a useful tool in teaching history. Documentary films using a large amount of archival, documentary, or other visual material, the volume of which naturally grows over time, are considered to be primarily historically accurate and true. However, more frequently they use narrative techniques of dramatic, fictional, or stylized stories. The creators of documentaries try to dramatize historical stories; they often use staged shots or fictional, arranged sequences. Conversely, feature filmmakers confirm the reconstructed historical situation with archival materials or artifacts and more frequently use documentary materials more or less directly in them. This way, the line between documentary and a feature film is constantly blurring, intertwining, and the two worlds – originally divided – are getting closer and closer, thanks to the endless anticipation of new experiences.

At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the most famous directors of the silent film era, D. W. Griffith, author of the first iconic historical film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), expressed a prophecy about the future of history display: “*Imagine a public library of the near future. (...) Suppose you want to read an episode in Napoleon’s life. Instead of tediously looking through a lot of books, wondering and without a clear idea of what exactly happened, you just sit at the right window in the prepared room, press a button and see exactly what happened. (...) Writing, revising, comparing, and reproducing will be done by a panel of renowned experts and you will get a vivid and complete picture.*”¹ These words sound prophetic, and from today’s point of view, the realization of such an idea already seems almost realistic. There are already plenty of

¹ GRIFFITH, D. W.: Some Prophecies (Interlude: The Filmmaker as Creator: D. W. Griffith). In KNOPF, R. (ed.): *Theater and Film. A Comparative Anthology*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2005, p. 100.

historical feature films in libraries around the world that teachers use as audio-visual teaching materials. Many of them are the work of creative inspiration of the authors, based on real, historical events and biographies of historical figures. In addition, specialized TV channels offer a variety of documentary insights into the past 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through thematic programs and films based on a diverse combination of fiction and non-fiction. In addition, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries leave more and more audio-visual traces. The present, but also the very recent past, is currently mapped by billions of miniaturized digital recording devices (from mobile phones, through all types of possible cameras including the security ones), confirming that nothing important that happens today will be left without an audio-visual trail, while cloud Internet archives allow unlimited sharing of these tracks. Thanks to these means and decades of development of cinematography, the recent past, in particular, seems to be more accessible. And so, even today, in the search for information about the ancient past, it seems as if it was really enough to press a button and we can call up an illustration of any period of human history. So, the possibilities of 'audio-visual reading' of information, as described by Griffith, are almost a reality. The global and local film industry is constantly producing historical, biographical or period films with a more or less ambitious intention to present a historical story or event faithfully, truthfully, and engagingly. However, these three attributes hide a contradiction: prioritizing either can damage the other two. In addition, a faithful, true, and engaging visualized description of the past can be presented by two fundamentally different approaches: fiction and non-fiction. However, both approaches should respect available historical sources (whether written, pictorial or material) and avoid ideological, political, or national tendencies when visualizing them in their own original way. Therefore, the following questions are becoming more and more current for the researcher in this field: Can film fiction provide relevant historical knowledge or a true depiction of historical reality? Can the use of documentaries 'guarantee' historical fidelity to the description of past events? To what extent can a feature film director become a creator of history? If such a question seems too bold, we can replace it with a less provocative one – can we consider a historical film at least as a type of historical experiment? In our article, we present some views and reflections on the connection and counterpoints of historical science and film. When processing the study, we will use methods of logical analysis, such as analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, comparison, or generalization. Our goal is to find out in which direction is the ambivalent relationship between historical science and historical film moving.

1 History in Film and Film in History

Let us say we want to examine two parameters. The extent to which the approach of feature filmmakers to the processing of historical themes leads to the interpretation of historical events and the extent to which the depiction of events or personalities can be considered faithful, historically based, and usable in scientific research of historical events. To do this, it is necessary to clarify a few basic concepts and starting points. The first area is the quality and volume of professional discourse focused on the assessment of film depictions of the past from the perspective of historians. This discourse evolved from the growing interest in visual media, which began to penetrate many academic areas after the 1960s. At that time, several conferences took place, at which European and American historians translated the results of their analysis of the interaction between film and historiography. Topics such as the production, reception, and value of a historical documentary began to be explored, as well as the issue of how to evaluate the current film as a historical source, resp. what problems the use of films as a teaching aid brings. In the English-speaking world, the historical film came to the attention of historians-academics in 1988, when the oldest and most respected professional journal, *The American*

Historical Review (AHR) devoted more than half of its pages to a “film and history forum” in its quarterly edition. Robert A. Rosenstone’s ground-breaking essay *History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History on Film*² was also published in it. In this essay, several renowned historians argued in favour of the historical film. One of the most renowned, H. White, took the opportunity to introduce the term “historiophoty” (as a pendant to “historiography”) and define it as “a representation of history and our thinking about it in visual images and written discourse”.³ The question then is, what is the meaning of the term “historical film” and how can we define this term. In the broadest sense of the word, and in what appears to be a common assumption by researchers, the term seems to apply to any film that is consciously set in the past, at some point before the actual production of a particular work. (In this sense, it is clear that all films, as well as other cultural artifacts, will become historical documents once completed.) However, we point to films that are purposely aimed at depicting the past, a specific section of historical time. Into this category, famous Canadian historian Natalie Zemon Davis puts either films based on a dramatic plot rooted in real historical events or films based on an imaginary plot that use historical events which then become the central motive of the story.⁴ Theorist Robert A. Rosenstone distinguished historical film from costume drama by insisting that historical films intersect, comment, or add something to a broader discourse about the historical image of a particular person or event.⁵ In examining (American) historical films, Robert Burgoyne argues that historical film is a genre in which stories focus on documentable historical events which serve as its main storyline – unlike films in which the past serves only as a scenic, nostalgic environment for developing a fictitious plot. He further states that the genre has five sub-genres: the war film, the epic, the biopic, the metahistorical film, and the topical historical film.⁶

Over the next decade, several respected historians, such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Robert Sklar, and Robert Toplin, helped legitimize the subject of historical film through essays in scientific publications. Many historical journals began to review films, and the AHR introduced the annual edition of its historical film magazine. Film theorists such as Tony Kaes, Thomas Elsaesser, Leger Grindon, Robert Burgoyne, and Vivian Sobchack have published successful scientific essays on historical films. Robert B. Toplin devoted himself to postulating the term “cinematic history” perhaps the most rigorously.⁷ Together with Robert Burgoyne and Leger Grindon, they defined historical film as a specific genre. They state that in comparison with other genres, film history has “great diversity in terms of settings, plots and characters” and that “there are some familiar practices in the craft”. He describes and discusses nine such practices, noting that not all historical films adhere to every single one:

1. Cinematic history simplifies historical evidence and excludes many details.
2. Cinematic history appears in three acts featuring exposition, complication and resolution.
3. Cinematic history offers partisan views of the past, clearly identifying heroes and villains.
4. Cinematic history portrays morally uplifting stories about struggles between Davids and Goliaths.
5. Cinematic history simplifies plots by featuring only a few representative characters.
6. Cinematic history speaks to the present.

² See: WHITE, H.: Historiography and Historiophoty. In *American Historical Review*, 1988, Vol. 93, No. 5, p. 1193-1199. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/93.5.1193>>.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ DAVIES, N.: *Slaves on Screen*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 5.

⁵ ROSENSTONE, R.: *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow : Pearson, 2006, p. 45-46.

⁶ BURGUYNE, R.: *The Hollywood Historical Film*. Oxford : Blackwell, 2008, p. 3-4.

⁷ TOPLIN, R. B.: *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood*. Lawrence : University of Kansas Press, 2002, p. 12-15.

7. Cinematic history frequently injects romance into its stories, even when amorous affairs are not central to these historical events.
8. Cinematic history communicates a feeling for the past through attention to details of an earlier age.
9. Cinematic history often communicates as powerfully in images and sounds as in words.⁸

The American historian Alison Landsberg studied the influence of art, especially film on memory and cognitive processes. Her research pointed to the great viewers' appeal of historical films based on "immersive identification". According to her, for the viewer, the historical film is an opportunity to connect with the characters in the film and thus immerse themselves in historical events, shown as they could happen, learn about the dynamics of events and even get the feeling of having a share in the displayed events. The space of the cinema thus becomes a place where people experience an extremely intense encounter with the lives and contexts of historically and spatially distant historical film characters. Landsberg goes on saying that the danger of feature film as a means of portraying history lies precisely in its virtuoso ability to entice viewers to deeply identify with the characters and events of the past. Thus, the viewer may have the illusory feeling that he understands the position of another person or knows how those who lived then felt in the past. In this intense identification, the viewer can experience the existence in someone else's skin without having to struggle with the distance that separates him from the past or without even understanding it.⁹ Over the last 25 years, many professional scientific works on the topic of history and film have been created.¹⁰ Today, there is a very wide field of different approaches, methods and ways of analysing works that take the past as a space for their interpretation of history and as a subject of interest. Professional historians (with a few exceptions) refuse to accept cinema as a serious way of interpreting and thinking about the past. In contrast, the disciplines that deal with the study of visual media (film, television, cultural studies) focus more on the ways and quality of its depiction than on assessing the degree of truth in a film about history. With that being said, we can simply say that a historical film only very rarely becomes a 'historiographic film'.

For many historians, the main obstacle that stands in their way of accepting dramatic construction (a story) as a way of creating history is an opinion that such films are not about the past, but are, in fact, about the present. That being a matter of reconfiguring the past in relation to current religions, conflicts, wars, social movements, individuals, and ideologies. Anyone who creates works of history knows (or should know) that even the most accurate scientific books are always, in the words of historian Natalia Zemon Davis, "*Ianus faced*".¹¹ In addition, as renowned theoreticians of history, such as Hayden White, claim, any attempt to translate information about the past into a historical narrative necessarily involves rhetorical conventions, a form of fiction. Alun Munslow emphasized: "*Like written history, history in*

⁸ TOPLIN, R. B.: *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood*. Lawrence : University of Kansas Press, 2002, p. 12-17.

⁹ LANDSBERG, A.: Politics and the Historical Film: Hotel Rwanda and the Form of Engagement. In ROSENSTONE, R., PARVULESCU, C. (eds.): *A Companion to the Historical Film*. Chichester : Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 13.

¹⁰ See, for example: LEGER, G.: *Shadows on the Past – Studies in the Historical Fiction Film*. Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1994; ROSENSTONE, R. A.: *Visions of the Past – Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge, London : Harvard University Press, 1995; MUNSLOW, A.: *Deconstructing History*. London, New York : Routledge, 1997; ROSENSTONE, R.: *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow : Pearson, 2006.

¹¹ Remark by the author: "*Janus, Roman god. Janus: a Roman god that is identified with doors, gates, and all beginnings and that is depicted with two opposite faces. To understand this idea, it is necessary to know that the Roman god Janus had the form of a man with two faces, each looking in the opposite direction – in our case into the past and into the present.*" Source: *Janus Roman God*. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Janus-Roman-god>>.

film is fictional, genre-based, strongly authorial, factually selective, ideologically driven, condensed and targeted".¹² The solid world of history on the pages of the book and the equally well-known (but more fleeting) world history on a movie screen are similar in at least two aspects. They refer to real events, moments and movements from the past, but at the same time they contribute to an unrealistic and fictional depiction of the past. To accept film, especially dramatic feature film, as a medium capable of conveying 'serious' history contradicts with everything we have learned at school since childhood: history is generally perceived as a science based on documents – documentary or book archives, which are the basis for the interpretation of historical facts in textual form. Conversely, the film was and is perceived only as an entertainment, a departure from the serious, which we consume to escape the various social and political problems that fill everyday life and which as such has nothing to do with the serious world of events and developments described in history books and textbooks. The common viewers' perception of films is that they serve primarily to create a reputation for the director and the actors and a financial profit for the production companies. And that for them, history is just another tool for selling tickets. Not only experience, but also facts confirm that a successful biographical film or a serious historical drama is still one of the best ways leading to the Oscar.¹³

There is a group of historians who tend to see history as a set of impartial and objective information, as a direct reflection of what happened. On the other hand, at least in the current generation of academic historians, there is also the view that all history, whether written or film, is an interpretation, a narrative construct, and never just a transparent reflection on the past. Following Hayden White, Robert Rosenstone emphasizes: "*Neither people nor nations live historical 'stories'; coherent stories with beginnings, centers, and ends are constructed by historians as part of their attempts to understand the past.*"¹⁴ This view encourages a speculation on how historical narrative shapes the past. If we look at the catalogues of national cinemas very quickly, not only in the most significant ones (USA, Russia, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Japan, etc.) we can find a number of titles that were created with the ambition to approach specific historical events and specific personalities. Many of them have been filmed repeatedly, in newer and newer versions. They have repeatedly 'revived' historical events and personalities, often several years or decades apart. It is also clear from these 'remakes' that each subsequent creative experiment dealt with the same theme in its own way, which included the current expression of artistic utterance, film speech, or an updated interpretation of historical events and facts. In each period of the film's history, representative works depicting the past can be found, and each of them can be judged in terms of historical fidelity and accuracy – not only in depicting events, characters, their actions and motives, but also in realization's accuracy, detail of historical stage setting and many other specific details. From this point of view, each film diving into history with the ambition of a faithful depiction of historical truth can be an object of independent inquiry. An interesting project of Fordham University in New York called

¹² MUNSLOW, A.: *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies*. London : Routledge, 2005, p. 111. See also: WHITE, H.: *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

¹³ Remark by the author: To name the most famous examples of historical films that won an Oscar: 1930 – *All Quiet on the Western Front*; 1936 – *Mutiny on the Bounty*; 1938 – *The Life of Emile Zola*; 1940 – *Gone with the Wind*; 1958 – *The Bridge on the River Kwai*; 1960 – *Ben Hur*; 1963 – *Lawrence from Arabia*; 1971 – *Patton*; 1985 – *Amadeus*; 1998 *The Last Emperor*; 1994 – *Schindler's List*; 1998 – *Titanic*; 2013 – *Argo*; 2014 – *12 Years Slave*; 2001 – *Gladiator*; 2019 – *Green Book*, etc. See: RENFRO, K.: *See the Movie That Won Best Picture at the Oscars the Year You Were Born*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.insider.com/oscars-all-best-picture-winners-2017-2>>.

¹⁴ ROSENSTONE, R.: *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 35.

*Medieval History in Movies*¹⁵ provided a broader view of the discourse on the fidelity and truthfulness of historical films. History students compared several hundred films thematically placed in the Middle Ages with period historical documents which resulted in interesting findings about ‘medieval’ films. They discovered obvious and hidden errors in the reproduction of historical circumstances, interpretation of events, and heroes. These mistakes can be attributed to the activity associated with the making of films – the creation of a specific pre-camera reality that can bring more or less free interpretation of historical circumstances, despite the fact that each of the films undoubtedly worked with more than one historical advisor. Such research opens a discussion about how modern artists have adapted and responded to medieval history and how sensitive topics have been portrayed in ‘medieval’ cinema – depicting men, women, their roles and relationships, ethnicity, race, or other social backgrounds. The mentioned topics were determined by the current view and the current interpretation of the film narrative. The analysis of the results also confirmed that the creators cope differently with far-back events and topics than with recent ones.¹⁶ It can be said that the deeper we go into the past, the more space opens up for a freer interpretation of events and historical figures. And this applies not only to the history visualized in the film, but also in written historiography.

2 Historical Film and Processes of (Re)Construction and (De)Construction of the Past

In recent decades, it has become common practice for several, historically specialized historians to be involved in the production of a film on any historical topic. Not only to provide advice during the production process but also to contribute to the scientific evaluation of the film after its completion. These evaluations of historians are also presented as a part of a material that is commonly available as ‘special editions’ on film DVDs. It has almost become an obligation for the creators of a historical film to attach interviews or statements that document the depiction of historical details and thus certify the film in terms of its historical fidelity to the film’s DVD release. In a way, the documentation provided legitimizes the concept and interpretation of the creators, their interpretation of the past. However, it must be said that these DVD materials represent a highly controlled and potentially selective use of evaluations made by historians. The production teams responsible for compiling the content of the DVD have ultimate control over which scientists are chosen to speak, as well as over the way their statements are edited. They often only supplement and support the statements of the main creators. On the other hand, it is beneficial and should be appreciated that these evaluation documents and comments do exist at all. Academic historians are not (and have never been) the most important in the production of historical films, but the ways in which they work with creators provide valuable insight into the relationship between films and the fidelity of portrayals of history. Needless to say, there are also opinions that historians work as a kind of protection that secures averting public criticism or as a necessary means of legitimizing historical content. What historians have failed to do, however, is to act as guardians of the representation of history in the filmmaking process. This is confirmed by the statement of historian Robert Rosenstone: “*The film is beyond the control of historians. The film shows that we do not own the past. The film creates a historical world that books cannot compete with, at least in terms of popularity. The film is a disturbing symbol of an increasingly post-literary world.*”¹⁷ The whole history, including the written one, is a construction, not a reflection. History is an ideological and cultural product of

¹⁵ *Medieval Hollywood*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://medievalhollywood.ace.fordham.edu>>.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ ROSENSTONE, R. A.: *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 11.

a society in a specific period of its development. History is therefore a series of conventions for our thinking about the past. And the language we use for such thinking does not have to be just written – it can be a way of thinking that uses elements other than the written word, namely sound, moving image, emotion, montage.¹⁸ Alun Munslow, a professor of cultural history, argues that since the 1970s that challenged the empirical-analytical method as a privileged path to historical knowledge, significant changes in the theory and methodology of historical research have led to the emergence of new concepts.¹⁹ This is true in all artistic, human, social, and even natural and biological sciences and Munslow wonders how we can be sure that empiricism and deduction will bring us closer to ‘true meaning’? How does the consciousness of ‘something has happened’ relate to that amorphous and easily misunderstood, albeit culturally valuable, ‘thing’ we call ‘truth’?²⁰ The historian, as the ‘author’, creates a connection between the content of the past (what happened) with the form or shape we know (as history is described). That means that history as a picture of the past and the past itself may not coincide. In other words, there is no direct correlation between what happened and the truth of what it means. History is in itself an idea of something, and faithful reality cannot be transferred in its absolute form to a page or a film. That means that even faithful reconstruction cannot be translated into concrete images and words. Most historians realize that the medium is important to the message. However, there is still a deep-rooted desire, even among those most aware of this, to reconstruct the past in the form it was – that is, to ‘tell the truth about history’. Uncovering historical truth requires more skills. First, the ability to estimate the intentions behind human actions (e.g., via detailed knowledge of the archival remains of such human activity). And second, thanks to the logic of deduction, we are able to find out not only what happened, but most likely also what it means. Detailed knowledge of the content of the past makes it possible to reveal the most probable causes, the hidden story, and thus the most probable meaning. In other words, to create a ‘true story’, it is necessary to know what happened, to know the sources, and to be able to empathize with the actors of history.

History has the same epistemological status as all cultural discourses – it is never neutral, but always partial (usually ideological) with open meaning. This is extremely important for us to be able to deconstruct, respectively analyse the mechanisms by which we create history. And so, the filmmakers come into confrontation. On one hand, they face the conflict that exists between known facts and widespread myth. On the other hand, it is the inalienable right of the creator to create his own description of causes, consequences, motives, and visuals in the film narrative. However, engaged historians of all political beliefs do the same. They also construct, plot, and interpret based on the knowledge of partial facts. Thus, even a ‘serious’ history does not completely avoid a continuous discourse in the search for an objective interpretation and depiction of historical facts. In the context of these findings, it is entirely appropriate to consider historical film as a type of experiment in the field of historiography, ergo – historiophoty. Many historians will undoubtedly continue to view experiments in history as transgressions and recklessness that contradict to ‘good scientific practice’. Some may even consider them dangerous and destructive. But historical experiments rethink history. Hayden White argues that any attempt to translate historical information about the past into a historical narrative necessarily involves narrative conventions that bring some form of fiction. He also emphasizes that “*history is a process of social change that includes not only the past but also the present*”.²¹

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 55.

¹⁹ MUNSLOW, A.: Introduction: Theory and Practice. In MUNSLOW, A., ROSENSTONE, R. A. (eds.): *Experiments in Rethinking History*. New York : Routledge, 2004, p. 7.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ WHITE, H.: Film and History: Questions to Filmmakers and Historians. In *Cineaste*, 2004, Vol. 2, No. 29, p. 66.

Historical films, like historical speculations, are carefully constructed, crafted, highly aware, and reflective. Perhaps the biggest difference between a historian and a filmmaker is the personal involvement in talking about the past. This personal insertion can take many forms, motivations, and can use a variety of creative techniques. However, it is based on the development of a fantasy component that creates an original construct, defining and concretizing every detail of the visualized reality: matter, shape, structure, space, and the people who animate, ‘play/embody/represent’ its animated story. Although filmmakers and producers who embark on demanding historical projects have to reckon high costs for their realization, this brings along a great opportunity to learn about the cognitive power of narration and at the same time to recognize the nature of history as a representation of the past with an author’s clause.

3 Historical Film in the Digital Age

In order to faithfully and effectively evoke the experience of the past, the historical film is also characterized by the collection and display of visual information. As Michele Pierson points out, historical cinema is, to a certain extent, “*the cinema of a production designer*”.²² The film’s designer or architect creates and authenticates a depiction of the past through a detailed and generously conceived visual design. However, in addition to creating a sense of the past, the depiction of such a stylized historical reality is the second key aspect of historical cinema: the presentation of the ‘spectacle’. The term “spectacle” in the context of the film refers to the staging of spectacular large scenes, often with a number of performers. The connection between historical filmmaking and spectacle has always been very close. In many important historical films, the use of a monumental performance/spectacle is inevitably stimulated by the story. According to Maria Wyke, the presentation of ancient Rome in the film functioned “*not only as a mechanism for presenting national identity*”, but also “*as a mechanism for depicting the technical capacity, perfection, progress and cultural value of cinema itself*”.²³

The ground-breaking historical films, which we perceive as monumental works, have been shot throughout the film’s history using the most innovative technologies available at the time. Technicolor technology has been used in films such as *The Ten Commandments* (1923), *Ben Hur* (1925), *Robin Hood* (1938) to document technical excellence and spectacularity. In the 1950s, CinemaScope technology expanded the breadth of cinema images to gigantic proportions and was also often used in films with historical themes – *The Robe* (1953), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), etc. The monumentality created by widescreen films in the 1950s and 1960s suggested that a sense of wonder could really bring the viewer closer to the historical ‘spectacle’ itself. And so, the subsequent development of the digital process of imaging (CGI – Computer Generated Imagery) from the 1990s naturally continued this trend and became an essential element in the emergence of historical films, which fundamentally expanded the imaginative possibilities of the genre. The first major historical film using CGI was *Forrest Gump* (1994). Among other things, they used the digital processing of the film into documentaries from the past, which allowed him to communicate with historical figures such as President Kennedy and Johnson and the first African-American students enrolled at the University of Alabama. Robert Burgoyne, on the scene where Gump is ‘copied’ into an archival weekly for a fictional interview with President

²² PIERSON, M.: A Production Designer’s Cinema: Historical Authenticity in Popular Films Set in the Past. In KING, G. (ed.): *Spectacle and the Real*. Bristol : Intellect, 2005, p. 145-155.

²³ WYKE, M.: *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History*. London : Routledge, 1997, p. 30.

Kennedy, argues that “*this sequence no longer comes from a fixed moment in history, no longer bears the archival trace of the moment it was filmed, rather, it carries a double temporality and expresses its independent origin – Kennedy from the past 1962, Hanks as Gump from the past 1994 – as well as the resulting transformed present*”.²⁴ Likely, experienced, media-literate audiences will immediately understand that such scenes are fictional constructs, especially when viewed in the context of the specific style of Gump’s narration. However, this is clearly a significant narrative hyperbolization, in which the dimension of historical truth shifts within the genre towards mystification. Therefore, it is possible to state the obvious potential of CGI on one hand to reduce the ‘authority’ of archival images and on the other hand – to increase the potential to present historical events in the film narrative in an infinite number of interpretations. Both of these phenomena thus appear to be problematic in terms of the ambition to achieve historical fidelity. According to Kirsten Moan Thompson, digital effects in historical film tend to be associated with “*spectacular action (individual and crowd), spectacular architecture, and spectacular details*”.²⁵ These elements can sometimes be seen in unison, especially during moments when historical films consciously represent the unlimited capabilities of digital technology. In *Titanic*, for example, a remarkably large and flawlessly digitally created ship is the focal point of the film’s ‘production value’. Its fantastic dimensions are set in several wide shots at the beginning of the film, and the ‘spectacle’ is maximized by the longitudinal movement of a flying camera, which moves from the ship’s bow to the stern, and depicts live actors on real fragments of the deck combined with digitally animated models. We see a similar ‘theatre’ in the digitized scenes of the film *Gladiator* (2000), during the depiction of the Colosseum in Rome.

Its space is a combination of real and digital elements. As in the case of *Titanic*, the grandeur of the architecture is illustrated by the tiny human figures visible in the stands of the Colosseum. When viewed from the outside as well as from the inside, the digital architecture is stunning both in its gigantic dimension and in the smallest decorative details. This combination of vastness and complexity can be seen in both CGI images of both *Gladiator* and *Titanic* and appears to be characteristic of digital imaging in general. In addition to this ‘megalithic’ architecture building, CGI has a major impact on the detail of the display of structures or materials. Amelia Arenas drew attention to digitally composed panoramic shots in *Gladiator*, in which “*the level of detail is so exhausting that it looks hyperrealistic, creating an effect that is more hallucinatory than realistic*”.²⁶ In addition to the specifics of visualizing inanimate objects, CGI allows live actors to be designed directly; Thompson states that “*exponential multiplication of bodies into masses or crowds*”²⁷ composes entirely new dimensions of crowd and fight scenes where the arrays of digitally cloned (but maximally realistic) fighters are spread beyond the visible horizon. Films such as *Gladiator*, *Alexander* (2004) and *300* (2006) have elevated the visualization of historical sources to a realized legend – all thanks to crowd replication software that allows you to animate thousands of autonomous three-dimensional digital characters and integrate them into one footage with live actors. An example of a visual archetype that is evolving under the influence of unlimited possibilities of digital production is the depiction of a typical combat image: a view of a ‘cloud’ of shot arrows flying at the enemy.

²⁴ BURGIONE, R.: Memory, History and Digital Imagery in Contemporary Film. In GRAINGE, P. (ed.): *Memory and Popular Film*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 228.

²⁵ THOMPSON, K. M.: ‘Philip Never Saw Babylon’: 360-Degree Vision and the Historical Epic in the Digital Era. In BURGIONE, R. (ed.): *The Epic Film in World Culture*. New York : Routledge, 2010, p. 46.

²⁶ ARENAS, A.: Popcorn and Circus: Gladiator and the Spectacle of Virtue. In *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 2001, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 4.

²⁷ THOMPSON, K. M.: ‘Philip Never Saw Babylon’: 360-Degree Vision and the Historical Epic in the Digital Era. In BURGIONE, R. (ed.): *The Epic Film in World Culture*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 46.

In the film *Braveheart* (1996) it is possible to count the arrows when the image is stopped (they are in the order of tens). In the film *300* (2006) a Persian officer boasts that “*our arrows cover the sun*”. The shot that follows fulfils this promise and, with the number of arrows in the tens of thousands, surpasses similar shots in older films. The shot thus provides a visual presentation of the strength of the Persian army, but also the potential of digital technology to push the boundaries of visual surplus. It could be said that the contrast between the arrows in *Braveheart* and in *300* embodies the fundamental influence of digital technologies on historical films – their gradual substitution of the physical world for virtualized objects, scenes, and any (non) human beings. The almost unlimited possibilities of digital production currently bring several dilemmas to the creators in the realization of historical themes. For example, the design dilemma: any object in front of the camera, including the actor (but also the costume, props, space) is modifiable – expandable, editable in space and colour, per the imagination of the creator, no matter how subjective. Or also the dilemma of measure: the possibility of displaying an almost infinite number of military lines, warships, or a horizon built by architecture, which is only a matter of programming skill and robustness of computing capacity, brings unlimited freedom to express the idea of the visual form of historical reality. By law, the most essential dilemma emerges from this – the dilemma of truth and responsibility. Every director (and their creative collaborator) making a historical film should undoubtedly try to portray historical events to get as close as possible to (historical) truth, however difficult, relative, and subjective such approach may be. The approach to achieve such demonstration of the creator is possible on several levels, which depend on his knowledge of historical reality and its critical evaluation and interpretation (from literary, scientific professional sources) aligned with his intention to convey a true historical picture of events which are also a dramatic space to tell his story to the viewer.

Conclusion

History is a social memory. Historical films often reflected broader cultural and historical trends and offered targeted and involuntary commentary on the cultures that created them. The process of building the relationship of the average film viewer or the engaged applicant (student or scientist) with history can be the basis for the fruitful use of the genre of historical film as a specific form of the historical experiment. Throughout the decades of technological innovation, the restructuring of the film industry, and the transformation of the creators’ relations to various topics, the popularity of the historical film has been constant. The filmmaker mastered a series of specific rhetorical techniques and tools for depicting historical contexts and sought a framework beyond the record of simplified patterns of individual actions and actions of extraordinary leaders or heroes. A historical film can offer a way of representation comparable to historiography itself.²⁸ Throughout its existence, it is constantly confronted with debates about the suitability of the film medium as a means of historical narrative and the cultural value of the genre in general. However, questions about the authenticity, accuracy, and fidelity of truth in historical films will always be legitimate, and the confrontation of historiophoty and historiography in any serious dramatic historical production will be considered important. At the same time, it will add a new dimension to the relationship between the past and its popular understanding. From this point of view, a historical film remains a fascinating area to study. And history remains a story that will need to be told – over and over again.

²⁸ GRINDON, L.: *Shadows on the Past – Studies in the Historical Fiction Film*. Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1994, p. 223.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRICE OF REAL ESTATE IN SLOVAKIA AND THE BASIC INTEREST RATE

Róbert Halenár

Abstract:

The article deals with the relationship between real estate prices in the Slovak Republic and the basic interest rate of the European Central Bank of the ECB. In the last decade, real estate prices in Slovakia have been rising. According to experts, there are two main reasons – a small increase in new real estate and low interest rates on mortgages. The first reason is related to the legislation in Slovakia, especially to the building law, which is old, inflexible and causes both a bureaucratic burden and the procedures it orders are lengthy and often unnecessary. The second reason is directly related to rising wages and declining mortgage rates, which are set by key interest rates. The article shows some indicators and examines the direct or indirect relationship between them.

Key words:

Housing Price. Interest Rate. Real Estate. Salary.

Introduction

The latest analysis of the National Bank of Slovakia says that in the second quarter of 2020, real estate prices rose by 11.2% year on year. This corona quarter even outpaced the first quarter of 2020, by 3.6%. Despite the crown, real estate prices rose and the average price per square meter of the apartment reached the value of 1,731 euros. Apartment prices are, among other things, pushed up both by the lack of real estate for sale and also by the high purchasing power of buyers. Although banks took restrictive measures during the pandemic, many clients already had reservation advances and also pre-approved loans. However, the banks' measures restricted the financing of housing for certain groups of the population, but there were still clients who were still acceptable to the bank and provided them with financing for the purchase of real estate in the required amount. As a result, more than one buyer remained on the market able to buy the property on offer. Demand thus still exceeds the supply of real estate and prices therefore still tend to rise.¹

1 Building Law

The Building Act, which has passed a similar number of changes in 40 years, is slowly retiring. The average length of construction proceedings in the Slovak Republic today is 286 days, while in the EU it is only 165 days of the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic. They have two separate standards to replace the old building law of 1976. According to the representatives of the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, spatial planning and construction are two different areas and it is also appropriate to separate them legislatively, said Peter Ďurček, State Secretary of the ICE SR and Tibor Németh, Director General of the ICE SR Construction Section. Apart from the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, nowhere in the EU are these two areas addressed together. Basic characteristics of the proposed standards: The zoning plan must have all municipalities of the Slovak Republic (so far over 2,000 inhabitants). Simplification of spatial planning and professionalization of spatial planning and construction bodies. The institute of the so-called territorial opinion of the municipality, by which the municipality confirms the construction

¹ ŠILLEROVÁ, E.: *Ceny nehnuteľností stále rastú. Kupovať či nekupovať byt v čase korony?*. [online]. [2020-10-01]. Available at: <<https://www.fingo.sk/blog/ceny-nehnutelnosti-stale-rastu/>>.

plan for construction. The decision on the construction should already take place in only one procedure, thanks to the principle of ‘one construction = one procedure’. The basis for the construction decision will therefore be the construction plan, which is the construction and construction technical assessment of the construction, zoning assessment and assessment of the compliance of the construction with the zoning plan. The current transferred performance of the state construction administration is returned from the municipalities to the state and to the so-called building commissioners, who will be randomly selected and authorized to act on behalf of the state. The categorization of constructions is being adjusted (small constructions, simple constructions and other constructions, including reserved constructions (e.g., bridges, motorways). Black buildings resp. illegal constructions according to the new design claims that in cases of existing illegal constructions, the decision to legalize them is probably subject to a future political decision. Constructions after the effectiveness of the new regulation – the law impose the obligation of the building authority to remove the construction, impose fines or also file a criminal complaint. There will be no alternative to removing the building. ZMOS and the Union of Towns of Slovakia defend the position of towns and municipalities and actively comment on this bill. Mayors and mayors fear the loss of certain powers, albeit transferred today (from the state to the municipalities). However, the state argues the fact that this competence only returns to the competence of the state and the state has so far borne and is responsible for this section. Another subject criticizing the proposals for new legislation is the Building Chamber of the Slovak Republic. They criticize in particular the institute of the building commissioner, the revocation of the delegated powers to the municipalities, but also the ambiguity of the new standards in terms of qualifications and expertise. The ministry would like to make these new regulations effective from 2020, but this presupposes an optimistic and smooth approval process.²

2 Wage Development in Slovakia

The average wage is most often determined as the average nominal monthly wage of an employee. The employee’s nominal monthly salary represents the employee’s gross remuneration for work performed paid by the employer, which is not reduced by any statutory deductions (income tax advance, social insurance and advance payment for health insurance). The amount of the average monthly wage is determined by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. However, its practical survey does not take into account the gross wages of all employees in Slovakia, it is based only on a statistical sample. The methodology of calculating the average wage can be found in the article Average monthly wage: what data are needed to calculate it and how are they obtained? The level of the average nominal monthly wage is a very important indicator due to the fact that many other key variables are derived from it. For example, the amount of the minimum wage, the obligation to pay social insurance for self-employed persons, the number of salaries of mayors and mayors, the number of salaries of some constitutional officials. The following table provides an overview of the average nominal monthly wage of an employee in the Slovak economy in the years 2010 to 2020. If we look at the year-on-year growth rate (index) of the average nominal monthly wage, we would find that it grew the fastest between 2019 and 2018, by almost 7.8% per year.³

² MESZÁROS, A.: *Návrh nového stavebného zákona. Bude ďalší pokus úspešný?*. [online]. [2020-10-01]. Available at: <<https://www.realitnaunia.sk/novy-stavebny-zakon>>.

³ SENEŠL, N.: *Vývoj priemernej mzdy na Slovensku*. [online]. [2021-01-27]. Available at: <<https://www.podnikajte.sk/zamestnanci-a-hr/vyvoj-priemernej-mzdy-na-slovensku>>.

Table 1: Nominal monthly salary of an employee in the economy of the Slovak Republic in euros during years 2010 – 2020

Year	Average nominal monthly salary of an employee in the economy of the Slovak Republic (in euros)
2010	769
2011	786
2012	805
2013	824
2014	858
2015	883
2016	912
2017	954
2018	1 013
2019	1 092
2020	1 133

Source: SENEŠI, N.: *Vývoj priemernej mzdy na Slovensku*. [online]. [2021-01-27]. Available at: <<https://www.podnikajte.sk/zamestnanci-a-hr/vyvoj-priemernej-mzdy-na-slovensku>>.

A lower price of money can therefore mean more savings to be used to buy other goods and services. Customers' shopping habits, however, sometimes contradict logic and are based on purely emotional decisions.⁴

3 Mortgage Interest Rates

Since the spring of this year, there has been unusually great interest in loans in Slovakia. Record low interest rates, especially at smaller banks, and the possibility of an online loan provided a great chance to arrange a mortgage with a favourable interest rate. Some banks have lowered the interest rate limit to 0.5%. To give you an idea, in 2019 it was an average of 1.02%. If we compare the situation in our country and in other euro area countries, the rates on new mortgages in Slovakia are below the European average. Nowhere in the Eurozone have there been as many home mortgages as in our country in recent years. However, it seems that the European Central Bank will not intervene in interest rates yet. It may happen that the interest rate will not change in 2021 and will remain at these low percentages for several years. Such a downward trend in interest rates is an advantage, especially for customers. However, if you expect an even more significant reduction, you probably will not see it. As interest rates are at historic lows, further reductions could cause banks financial problems. They would thus have to raise interest rates again. With the increased interest in mortgages, the demand for own housing is also rising. Although property prices may appear to have fallen during the pandemic, this is not the case. Lower interest rates are causing real estate prices to rise. Bargain mortgages entice people to buy the apartment or house of their dreams, which they cannot really afford. If interest in real estate is still so high, their prices will not fall. A significant decline would occur only if there were a large number of offers on the real estate market that no one would be interested in in the long run. Despite high prices, however, many people still invest in their own housing.⁵

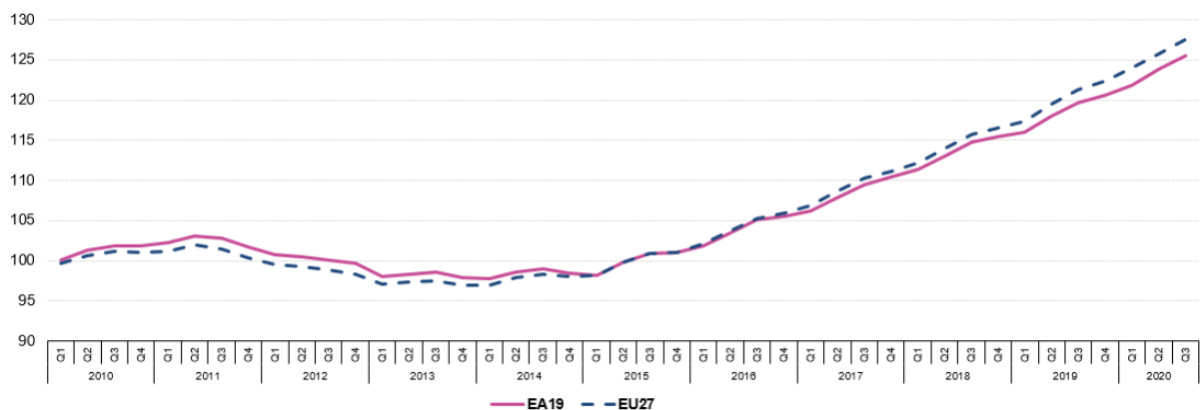
⁴ See: TRNKA, A.: Statistical Analysis of Online Shopping Behavior of Students. In MATÚŠ, J., PETRANOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: Digital Life – Part II*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 283-292.

⁵ *Úroky hypoték sú na rekordných minimách. Klesli aj ceny nehnuteľností?*. [online]. [2020-12-02]. Available at: <<https://www.epi.sk/clanok-z-titulky/uroky-hypotek-su-na-rekordnych-minimach.htm>>.

4 Housing Price Statistic

The HPI shows the price changes of residential properties purchased by households (flats, detached houses, terraced houses, etc.), both newly-built and existing ones, independently of their final use and independently of their previous owners. The index levels (2015 = 100) for the euro area (EA-19) aggregate and EU-27 aggregate house price indices are shown in Chart 1. After a slight increase between the first quarter of 2010 and of 2011, house prices showed a sharp decline between the second quarter of 2011 and the first quarter of 2013. Then, they remained more or less stable until 2014 and rose rapidly and constantly since early 2015. Both the euro area (EA-19) and the EU-27 follow a similar trend.⁶ Sales of existing home sales in USA are at an all-time high but new home sales have also risen during the pandemic. Those sales are allowing builders to raise prices. Buyer traffic is converting into sales at a record rate. Residential construction ended in 2020 on a strong note. Housing starts rose 5.8% to 1.67 million annualized units in December. Total starts were 2.8% higher than a year ago.⁷ The strong demand for housing, however, came at a time when the supply of homes for sale was already low. Much of that was due to a still-slow recovery in homebuilding from the Great Recession. When the pandemic hit, sellers pulled back, not wanting to let anyone in their homes nor to move themselves. What followed were drastic changes in every facet of the market.⁸

House Prices – euro area (EA19) and EU27 aggregates – Index levels (2015 = 100), 2010Q1-2020Q3



Source: Eurostat (online data code: prc_hpi_q)

eurostat

Chart 1: Housing prices in euro area

Source: *Housing Price Statistics – House Price Index* [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Housing_price_statistics_-_house_price_index>.

⁶ *Housing Price Statistics – House Price Index*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Housing_price_statistics_-_house_price_index>.

⁷ SANTARELLI, M.: *US Housing Market Forecast 2021: Will It Crash or Boom?*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.noradarealestate.com/blog/housing-market-predictions/>>.

⁸ OLICK, D.: *The Housing Market Stands at a Tipping Point after a Stunningly Successful Year during the Pandemic*. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/12/housing-market-covid-one-year-anniversary.html>>.

Table 2: ECB key interest rate

Year, quarter	Price in € / m2	Year	Year-on-year change in %	Year, quarter	Price in € / m2	Year	Year-on-year change in %	Year, quarter	Price in € / m2	Year	Year-on-year change in %
		2002=100				2002=100				2002=100	
3Q 2020	1 792	302,7	11,8	4Q 2016	1 331	224,9	6,5	4Q 2012	1 243	209,9	0,5
2Q 2020	1 731	292,4	11,2	3Q 2016	1 316	222,4	5,9	3Q 2012	1 238	209,1	-0,6
1Q 2020	1 671	282,3	8,6	2Q 2016	1 297	219	5,2	2Q 2012	1 224	206,8	-2,2
4Q 2019	1 597	269,8	6,4	1Q 2016	1 259	212,6	2	1Q 2012	1 234	208,5	-2
3Q 2019	1 603	270,8	9,7	4Q 2015	1 250	211,1	2,2	4Q 2011	1 236	208,8	-2,5
2Q 2019	1 556	262,9	6,4	3Q 2015	1 243	209,9	2	3Q 2011	1 245	210,3	-2,9
1Q 2019	1 539	260	7,6	2Q 2015	1 232	208,2	1,5	2Q 2011	1 251	211,3	-1,7
4Q 2018	1 502	253,7	7,6	1Q 2015	1 234	208,4	1,1	1Q 2011	1 260	212,8	-1,5
3Q 2018	1 461	246,8	4,1	4Q 2014	1 223	206,5	0,6	4Q 2010	1 267	214,1	-2,3
2Q 2018	1 463	247,1	5,1	3Q 2014	1 218	205,8	-0,3	3Q 2010	1 282	216,6	-3
1Q 2018	1 431	241,7	5,2	2Q 2014	1 215	205,2	-1,4	2Q 2010	1 273	215	-5,2
4Q 2017	1 395	235,7	4,8	1Q 2014	1 220	206,1	-1,6	1Q 2010	1 278	215,9	-9,6
3Q 2017	1 403	237	6,6	4Q 2013	1 215	205,3	-2,2	4Q 2009	1 297	219	-12,3
2Q 2017	1 392	235,1	7,3	3Q 2013	1 222	206,5	-1,2	3Q 2009	1 322	223,4	-14,2
1Q 2017	1 360	229,7	8	2Q 2013	1 231	208	0,6	2Q 2009	1 342	226,7	-13,4
				1Q 2013	1 240	209,4	0,4				

Source: *Vývoj cien nehnuteľností na bývanie v SR*. [online]. [2021-01-27]. Available at: <<https://www.nbs.sk/sk/statisticke-udaje/vybrane-makroekonomicke-ukazovatele/ceny-nehnutelnosti-na-byvanie/vyvoj-cien-nehnutelnosti-na-byvanie-v-sr>>.

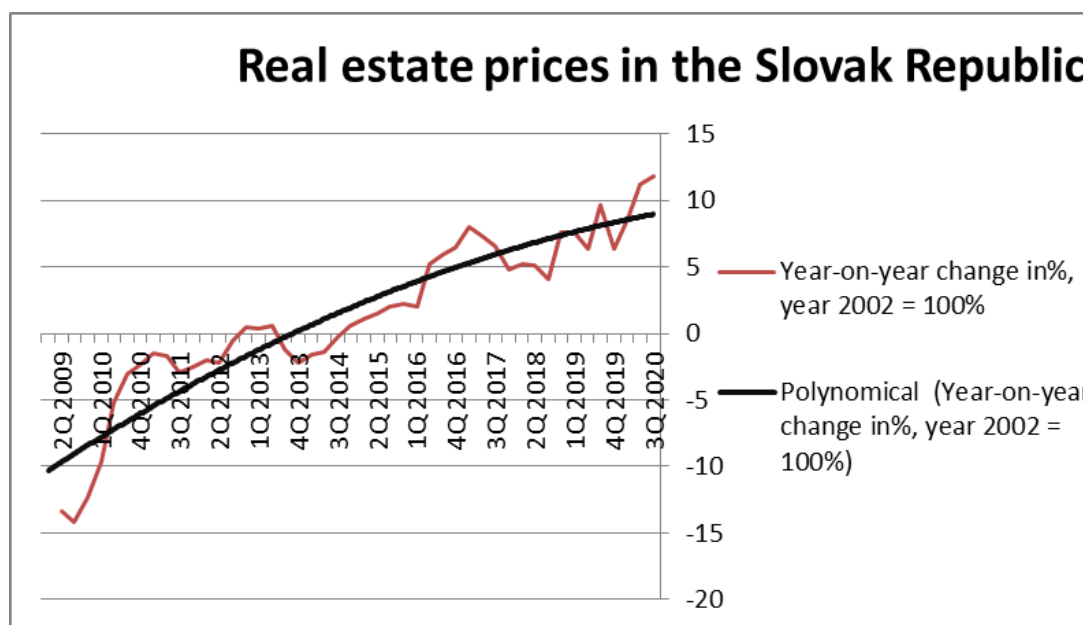


Chart 2: Housing prices in Slovak Republic

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Table 3: ECB key interest rate

Valid from	Overnight refinancing operations	Main refinancing operations	One-day sterilization operations
18.9.2019	0,25%	0,00%	-0,50%
16.3.2016	0,25%	0,00%	-0,40%
9.12.2015	0,30%	0,05%	-0,30%
10.9.2014	0,30%	0,05%	-0,20%
11.6.2014	0,40%	0,15%	-0,10%
13.11.2013	0,75%	0,25%	0,00%
8.5.2013	1,00%	0,50%	0,00%
11.7.2012	1,50%	0,75%	0,00%
14.12.2011	1,75%	1,00%	0,25%
9.11.2011	2,00%	1,25%	0,50%
13.7.2011	2,25%	1,50%	0,75%
13.4.2011	2,00%	1,25%	0,50%
13.5.2009	1,75%	1,00%	0,25%
8.4.2009	2,25%	1,25%	0,25%
11.3.2009	2,50%	1,50%	0,50%
21.1.2009	3,00%	2,00%	1,00%
1.1.2009	3,00%	2,50%	2,00%

Source: *Úrokové sadzby ECB*. [online]. [2021-01-27]. Available at: <<https://www.nbs.sk/sk/statisticke-udaje/financne-trhy/urokove-sadzby/urokove-sadzby-ecb>>.

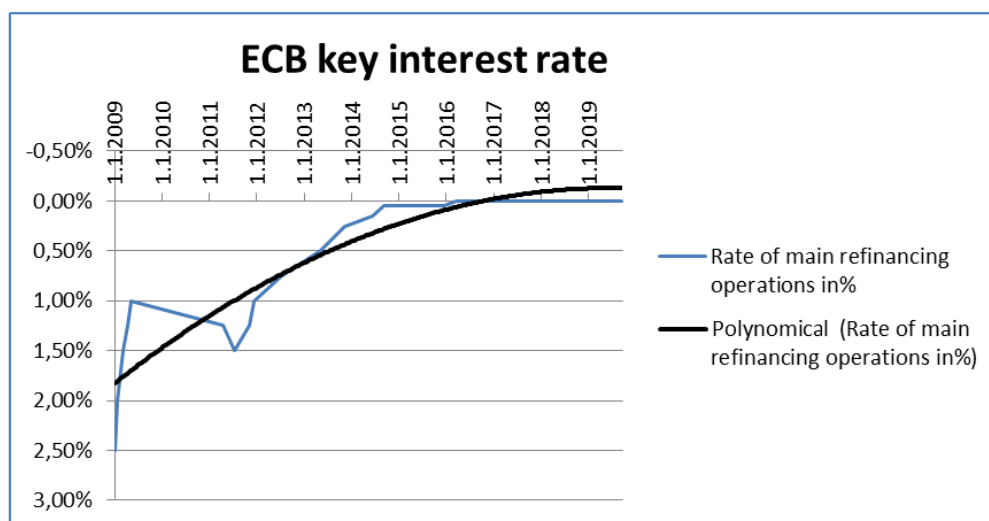


Chart 3: European Central Bank – Key interest rates

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Conclusion

In recent years, we have witnessed a non-standard monetary policy that also includes quantitative easing, which has a major impact on the price of currency throughout the euro area. Inflation is gradually being transformed into many assets. After rising real estate prices, shares or, for example, crypto currencies, to a certain extent, it will also reach normal consumption. Housing as a durable goods asset has been more sensitive to the change in the European Central Bank’s key interest rate for several decades, as compound interest comes

into play. The development trend of the basic interest rate and real estate prices in the Slovak Republic is clearly correlated. It can therefore be assumed that in the last decade, real estate prices have been pushed up mainly by this factor. No one has a crystal ball and it is not quite easy to predict the development of the prices of any assets of goods or services. However, it can be assumed that as long as the value of money remains low, real estate prices may continue to rise slightly in the future. In the coming years, we can follow this development and correct any mistakes. However, it is clear that the corrections will be in the order of percentages only. The near future and possible interventions by the European Central Bank can show us the direction of future movements.

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MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TOPICS RELATED TO SCANDALS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Anna Hurajová

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to present a qualitative discourse analysis of newspaper articles in online versions of printed newspapers the SME daily and the weekly *Katolícke noviny*. The scandals and controversial topics such as paedophilia scandals, child sexual abuse and homosexuality within the Catholic Church around the world and in Slovakia were chosen as the topic for the discourse analysis. The main aim of the research was to verify the presumption that there is a difference in the quality of media representation of these scandals and other controversial topics in the Church in public non-religious and religious print media. The media texts were investigated from 2010 to March 2020. Apart from the theoretical framework for the topic, the qualitative level of the analysis is presented in the paper alongside with the results of the analysis and consequent conclusions. The main differences in the media representation of the topics in the two selected newspapers lie in reporting on the topics using different genres and in depth and scope of informing depending on the newspaper.

Key words:

Catholic Church. Discourse Analysis. Media Representation. Printed Newspapers. Scandals.

Introduction

When describing the content of media products, on one hand, the media reality stands for everything that appears in the media and becomes part of our reality; on the other hand, social reality, that is to say, what the society offers to each of its members as an idea of the world according to which individuals anchored in a particular society describe the world around them.¹ In addition to social reality, media reality is gaining ground as a special type of social construction of reality whose form is determined not only by the society in which the media operate, but by the economic nature of the media and the routines to which the production of media products is subject.² The media influence what people think about and, to a certain extent, how they think about it by including some topics in their contents and others not, and by framing some topics, signalling the order of their importance and their possible interpretation.³ Therefore, the agenda-setting theory seeks to answer why some information on some topics will become part of the public debate while others remain aside, and why some issues are perceived by the public as more serious than others, while giving the media an important role in this process. The greater the need for an individual to understand public affairs, the more likely they are to listen to the mass media agenda. Agenda-setting is a powerful and widespread effect of mass communication as a result of specific mass media content. Putting agenda-setting into public discourse is the construction of reality in news. By being given more space in the media, some topics such as politics or economics seem to be described as more important. This may result in public opinion manipulation, which is against the principles of professional ethics of journalism. In journalistic practice, noncompliance with these principles is most visible in agenda-setting, gate-keeping and framing.⁴

¹ JIRÁK, J., KÖPPLOVÁ, B.: *Média a spoločnosť*. Prague : Portál, 2003, p. 140.

² Ibidem.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ POLÁKOVÁ, E.: Teória a prax dodržiavania etiky médií a ich spoločenskej zodpovednosti. In *Communication Today*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 148-158.

The concept of “framing” means selecting and highlighting specific attributes in the media agenda in relation to the object. The framework applied to the media agenda is the central idea of content and suggests what the topic is by selecting, emphasizing, concealing and commenting.⁵ The term “gatekeeping” is a designation of processes by which the media selectively choose content. It is primarily about deciding whether to allow a specific report “to go through the gate” of a medium.⁶ So it is the media who decides about what the public is to think about. Many Catholics, and especially religious clergymen, have a distorted idea of the media – either they condemn the media or consider them a gift of God’s Providence for our times. These views are usually based on how the press is currently responding to the Church, whether it harms or defends it.⁷ Olekšák adds that “*it is not a harmonious relationship, but a tense one, full of mutual suspicions*”.⁸ Furthermore, he points out that the answer to the question of why the Church and the media world are showing an intense mutual interest in each other is that we live in a postmodern era and that the culture of the 21st century is postmodern, which influences all the spheres of social life.⁹ Fifty years of postmodernism demonstrates that, despite the rise of individualism, the need for belonging to a certain group still persists. The media as part of mass culture assume several functions of religion, e.g., strengthening identity awareness and fulfilling the integration role.¹⁰ In addition to integrating, explaining the world, creating new myths and mythical heroes, the media have also acquired the eschatological function of religion. They offer consumers the opportunity to move from everyday depressing reality to the unearthly world of nature, houses, people, successful personalities, luxury and fame. The greatest power that the media have gained from religion is the ability to create a new moral order which is successfully presented to millions of recipients.¹¹

The Slovak Republic is a country with a strong Christian tradition and is still perceived as a country with a relatively religious population. The majority of the population, irrespective of religion, is therefore interested in social issues related to the relationship of the state and the churches. Since 1999, this relationship had been marked mainly by more open media criticism of representatives of political state power by representatives of churches. After 2000, the dialogue between the state and the churches was influenced in particular by the conclusion of a long process of ratification of the Basic Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See, the adoption of the Church Law and the financing of churches.¹² In the period post-2000, the Catholic Church has faced widespread criticism especially for sexual and economic scandals of the clergy. Nowadays, the Church faces three serious problems: paedophilia and the fact that it was covered by church authorities; economic issue and ways of managing financial resources; and thirdly, the issue of power in the Church. For the sake of this research, the issue of sexual and paedophilia scandals was chosen.

⁵ MCCOMBS, M.: *Agenda Setting. Nastolování agendy: Masová média a veřejné mínění*. Prague : Portál, 2009, p. 132-133.

⁶ MCQUAIL, D.: *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. Prague : Portál, 2007, p. 241.

⁷ See: GAITANO, G. N.: Verejná mienka a katolícka cirkev. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2009, Vol. 52, No. 1-2, p. 2-16.

⁸ OLEKŠÁK, P.: Cirkev a médiá. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2009, Vol. 52, No. 1-2, p. 19.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ ZASEPA, T.: *Médiá v čase globalizácie*. Bratislava : Lúč, 2002, p. 19.

¹¹ OLEKŠÁK, P.: Cirkev a médiá. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2009, Vol. 52, No. 1-2, p. 19.

¹² POLÁKOVÁ, E., JUREKOVÁ, K.: Mediálne zobrazovanie tém o vzťahu štátu a katolíckej cirkvi. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2007, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 62.

1 Materials and Methods

1.1 Research Sample

The main aim of the research was to verify the presumption that there is a difference in the quality of media representation of the topic of scandals (paedophile scandals and child sexual abuse) and other controversial topics in the church in public non-religious and religious print media. The research sample was chosen based on recommendations by Hendl,¹³ Trampota and Vojtěchovská¹⁴ on qualitative research reflecting the research goals. The material for this research was chosen on the basis of readability of public non-religious and religious print media published in Slovakia. The media concerned were investigated through content analysis of media texts in the SME daily (public non-religious newspaper) and the weekly *Katolícke noviny* (religious newspaper) from 2010 to March 2020. We examined how these periodicals participated in the media presentation of selected topics related to the topic of scandals in the Church (paedophilia scandals, child sexual abuse and homosexual priests in the Catholic Church across the world) and thus how they participated also in the opinion formation of their readers and subsequently, in the creation of public opinion on the selected topics. At the same time, the extent to which the topics discussed on the pages of both periodicals coincided in content and form was investigated. Newspaper articles were analysed, from which:

- only topics related to scandals and controversial topics in the Catholic Church were selected;
- of these topics, three most discussed topics were identified that have been the subject of our further qualitative research.

1.2 Research Method

When investigating media, content analysis is the most commonly used method. Thus, a qualitative content analysis was used to analyse selected published media content, analysing the following thematic categories:

- topics dealt with in the selected periodicals during the period considered in connection with sexual scandals and controversial topics in the Catholic Church across the world;
- topics related to sexual scandals and controversial topics in the Catholic Church in Slovakia;
- the category of content-qualitative perception of journalistic articles (positively- and negatively-laden).

2 Results

2.1 Media Representation of the Topic in the SME Daily

In the SME daily articles, the majority of articles related to sexual scandals of the Catholic Church across the world dealt with the issues of paedophilia and child sexual abuse by Catholic priests. During the investigated time period, 110 articles covered the above-mentioned topics. The most discussed topics within the issue of paedophilia and child sexual abuse were those related to religious disaffiliation, compensation for victims of sexual crimes and resignation of the affected bishops and priests. Many of the articles described how the Popes (Benedict XIV and Francis) approached the issue depicting their steps taken. Articles on child abuse in various parts of the world such as in Poland, the Netherlands, the USA or Australia appeared. Apart from reporting on the lapses of the Catholic Church, articles

¹³ HENDL, J.: *Kvalitativní výzkum. Základní metody a aplikace*. Prague : Portál, 2008, p. 150.

¹⁴ TRAMPOTA, T., VOJTĚCHOVSKÁ, M.: *Metody výzkumu médií*. Prague : Portál, 2010, p. 141.

devoted to celibacy and priests' homosexuality appeared. Another identified, but not numerous, topics included the issue of power within the Church (power within ecclesiastical structures, illegal practices in Vatican City such as corruption, excessive spending and nepotism, and transparent management), and the topic of reforms within the Church. Marginally (in one article), the topic of Pope's criticism of the pay gap between men and women was represented.

In connection with this topic, the media content was published which was neutral in tone. However, the contributions appeared as negative to the Catholic Church as such. Criticism towards the Catholic Church and its unwillingness to address the issues was deciphered, especially in the articles published between 2010 – 2014. The contributions were written by journalists of the SME daily and were taken from renowned news agencies, having informative character. At the same time, the Church representatives (mainly Pope Francis) were quoted or paraphrased in some articles; therefore, the topic was commented on by the representatives of the Holy See. It should be noted that this issue is not an example of a media debate in the true sense of the word as the spectrum of opinions did not appear in the articles. A characteristic feature of the articles was repeated information of equal importance which was redundant for permanent readers.

Concerning the topic of sexual harassment by priests, the topic of harassment of a girl by the Greek Catholic Bishop Milan Chatur was particularly highlighted in the SME daily. The topic was covered from September 2018 to May 2019, with one article from January 2020 informing of his replacement in the diocese by Archbishop Cyril Vasil', a high Church official from Rome. The articles were mostly informative. Contributions written by readers – the public (lay and professional) were published in the blog section; an opinion of a Church representative was not published at least once. In the run up to the 2016 and 2020 parliamentary elections in Slovakia, several articles dealing with the Church's support for extremist right-wing parties appeared. In the campaign, some priests openly supported extremist political parties, and the Church is criticized for not clearly dissociating itself from these manifestations. In this context, the Slovak Catholic Church is criticised for not having ever said a clear 'no' to clerical nationalism. Several articles and commentaries deal with the personality of Jozef Tiso and his anti-Semitic politics which has never been publicly condemned by the official Church.¹⁵ Many articles discussing the official opinion of the Slovak Catholic Church on medical and bioethical topics such as alternative treatments and homeopathy, contraception, sex, artificial insemination, etc. were published during the period under examination. It should be noted, however, that a majority of them were interview articles with experts in the relevant areas as well as the Church representatives.

2.2 Media Representation of the Topic in the Weekly Katolícke Noviny

Compared to the SME daily, the weekly Katolícke noviny published fewer news and current affairs articles on the topic of sexual scandals of Catholic bishops and priests. The topic of the Bishop Milan Chatur's accusation of sexual harassment prevailed, with almost all the articles being written by the Katolícke noviny journalists and expressing their personal opinions (in one article, the author reflects on why there was no room for the other party to comment on the accusation). The common feature of these contributions is that they all condemn sexual abuse as such (*"abuse is a fearsome distortion of a preaching ministry"*, or *"what is scandalous in sexual scandals"*). On the other hand, contrary to the non-religious public

¹⁵ VRABCOVÁ, M.: *Slovenská katolícka cirkev nikdy nepovedala jasné nie klerikálnemu nacionalizmu*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<https://domov.sme.sk/c/20116153/katolici-zehnali-tisovi-aj-kotlebovi.html>>.

newspapers, the articles in the weekly *Katolícke noviny* give Church representatives an opportunity to express their opinion on the topic of sexual abuse in Slovak Catholic Church. Other issues such as power within the Catholic Church, corruption scandals in Vatican or nepotism were not covered by the weekly. Only a few articles dealing with the sensitive topic of the clerical-nationalist Slovak state were found in the weekly *Katolícke noviny*; both articles dealing with the Church's approach towards the solution of the „Jewish Question“ condemned the Holocaust in Slovakia and the deportation of Jews from the perspective of the then Church representatives.¹⁶ However, articles dealing with medical and bioethical topics did not appear frequently; if such articles occurred, they represented the official position of the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

The empirical research carried out by the method of content analysis provided the following conclusions: the weekly *Katolícke noviny* reported on the topics investigated through publicist genres rather than through news contributions. This is probably related to its weekly periodicity which in most cases does not allow for timely informing on issues related to the scandals within the Catholic Church. Unlike the *SME* daily, the weekly *Katolícke noviny* has an opportunity to point out the social relevance of the topic in the field of journalism rather than emphasize its timeliness in the field of news. In the case of the *SME* daily, the information on the topics was carried out by means of news contributions and the opinion spectrum was reflected by publicist genres, though to a lesser extent than in the weekly *Katolícke noviny*. In the *SME* daily, the articles dealing with the topics of scandals and other controversial topics in the Catholic Church were more informative whereas those in the weekly *Katolícke noviny* were presented in form of commentaries and tended to explain facts related to a particular topic. The results of this modest research will serve as the basis for further investigation of the topic of media representation of scandals in the Catholic Church in Slovak printed media.

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¹⁶ See: LAUKO, J.: *Deportácie Židov boli podľa biskupov nemravným činom*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<https://www.katolickenoviny.sk/tema/category/tema/article/deportacie-zidov-boli-podla-biskupov-nemravnym-cinom.xhtml>>; LAUKO, J.: *Arcibiskupa zarazila Tisova naivita*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<https://www.katolickenoviny.sk/tema/category/tema/article/arcibiskupa-zarazila-tisova-naivita.xhtml>>.

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COVID-19 IN MEDIA AS AN ALIEN: THE TOPOS OF “THREAT FROM OUT THERE”

Martin Charvát – Jan Jiráček

Abstract:

In the paper we would like to point out a specific tendency present in contemporary journalism, which has been strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemics: namely (a) usage of digital technologies in representing the virus itself and the global/local situation concerning the spread of the virus and (b) building up the narration, which struggles to explain the situation ‘with covid’. Our argument is that the narrative of virus invasion follows the pattern of unknown threat very similar to the narration of classic Ridley Scott’s feature movie *Alien* (1979) using the available representational technologies (as Scott used in 1970s).

Key words:

Biopolitics. Digital Media. Disinformation. Media Narration. Media Representation. Pandemics. Visualization.

Introduction

In the present paper we would like to point out a specific tendency present in contemporary journalism, which has been strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemics: namely (a) usage of digital technologies in representing the virus itself and the global/local situation concerning the spread of the virus and (b) building up the narration, which struggles to explain the situation ‘with covid’. Our argument is that the narrative of virus invasion follows the pattern of unknown threat very similar to the narration of classic Ridley Scott’s feature movie *Alien* (1979) using the available representational technologies (as Scott used in 1970s). Our approach is framed by narrative analysis as adapted and adopted by many scholars for interpretation of news¹ based upon argument that especially visual media (television) tends to follow the similar pattern of narration in news and feature content. Using the example of Czech media (mainly as illustration of our thesis), we can show that news articles were full of visualizations of the structure of the virus and offered various images of the virus which were supposed to help the consumer understand “what we are dealing with”. And of course, this kind of a representation of certain threat (to society) is underlined by manifestation of scientific discourse, which is represented by obvious characters: experts of all kinds. Part of the narration is the exploration of dead-end, in this case “fake news” about COVID-19 (mainly about its origin). This kind of visualization and narrativization offers a simple message: this is how the threat looks like, this is the threat to the “whole” and “healthy” body of the society and thus it must be destroyed. In consequence, the new type of (postmodern) biopolitics emerged (as pointed out by Agamben),² enabled by digital technologies: lockdowns, tracking down people, the control of movement and so on – examined in ongoing media coverage, which – in its interpretative power – ‘makes sense’ of the development.

We focus on digital visualization of the virus as a part of the (mythological) storytelling. The tracking of the (spread) of the virus in news was based on the digital visualization: maps of territories (and the whole world) were full of red points, shining and glazing while showing

¹ See, for example: HARTLEY, J.: *Understanding News*. London, New York : Routledge, 1982.; LULE, J.: *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism*. New York : Guilford Press, 2001.

² See: AGAMBEN, G.: *Lo stato d’eccezione provocato da un’emergenza immotivata*. Released on 26th February 2020. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <<https://ilmanifesto.it/lo-stato-deccezione-provocato-da-unemergenza-immotivata/>>.

where the situation is bad or getting worse or better.³ But paradoxically there was and still is a time shift: we live in a society, which thinks about itself as a digital society; everything is done without delay or lag. But in this case, we are confronted with the fact that 3D and interactive maps as well as other revealed information are not representing ‘present’, they are delayed (for 10 – 14 days because of the dynamics of the epidemic) – they are not able to describe current situation, but only its past. Of course, we can thus predict what will happen next, but the role of digital technologies has changed: they are not tools of sending message immediately, they are mere tracking devices of the virus.

1 Threat from Out There (Or Here?)

Let us begin with the analogy with the movie *Alien* (1979). Like all analogies, this one is far from being perfect. The evolving scheme of *Alien*’s narration (and in sequels this is a fundamental nod point) is based on opening divergence (following strange signal) only to be confronted with the threat from ‘out there’. Only one member of the crew knows that the divergence is not an accident, it is then revealed that finding an alien was the main objective set out by the company. Nevertheless, members of the crew face something which is completely strange to them, its (alien’s) development of forms strikes them unprepared and thus expose them to extreme danger. And they must fight the threat, the threat which has its origin in the unknown space territory (of course, in this motive is put into play in a much larger field), without any specified weapons given.

The COVID-19 emergence follows up similar scheme: its origin is in a sense unknown (it comes from laboratories in China) – and the questions had taken this shape: was the spread of the virus intentional or accidental? The world has faced the situation of the uncontrolled spread; videos on social media depicting collapsing people on the streets of cities in China were watched by Europeans and American from the perspective of disinterested spectators, who thought that this kind of a tragedy is far from happening in their regions and territory. But, as it has been later revealed (as the analysis of the virus moved further), the delay between being infected and eruption of the symptoms is approximately one to two weeks, the virus has already been present all around the world. And, as it was the case with the alien, world has not been prepared, world did not have specified weapon to fight it. Only traditional tools were applied: quarantines and lockdowns of the whole sectors, infrastructures, cities and countries. The faith has been also put into the power of digital technologies: tracing the infection and its spread, ‘smart’ analysis of people’s mobility, and so on. But even the digital technologies are in delay, they are not able to “catch” the virus in real time. There is also another similar point present. Both in the case of *Alien* and the COVID-19 we were and still are in the state of currently reached level of knowledge, which determines what is understandable and rationally acceptable or understandable.

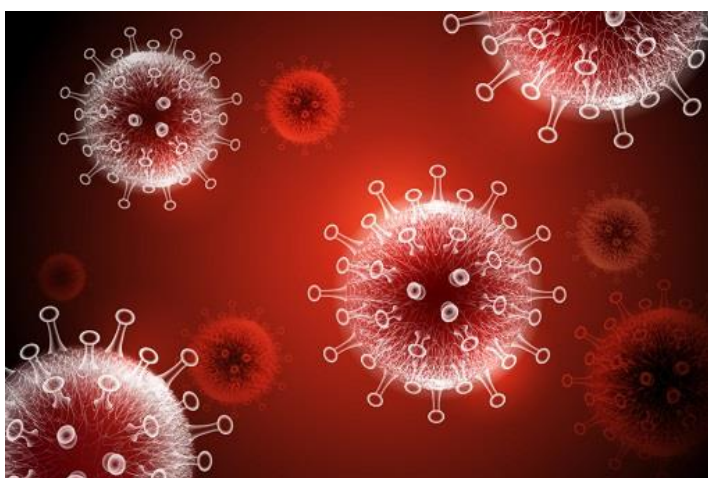
On the other hand, we are very well aware of the fact, that in contrast to *Alien* the COVID-19 is not technically ‘from the space out there’. Its origin is the Earth, it is a danger or threat from “here” and it is not biologically completely different form of life. But the topos of unknown threat, threat that is new, still remains. Of course, narration about COVID-19 (not only in media, but also in academic discourse) are structured by looking back into the different other kinds

³ Remark by the authors: For example, actualized version of the map of Czech Republic is available here: MAHDALOVÁ, K.: *Čerstvá data, jak se šíří virus. Unikátní data všech obcí v Česku*. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <<https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/unikatni-mapa-vsech-obci-v-cesku-kde-se-prave-ted-siri-koronavirus-124624>>.

of pandemics in order to find specific schemes and repetitive diagrams of the ‘behaviour’ of the virus itself. One similarity remains: in *Alien* the first stage of the monster is a ‘facehugger’ one: the embryo attaches itself on the face of a human and small alien thus evolving inside of human’s body lest he then breaks out through the skin and organs. COVID-19 attaches itself upon the human lungs, penetrates them and slowly destroying them, but not only lungs but the whole organic system; it parasites on live functions of a man – its (in comparison to alien) aim is not kill its host, because it will kill the virus: the man is a vase for spreading and allows the virus to reproduce.

2 Visualization

In order to know the virus, to discover its functions, to reveal its essence, scientist produced and worked with visual representation of the virus. As Manovich says, “*software is the invisible glue*” that ties society together.⁴ Not only in a sense of working environments, home office, but also it is a case of city infrastructure,⁵ everyday movement, shopping, traveling and so on. We live ‘in media’, in media-environments that shape our ‘being-in-the-world’,⁶ our structure of perception of the world. Software and 3D visualizations of virus are pretty common in scientific research, but the case of COVID-19 is one of the rare examples of worldwide acceptance and dissemination of certain “operational image”⁷ by media. In the following months of spreading the virus around the globe, the media were bringing “new” information 24/7 about the situation. Journalist adopted the visualization of the (structure) of COVID-19 in order to help the audience to recognize what is going on and how does the inner and by mere human invisible essence of the virus look like.



Picture 1: Visualization of the structure of the virus

Source: *Onemocnění aktuálně: Přehled aktuálních informací o nemocech v České republice*. [online]. [2021-02-05]. Available at: <<https://onemocneni-aktualne.mzcr.cz/images/covid-19.jpg>>.

Visualization was a powerful tool how to make audience ‘recognize’ what we are dealing with. In other words: it was a powerful tool (with complementary statistics and different metrics) to educate the audience. What we have been facing is convergence of biological/scientific discourse and its appropriation by media and in news circulation. Of course, the commentary

⁴ MANOVICH, L.: *Software Takes Command*. New York : Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 39.

⁵ See: MITCHELL, W. J.: *ME++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2004.

⁶ See also: DEUZE, M.: *Media Life*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

⁷ See, for example: FAROCKI, H.: *Working the Sight-Lines*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2004.

was also needed: we have been told why the virus behaves like it behaves (because of the combination of spike proteins) and what it can do to a human body. Many epidemiologists were invited into newsrooms not only to forecast the progress of pandemic but also to answer the questions raised by audience (and then to, if it was possible, calm down hysteria). Because of the novelty of the threat many “fake news”⁸ have been present in Czech media discourse, which evolved around the theme whether the origin of the virus is artificial or natural. Both points of view (up until March 2021) have agreed consensually that virus escaped from laboratories in Wuhan, China. But in the first case the story strongly suggested that the virus has been made artificially as a new type of weapon in biological warfare set up by China. This – assumably false – assumption has been strengthened (especially during March, April and May 2020) by claims of some Czech biologist, epidemiologist and other experts (for example Soňa Peková, expert on molecular genetics), who argued, that the behaviour of the virus is “un-natural”.⁹ The impact of fake news based on the statement that virus has artificial origin was the mistrust in regulation forced into existence in almost every state around the world in order to fight with the covid (as usage of face masks, forced lockdowns, regulation of social contacts and so on). As the leading fake news about vaccination and vaccines can be marked those which come up with the information that vaccination itself is a hidden application of new form of power and digital surveillance forced by global organization with a pragmatic goal to trace people’s activities and behaviour. Vaccination has been explained as an undercover micro-chipping in order to deploy new type of totalitarian forms of organizations of people and state power.¹⁰ This is one of arguments which people against vaccination used on social media. Another one is that vaccination is dangerous for health and bodily functions and causes death, i.e., it is more dangerous than the virus itself. In Czech Republic this led to the fact that almost 40% of people did not want to get vaccinated. Campaign run by Ministry of Health with support of physicians and epidemiologist has been able to reduce the number down to 20% in March 2021.¹¹ Both the vaccination and restrictions of social contacts (the ‘lockdown’ – whatever it means) were interpreted by the media as some kind of step back to non-democratic situation. The comments

⁸ *Dezinformace, lži, hoaxy a alternativní fakta o Covid-19*. [online]. [2021-02-05]. Available at: <<https://koronavirus.mzcr.cz/dezinformace-o-covid-19/>>.

⁹ See, for example: ŠELIGA, V.: *Peková: Měla jsem pravdu. Virus se šíří, protože je uměle vytvořený, aby infikoval lidi*. Released on 5th February 2021. [online]. [2021-02-07]. Available at: <<https://cnn.iprima.cz/clanek-sona-pekova-mela-jsem-pravdu-vir-je-umele-vytvoreny-18582>>; DOLEŽAL, J. X.: *Opravdu doktorka Peková věří na umělost koronaviru?*. [online]. [2021-01-07]. Available at: <<https://www.forum24.cz/opravdu-doktorka-pekova-veri-na-umelost-koronaviru/>>; VÝBORNÁ, L., ŠVARCOVÁ, A.: *Soňa Peková: Nový koronavirus považuju za uměle vytvořený, nemá charakteristiky, které známe z přírody*. Released on 22nd April 2020. [online]. [2021-01-07]. Available at: <<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/sona-pekova-novy-koronavirus-povazuju-za-umele-vytvoreny-nema-charakteristiky-8187948>>.

¹⁰ VACHTL, J.: *Fake news roku: Pandemii řídí farmaceuti, Gates chce očipovat lidstvo*. Released on 28th December 2020. [online]. [2021-01-07]. Available at: <https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/nejvetsi-fake-news-roku-2020-pandemie-bill-gates-cipovani-covid-americke-volby-manipulace.A201127_090557_domaci_chtl>.

¹¹ See: ENDRŠTOVÁ, M., VALÁŠEK, L.: *„Radši zemřu na covid než na vakcínu.“ Roste nechut’ k očkování, kampaň přijde pozdě*. Released on 7th January 2021. [online]. [2021-02-05]. Available at: <<https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/radsi-zemru-na-covid-nez-na-vakcinu-rote-nechut-k-ockovani/r~8e91dd1e4f2f11eb8972ac1f6b220ee8/>>; *Začíná kampaň k očkování, cílem je přihlášení 70 procent lidí*. Released on 7th January 2021. [online]. [2021-02-05]. Available at: <<https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/zacina-kampan-k-ockovani-cilem-je-prihlaseni-70-procent-lidi/2015732>>; *Očkování proti onemocnění Covid-19*. [online]. [2021-01-07]. Available at: <<https://koronavirus.mzcr.cz/ockovani-proti-covid-19/>>; CECHL, P.: *Očkování, nebo ne? Češi mění názor, velkou roli budou hrát plánované výhody*. Released on 7th March 2021. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/ockovani-cesi-covid-20220506.html?utm_source=www.seznam.cz&utm_medium=sekce-internetu#dop_ab_variant=550400&dop_source_zone_name=hpfeed.sznhp.box&dop_req_id=yurWauaHyYh-202105070930&dop_id=11605076>.

comparing the pandemic restrictions to Cold War 1950s were quite frequent. We believe that this is a consequence of the ‘advocacy nature’ of the Czech media: the argument ‘it is like 1950s’ was used for blaming the government, not for true description of the real situation. Anyway, the case of ‘vaccination as micro-chipping’ was uncovered by Czech media as disinformation blamed on ‘disinformation webs’ without any other discursive re-definition.

Also, in these cases many of visualizations have been used. But in a very different manner: when the epidemiologist and the public scientific discourse, which has been presented by media, used visualization in order to educate and widen the realm of knowledge about the virus itself (and we can mark it as a “argument by authority”),¹² in the case of fake news the visualization played different role discursively; mainly illustrative one without any specific and tight connection to the text or as it was the case of statistics only to say that metrics are false, statistics are fake and are only used to discipline the society (and of course, it has also been said that because of only a small amount of people, for whom the virus is potentially deadly, the society as a whole must obey rules produced by government, which are restrictive and demolishes human freedom). But this also something what has been thematized by Czech media. For example, Czech Television on 8th March 2021 published news about the effects of lockdowns upon elderly group of people.¹³ Year after the dissemination of the virus this is still one of the themes, which were used not only by social workers or psychiatrists but primarily by those who stood up against the repressive mechanisms of control: in this case the narration was naturalized by ‘authentic’ statements by elders who cannot see their children or grandchildren and do not want to die alone. On the other hand, by mainstream media¹⁴ was deployed the discourse of ‘protection’: the virus is a lethal threat for elders, they should stay at home and not even go out shopping.¹⁵

3 Biopolitics and Digital Control (Between “Fake News” and “Mainstream Media”)

The aforementioned problem and theme of digital control or lockdowns gave rise to specific kind of (digital) biopolitics.¹⁶ During the first few months of global spread of COVID-19, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben published several commentaries. In the one from 26th February 2020 named *Lo stato d’eccezione provocato da un’emergenza immotivata*, he writes that the spread of the virus is defining the situation (on the global and also local level), when “state of emergency” would become the “new paradigm of governance”. He speaks about “irrational”

¹² See: LUHMANN, N.: *The Reality of Mass Media*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1995.

¹³ *Na seniory dopadá samota. Koronavirus je hrozba, odloučení ale může být také*. Released on 8th March 2021. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <<https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3280418-na-seniory-dopada-samota-koronavirus-je-hrozba-odlouceni-ale-muze-byt-take>>.

¹⁴ Remark by the authors: *Deník N* has been using all the tools we are discussing. In this article statistics are present and also its interpretation: KOUBSKÝ, P.: *Epidemie koronaviru v číslech a grafech*. Released on 3rd April 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://denikn.cz/332489/epidemie-koronaviru-v-cislech-a-grafech/?ref=tema>>.

¹⁵ RODRIGUEZ, V.: *Desetina seniorů koronaviru podlehne. Při epidemii by sami do obchodu neměli*. Released on 3rd March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <<https://www.denik.cz/zdravi/koronavirus-nakaza-nemoc-seniori-20200303.html>>; BEZDĚKOVÁ, I.: *Seniři v ohrožení: Prarodičům hrozí nákaza od dětí, někteří se málo chrání, jiní o viru dosud nevědí*. Released on 20th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <<https://denikn.cz/319275/seniori-v-ohrozeni-prarodicum-hrozi-nakaza-od-deti-nekteri-se-malo-chrani-jini-o-viru-dosud-nevi/?ref=tema>>.

¹⁶ For the term “biopolitics”, see: FOUCAULT, M.: *The Birth of Biopolitics*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

panic, which is deployed by media agenda setting and by political claims.¹⁷ This leads, as Agamben continues, to nothing less than to strengthening of mechanisms of repression and control in society, when human life is shaped into the “deprived” form, into the “bare life”,¹⁸ which is characterised by the loss of civil rights. The loss of freedom is phenomenon which comes in hand with repressive biopolitics, which is focused on preventing people/population from dying but at the same time discipline it under control. The aim of the biopolitics is to control life by state. And pandemics is one of the best opportunities to fulfil this dream: by managing of how many people ‘can’ or ‘will’ die the state will save the others; the state decides who is threatened by the virus, who must be protected.

We do not intend to criticize or judge Agamben’s opinion. What is important is the fact that in the Czech media (and not only Czech) the discussion referring (however implicitly) to the topic of biopolitics tended to fall apart into the strict difference between those who appraise the applied mechanism of control as inevitable (supported by naïve humanism) and those who were loudly yelling that what is going on is the almost unprecedented attack on basic human and civil rights. For both camps, the digital media, statistics and visualization played crucial role in their arguments. The ones who defended state intervention used statistics and digital control of movement in correlation with decreased new cases of infection as a proof that the intervention works. The ones who stood up against state intervention stated that these statistics (published in so-called mainstream media) are fake and came up with metrics and visualizations that signed that there is no strong correlation between repressive mechanism and keeping the pandemics ‘under control’. Specific case is the so-called basic reproduction number, which expected projection of spreading the virus. By those who defended state intervention, the reproduction number was a scientific argument and a tool to make decision in order to keep the society safe. For those who denied the existence of virus it has become the arch-enemy number one (almost as android in *Alien*). They stressed that its measurement is faked by government in order to prolong the restrictions, and when the number has increased above the level of 1, it was a signal that other restrictions will come. Not even mathematics and statistics could have any appeal at those who did not want to accept restrictions.

Conclusion

In the article we tried to show how the statistical sets of data and software visualizations used in scientific realm has been (in the case of COVID-19 media representation) adopted by media discourse, respectively used in two narrative schemes presented in media (both on so-called mainstream and disinformation websites). On one hand, the narration is based on the desire to get to know the virus, to ‘educate’ the public in order to calm down the panic which arises from the contact with something unknown; statistics and visualizations are here deployed as tools or coping mechanism with the situation, because they provide ‘objective’ perception of the spread of the pandemics. But usage and faith put in digital technologies has been paradoxical: it seems to us that in digital society everything is projected ‘live’ on the computer and TV screens, but in fact, the technologies are always in delay, they can only trace the virus with two weeks hold-up. On the other hand, the ‘fake news’ narration is kind of a dead end. It uses data and visualizations as mere illustrations to self-affirmative discourse based on the fear of global changes in control and repressive mechanism. What is in mainstream media discourse presented

¹⁷ AGAMBEN, G.: *Lo stato d’eccezione provocato da un’emergenza immotivata*. Released on 26th February 2020. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <<https://ilmanifesto.it/lo-stato-deccezione-provocato-da-unemergenza-immotivata/>>.

¹⁸ See: AGAMBEN, G.: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1998.

as ‘fact’ is by ‘fake news’ discourse interpreted as ‘twisted’ or manipulated. There can never be any kind of consensus about what is going on. The threat is here, says mainstream media. For ‘fake news’ discourse the notion of ‘threat’ is highly problematic; threat is only a mechanism for control.

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PANDEMIC, TECHNOLOGY, TELEVISION: POPULAR TELEVISION DURING THE COVID-19 VIRUS PANDEMIC (CROATIAN TV)

Tatjana Ileš – Andrea Zakšek

Abstract:

Mankind needs communication and social life to function normally, which is almost completely impossible in today's pandemic. We recognize technology as a medium that primarily improves the way traditional media (e.g., television) function. We live in an age of simulation and simulacrum, where truth becomes subjective and universal laws no longer stand. Considering that popular culture is the area in which the current social characteristics are most strongly read, the so-called structure of feelings in society, an overview of television programs (HTV 1, HTV 2, Nova TV and RTL) during the first lockdown in Croatia (20th March to 11th May 2020) will be given. Moreover, the ratings of popular television genres will be analyzed and show the results of the conducted survey. The aim of this paper is to research the television space in Croatia in a certain period, which is greatly determined by the global Covid-19 virus pandemic.

Key words:

Croatian TV. Pandemic. Postmodernism. Technology. Television.

Introduction

In 2020, a pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus occurred worldwide. These are very serious times for humanity, after which the consequences for human life on Earth in all aspects of socio-cultural activities will be observed for a long time to come. As we write this paper, 2020 is behind us, but we are still in the midst of a pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. Given that culture, and especially popular culture, is the area in which the current social characteristics are most strongly read (the so-called *structure of feelings* in society), in this paper we will give an insight into the broadcast content of television programs (HTV 1, HTV 2, Nova TV and RTL) during the first lockdown in Croatia (20th March to 11th May 2020). Lastly, we will show the results of the conducted survey. The aim of this paper is to investigate the television space in Croatia, in a certain period of time, which is necessarily determined by the global coronavirus pandemic, i.e., the limitations that the spread of the virus has brought into everyday life, and which have possibly changed TV content consuming habits of television viewers. The features of the postmodern are still recognizable in everyday life, although in theory, this period began in the 1980s, and theorists are increasingly using terms such as “postpostmodern”, “posthuman” and/or “transhumanism” to describe the state of today's global society. The main factor of all the changes that postmodernism has introduced into today is technology, which permeates almost every aspect of human life. Man is a social being who needs communication and social life to function normally, and technology has been used primarily to improve the way traditional media works. Especially the Internet – which has enabled people to be informed about current events at any time. Also, the development of social networks has improved communication to unprecedented proportions. The time-space barrier is breaking down, the flow of information is easier and faster than ever before, and we live in an age of simulation and simulacrum, where truth becomes subjective and universal laws no longer exist. Virtual reality becomes real reality, analog becomes digital.

1 Theoretical Framing and Cultural Context

Cultural theories say that today's society is characterized by disappointment, doubt, irony, fragmentation, and plurality. With the decline of faith in science and the end of modernism,

human society turned to information and technology as a way to overcome the difficulties posed by postmodern everyday life. Thanks to the possibilities brought by information technology, unimaginably great technological progress has been made in just a few decades, and this process of development is accelerating even more each year. However, in addition to raising the level of progress in society, the application of information technology has brought with it some unintended and unforeseen consequences. Namely, throughout its history, human society has believed in a certain form of utopia in every time period. The beginning of the development of information technology in the new, postmodern age represents precisely this utopian possibility, something that human society will finally lead to prosperity. Precisely speaking of technology as a new utopia, it can be said that technology as a new form of utopia has created a parallel, virtual world, a hyperreality in which change is constantly taking place, characterized by indeterminacy and informational orientation. That is a world of scattered identities and even greater uncertainties. Every year we witness the growing expansion of this virtual world, which in various forms, is beginning to enter into all aspects of everyday life. Thus, technology is becoming ubiquitous. According to Richard S. Rosenberg, the powerful communication channels, provided by information technology, have enabled people to have incredible communication capabilities and transfer huge amounts of data in just a few seconds. Furthermore, information technology has had an undeniable impact on the development of science. With it, people came to revolutionary insights into the origins of the human race, were given the opportunity to explore the universe and the nearby galaxies, and also improved the quality of life. Rosenberg concludes that all the achievements in science of the last 50 years would not have been possible without the use and development of information technology.¹

But there is another side to this phenomenon. Nel and Kroeze also mention the ethical nature of information technology, arguing that there are two contradictory points. According to the one side, technology is just a tool used by people to improve the quality of life and is completely subordinated to humans and is ethically neutral. According to the other side, technology has consequences for society and its impact is by no means neutral and negligible.² There is also a term for this phenomenon, called “technological determinism”. It is defined by Robins and Webster as the idea that social development and cultural change occur exclusively under the influence of technological innovation and technological development. According to them, technological determinism is an interesting concept because it results in faster development. As the individual understands the benefits of technological advancement, they become more susceptible and receptive to new ideas and implementations. On the other hand, they become deaf and blind to all other methods that do not apply technology. New technologies will be used to optimize mechanisms that have been proven insufficient in past technologies.³ Heidegger wrote much about the issue of technology and humankind in his essays entitled *The Question Concerning Technology*. According to this author, technological determinism and technology will have an exclusive role in deciding and determining the direction of society’s development. There will be rapid technological progress and the emergence of the information society: “*All we have left are technological connections.*”⁴

¹ ROSENBERG, R. S.: *The Social Impact of Computers*. 3rd Edition. London : Elsevier Academic Press, 2004, p. 358.

² See: NEL, D. F., KROEZE, J. H.: *Information Technology as an Agent of Post-Modernism*. Pretoria : University of Pretoria, 2008. [online]. [2021-03-25]. Available at: <http://cogprints.org/6207/1/Nel_and_Kroeze_-_IT_as_an_agent_of_post-modernism_080909.pdf>.

³ ROBINS, K., WEBSTER, F.: *Times of the Technoculture*. New York : Routledge, 1999, p. 73.

⁴ HEIDEGGER, M.: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York : Garland Publishing, 1977, p. 27.

Furthermore, thanks to the growing importance of Internet networks, information technologies lead to easier transmission of mechanisms through mass communication channels. But these seemingly positive possibilities of information technology ultimately lead to a saturation of society with information and the restructuring of social ties. The greatest impact of mass information is seen in the emergence of a plurality of information sources. People are ‘bombarded’ with potentially different sources of information on the same topic, and it is up to the individual to choose between these many sources of knowledge, and to try to analyze and deconstruct them on their own. But if we look at this situation from a postmodern perspective, we come to the conclusion that, although there is a possibility of greater insight into the topic, in the end the question that is emphasized is what is objective truth and what should an individual believe? Internal reflection and deliberation are discouraged due to the speed of information exchange, which leads to information never being fully understood and only partially perceived. Dubravka Oraić-Tolić also writes about the role of the media in informing today’s society: “*The media simultaneously serve to mediate the truth about reality and to manipulate reality. They, on the one hand, reveal the objective truth more clearly than spoken word and writing could. Moreover, they also cover up and manipulate factual reality more than was ever possible in spoken and written culture.*”⁵

The fact is that today we live in a world of images and (visual) information. Television, computers, smartphones and the Internet have become our daily companions, our collaborators and the tools with which we experience the world. “Hyperrealism”, the term Baudrillard spoke of decades ago,⁶ today is becoming a new reality. Television program producers present image and fiction as reality by mediating them through contemporary music, series, sitcoms, movies, and even documentaries and newscasts. They understand the power of the visual in the realm of creating virtual reality. Hyperreality is a key feature of postmodern society. Postmodernists explain this dissolution of the difference between fiction and reality by claiming that truth is actually fiction. Reality is as we see and understand it. There is no objective reality. According to the philosopher Richard Tarnas: “*The mind is not a passive mirror of the external world and the internal order, but is active and creative in the process of perception and cognition. Reality is in one sense constructed in the mind, not just simply perceived, and so many constructions are possible, none of which necessarily have to be sovereign.*”⁷ This is connected to Baudrillard’s claim that we live in a world so saturated with media that media images dominate and distort our perception of the world to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between media images and reality. We live, therefore, in a *simulacrum*, we are so caught up in this game of spectacle that we are less and less connected with external reality, the ‘real’ reality, and the concepts of the social and the political completely lose their meaning. Baudrillard uses both the adjectives *narcoticized* and *mesmerized* in describing a postmodern man who is so fascinated by image and spectacle that the concept of meaning that depends on stable boundaries, solid structures, and shared consciousness completely disintegrates. Caught in a whirlpool of simulations, the masses are “*bathed in a media message without message and meaning*”.⁸

Hyperrealism is considered a major feature of postmodernism. In the realm of the hyperreal, the real and the unreal come into constant contact with each other. Simulations are beginning to be perceived as something more real than reality itself. When it comes to hyperreality,

⁵ ORAIĆ-TOLIĆ, D.: *Male Modernism and Female Postmodernism: The Birth of the Virtual Culture*. Zagreb : Ljevak Publishing, 2005, p. 21.

⁶ See, for example: BAUDRILLARD, J.: *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1994.

⁷ TARNAS, R.: *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*. New York : Ballantine Books, 1991, p. 396.

⁸ BAUDRILLARD, J.: *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 175.

be sure to emphasize a person's immersion in (high) technology. According to Dubravka Oraić-Tolić, "*what Baudrillard described in his philosophy as simulation and simulacrum has become in the virtual worlds of computer technology a real experience, and a heated future that is shrouded into present before our eyes. If man can immerse himself and really reside in the unreal reality of cyberspace, which is as real as the primary reality, then nothing is the same anymore, then we are faced with the question of the constructiveness of not only cultural, but also biological identity*".⁹

According to Sontag, a critic of American culture, postmodernism comes to the fore because of the blurring of the line between highlow and lowbrow culture, that is, high and low culture. Until then, there was a so-called *cultural elitism* whose purpose was to separate works considered high art from cultural content for broader audience. In order to understand and appreciate high art, an individual must have a certain level of higher education.¹⁰ On the other hand, according to Pronk, lowbrow culture is available to the broad masses of people of all levels of education and does not require any special knowledge to be understood.¹¹ In the 1950s and 1960s, a social spirit began to develop. It rejected the elitism of modernism and ultimately led to the creation of postmodernism. The construction of such a specific structure of feelings and understanding of culture as a way of life has led to the gradual acceptance of pop-cultural products as part of the so-called serious culture. Smith in his book *The End of the World as We Know It* says the following about popular culture: "*Popular culture is something like a computer virus that creeps into every corner of society, rewriting everything there in the form of its program, replicating itself, corrupting all existing items and creating unspeakable damage to the world of high culture.*"¹² Consumers of popular culture in Western countries, that were created by a new generation of young people after World War II, are carriers of a freer spirit, fighting traditionalism, accepting diversity and heterogenizing opinions. They are matching with postmodernist dispersed identities and disrupting old values: "*Postmodern means the rise of those whose voices in history have been silenced by modernist metanarratives, which are both patriarchal and imperialist.*"¹³ Contemporary British cultural theorist McRobbie further writes that postmodernism has created a new set of intellectuals coming from ethnic, class, racial and gender margins. These are the people she calls the "*new generation of intellectuals*".¹⁴ Postmodern culture is composed of many different elements, and can be called a "culture of citation". Cultural production is a consequence of other, past cultural productions. According to Jameson: "*Postmodern cultural texts not only quote other cultures, other historical moments, they randomly cannibalize them to the point where any possibility of criticism or historical distance no longer exists – there is only pastiche.*"¹⁵

Since television has been the center of events in Western households for almost a century, popular forms of television content are also being subjects to changes in the cultural and social environment, even those that do not necessarily bring aesthetic value to television. Bignell, quoting Ellis, writes that "*television functions through reality, processing it for the purpose*

⁹ ORAIĆ-TOLIĆ, D.: *Male Modernism and Female Postmodernism: The Birth of the Virtual Culture*. Zagreb : Ljevak Publishing, 2005, p. 12.

¹⁰ SONTAG, S.: *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York : Picador, 2001, p. 293-294.

¹¹ See: PRONK, C.: *Postmodernism's Impact on Popular Culture*. Available at: <https://banneroftruth.org/uk/resources/articles/2006/postmodernisms-impact-on-popular-culture/?fbclid=IwAR0DJSZtByaSy8qmZdFzDnfS_JBqlRoPieuho86WAgVNX2m7GS7SqIzsIMU>.

¹² SMITH, C.: *The End of the World as We Know It*. Colorado Springs : Waterbrook Press, 2001, p. 65.

¹³ MCROBBIE, A.: *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London : Routledge, 1994, p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 22.

¹⁵ JAMESON, F.: *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern*. London : Verso Publishing, 1998, p. 283.

of defining, explaining, retelling, marginalizing, or speculating on reality”.¹⁶ According to Jameson, “such devices (television), are in fact reproduction devices rather than production devices, and create very different demands in the sphere of our capacity for aesthetic representation, as opposed to the relatively mimetic idolatry of older devices of the futuristic movement”.¹⁷ It is not intended to talk here about the history of television as a large-scale visual communication medium, which still plays a significant role in global communication, but only to recall the rapid development of this medium, from the beginning in the 1930s until today, when television programs include streaming services like Netflix, HBO or Amazon Prime. It should also be said that the emergence of the Internet has greatly influenced the consumption of various forms of television programs. Thanks to streaming channels, viewers have the opportunity (and for a fee) to access a catalog consisting of a large number of television contents, and even those which broadcasting on television has long since ended. Due to its wide offer and the possibility of watching television content on demand, streaming services have today become the most common way of watching television shows. In this part of the analysis, the term “pandemic” will be added to the relationship and mutual influences of television and technology, as well as the associated changes in the formation of personal and collective identities. That is because the global infection caused by the Covid-19 virus is a powerful factor that already shows, and will also continue showing in future researches. It changes the daily consumption of TV content by television viewers, their viewing habits and causes new preferences.

2 Analysis of Television Program Viewing Research during the Pandemic (The First Lockdown in Croatia)

As one part of this paper, a short research was made which purpose was to investigate the habits of Croatian television viewers, which relate to television viewing during the pandemic, more precisely, during the first lockdown in the period from 20th March to 11th May 2020. The aim of this research was to gain insight into (possible) changes in viewing habits caused by the pandemic situation and social closure by surveying the subjects. The survey is a quantitative research method that includes closed-ended questions where subjects answer by choosing one of the offered answers, and open-ended questions where subjects can write the answer themselves. Both types of questions were used in this survey. The survey was conducted online, via Google surveys, and the target group of subjects was related to the population of the Republic of Croatia. A general hypothesis has been set out that: *Television viewers in Croatia consumed more popular television content during the pandemic than before the pandemic*. The purpose of the research conducted by the survey questionnaire was to investigate the truth of the hypothesis, and to determine whether the habits of television viewers in Croatia have changed in a given period. It should be noted that by monitoring the schedule of public television programs – Croatian Radio Television, i.e., HTV 1 and HTV 2, and commercial media houses – RTL and Nova TV, during the first lockdown, we concluded that there were no significant changes in the program schedule of popular forms (quizzes, soap operas, reality shows, TV series, etc.), which would be conditioned by a pandemic. On the contrary, there was a significant rise in a number of so-called Breaking News, i.e., Extraordinary News and regular press conferences of the National Civil Service Headquarters (as well as the Civil Service at the local level). This brought the most important information and the latest news on the development of the situation related to the spread of Covid-19 virus. At the time of the first

¹⁶ BIGNELL, J.: *Big Brother: Reality TV in the Twenty-First Century*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 60.

¹⁷ JAMESON, F.: *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern*. London : Verso Publishing, 1998, p. 37.

lockdown, what increased significantly was viewership of news programs and reports that provided information about the pandemic, its causes and consequences, ways to fight the virus and possibly protect human lives, which was in line with viewers' interest in the general situation at the time.

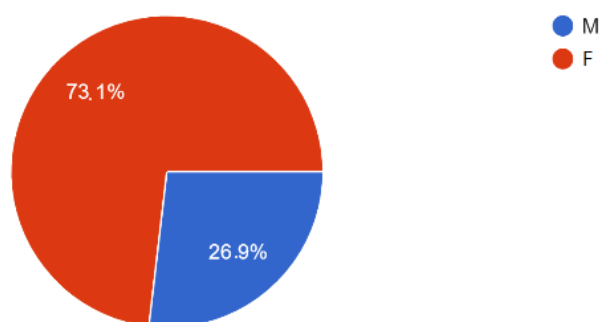
3 Research Methodology

The survey was conducted in the period from 11th to 18th April 2021 and a random sample of 108 subjects from all age groups was collected. The survey was shared via the social network Facebook, as well as via e-mail and mobile applications (Viber, WhatsApp, Messenger). The survey consists of 14 open-ended and closed-ended questions, and the content of the questions refers to the viewership of television programs in the Republic of Croatia during the first lockdown in 2020. The aim of questions was to gain knowledge about changes in viewing figures, the popularity of certain television programs, the reasons for watching television and the opinions of subjects about the quality of programs and the impact of television on their lives.

4 Research Results

The study included 108 subjects, of whom 79 were women (73.1%) and 29 men (26.9%). Furthermore, in terms of age groups, most subjects belong to the age group of 18 to 30 years (69.4%), followed by subjects aged 31 to 50 years (26.9%), followed by subjects aged under 18 years (2.8%), and the least number of subjects belong to the age group older than 51 years (0.9%). In addition to age, subjects also stated their employment status (occupation). Half of the subjects, 54 of them, belong to the group of employees, followed by students (37%), the unemployed (9.3%), and the smallest number are students (3.7%). Graph 1 shows the ratio of women and men, Graph 2 shows the age of the subjects, and Graph 3 shows the occupation of the subjects.

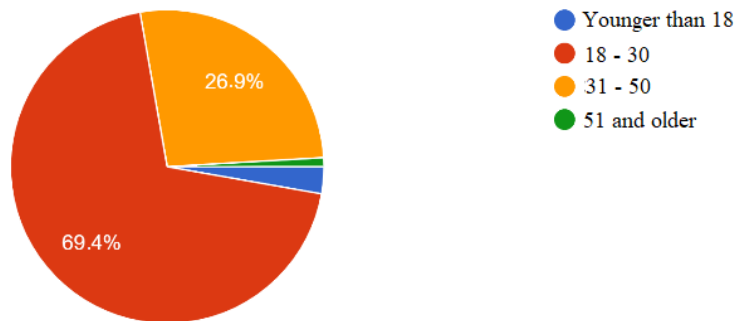
Gender
108 responses



Graph 1: Gender

Source: Own processing, 2021.

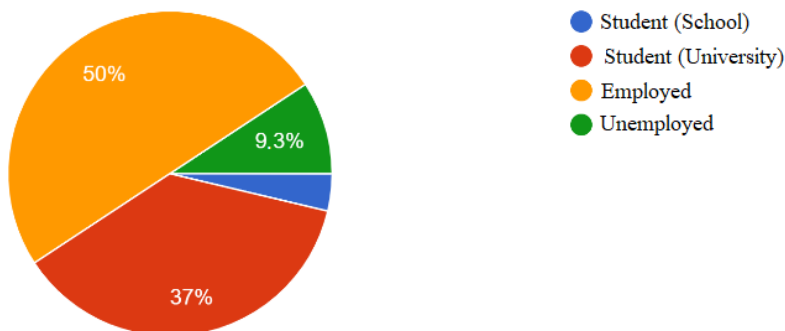
Age
108 responses



Graph 2: Age

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Occupation
108 responses

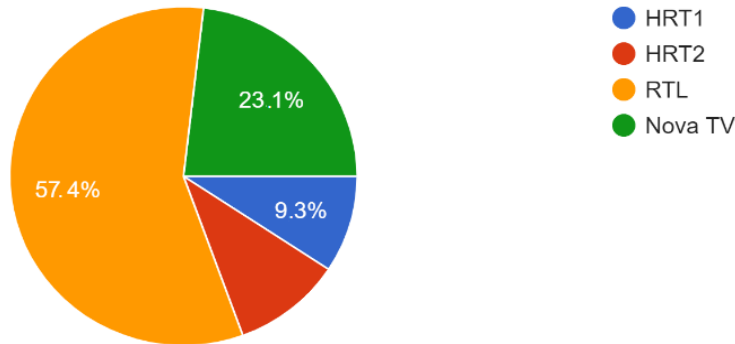


Graph 3: Occupation

Source: Own processing, 2021.

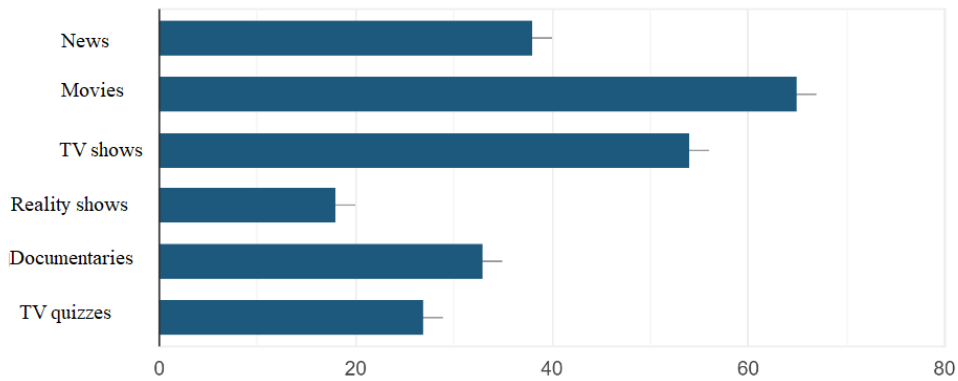
The next questions focused on the issue of television viewership. To the question “Did you spend more time watching television during the first lockdown?”, more than half of the subjects, 58 of them (53.7%), answered in the affirmative, and 50 subjects (46.3%) answered in the negative. This question confirmed the assumption that people in the Republic of Croatia watched more television on average in the mentioned period. The next question was “Which TV programs did you watch the most?”, and the offered answers were: HRT1, HRT2, RTL and Nova TV. RTL proved to be the most popular television program, and more than half of the subjects (57.4%) chose this program as their favorite. It is followed by Nova TV (23.1%), then HRT2 (10.2%), and in last place is HRT1 (9.3% of subjects). A visual presentation of the answers to this question is shown in Graph 4. The next question referred to the television content that the subjects prefer, and it reads “Which TV content interested you the most?”. Subjects were able to choose between news, movies, series, reality shows, documentaries and TV quizzes. It should also be mentioned that in this question the subjects were able to mark more than one answer. Subjects chose movies (60.2%) as the most popular content. In second place are the series (50%), and in third place are the news, which was chosen by 35.2% of subjects. Documentaries were chosen by 30.6% of subjects, quizzes by 25%, and in the last place are reality shows (16.7%). The visual representation is shown in Graph 5.

Which TV programs did you watch the most?
108 responses



Graph 4: Which TV programs did you watch the most?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

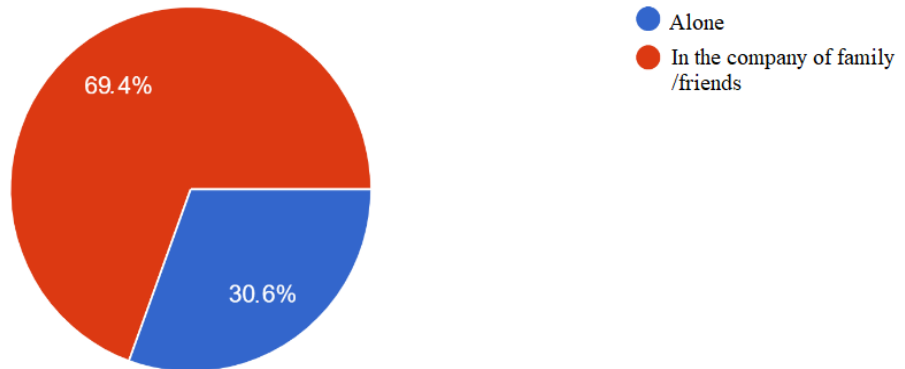
Which TV content interested you the most?
108 responses



Graph 5: Which TV programs did you watch the most?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

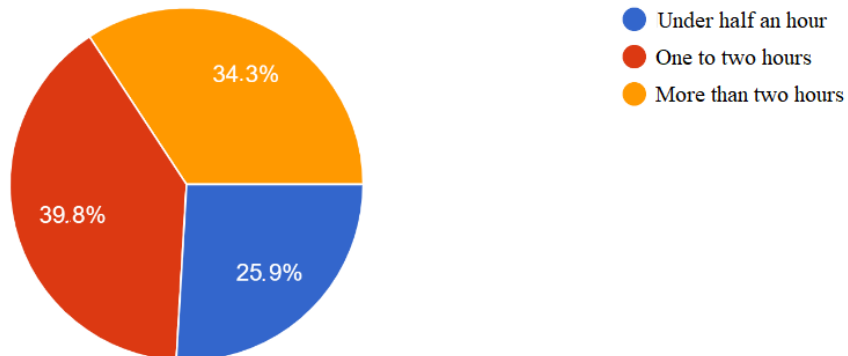
When asked “Did you watch television more often alone or in the company of family/friends?”, as many as 75 subjects (69.4%) stated that they watched television in company, and 33 of them (30.6%) watched television without company (Graph 6). The next question was about the amount of time spent in front of the TV. 28 subjects (25.9%) spent up to half an hour a day in front of the TV, 43 subjects (39.8%) spent an average of one to two hours, and 37 of them (34.3%) watched television for more than two hours a day (Graph 7). This question showed that Croatian citizens do not spend more than a few hours a day in front of the TV on average, although it was previously determined that they watched more television during this period, which means that they spent most of their time doing other activities.

Did you watch television more often alone or in the company of family / friends?
108 responses



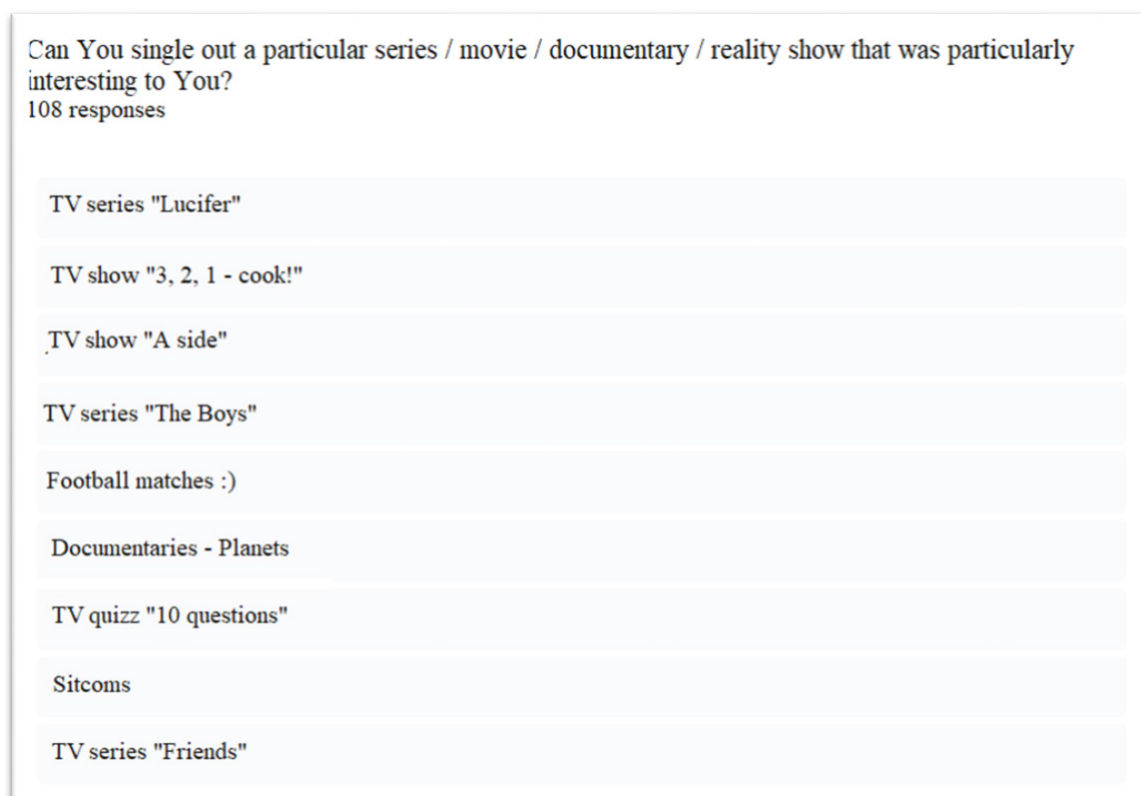
Graph 6: Did you watch television more often alone or in company of family/friends?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

What is the average amount of time you have spent in front of the television?
108 responses



Graph 7: What is the average amount of time you have spent in front of the television?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

The next question was open-ended, meaning that subjects were able to type an individual answer. The question was “Can you single out a particular series/movie/documentary/reality show that was particularly interesting to you?”. 13 subjects answered that they could not single out or that they did not remember, and among other answers, popular movies and series stand out. Moreover, 6 subjects highlighted the news as the most interesting. Some of the answers are shown in Picture 1.

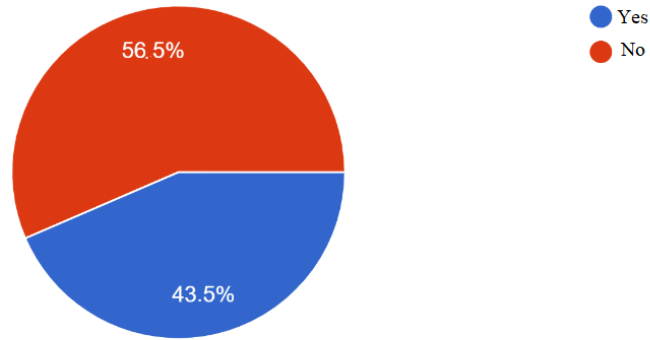


Picture 1: Can you single out a particular series/movie/documentary/reality show that was particularly interesting to you?

Source: Own processing, 2021.

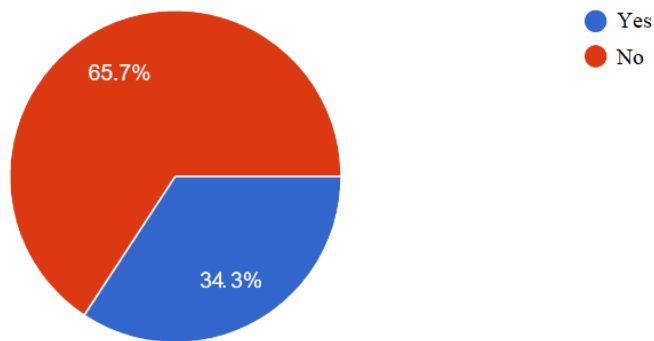
The next two questions related to the quality of television programs during the beforementioned period. To the question “Do you think that the television program changed during the pandemic?”, as many as 56.5% of subjects answered in the negative, and 43.5% of them answered in the affirmative (Graph 8). To the question “Do you think that the content of television programs during the pandemic was satisfactory?” (Graph 9), the majority of subjects (65.7%) answered that it was unsatisfactory, and only 34.3% answered otherwise. From these answers it can be concluded that the Croatian population is generally dissatisfied with the program offered on our television programs, which explains the fact why they generally do not spend more than two hours a day watching television. The next question dealt with the reasons why subjects watched television, and wanted to explore their daily habits. The question was “Why did you spend time in front of the television?” Here, subjects were able to choose multiple reasons. As the most popular reason, the subjects pointed out the answer “Due to excess free time”, which was chosen by 60.2% of subjects, followed by the reason “As a way to spend time with family” (37%), in third place is the reason “To relax after a stressful day” (26.9%), and the least popular reason is “Because of the interesting content” (19.4%). As established by the previous question, it is obvious here that the subjects are not satisfied with the television content, and television serves them only as a pastime activity (Graph 10).

Do you think that the television program changed during the pandemic?
108 responses



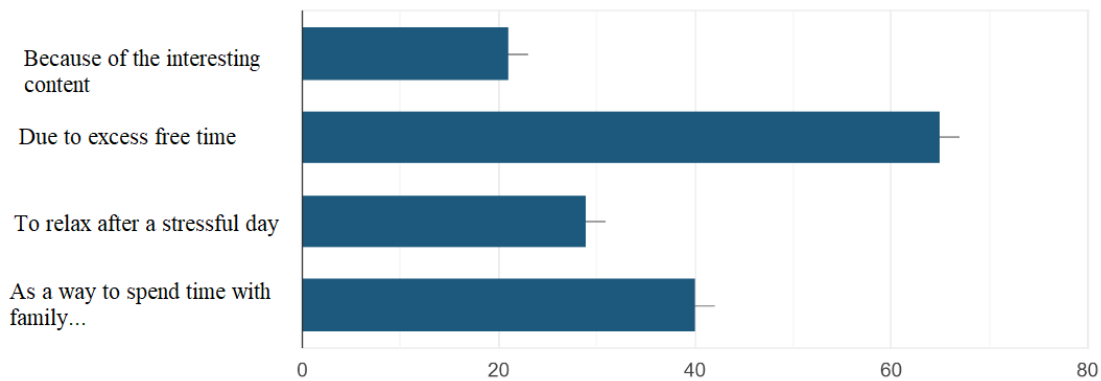
Graph 8: Do you think that the television program changed during the pandemic?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

Do you think that the content of television programs during the pandemic was satisfactory?
108 responses



Graph 9: Do you think that the content of television programs during the pandemic was satisfactory?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

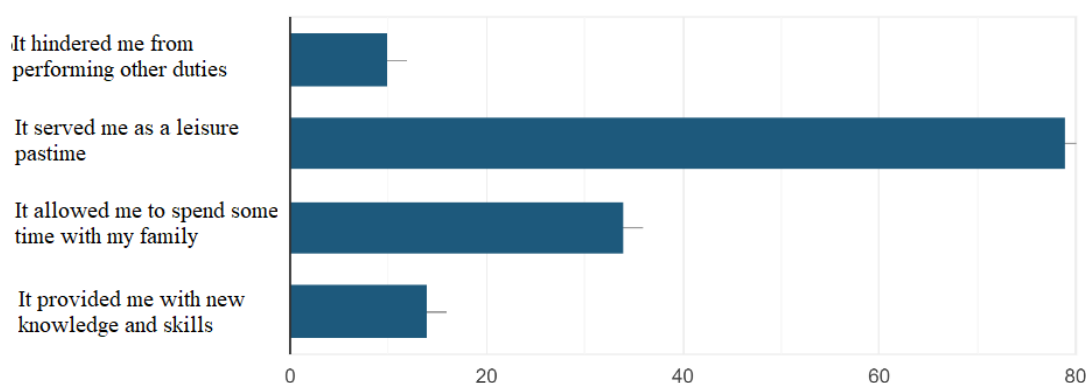
Why did you spend time in front of the television?
108 responses



Graph 10: Why did you spend time in front of the television?
Source: Own processing, 2021.

To the question “How would you describe the impact of the television program on your life?”, subjects were also able to choose more answers, and most subjects chose the answer “It served me as a leisure pastime” (73.1%). The answer “It allowed me to spend some time with my family” was chosen by 31.5% of subjects, and the least subjects chose the answers “It provided me with new knowledge and skills” (13%) and “It hindered me from performing other duties” (9.3%) (Graph 11).

How would you describe the impact of the television program on your life?
108 responses



Graph 10: How would you describe the impact of the television program on your life?

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The last question was open-ended, and with the question it was tried to obtain honest opinions of the subjects about the importance and impact of television on their lives during the examined period. This question was “Do you think the importance of television increased during the pandemic and why?” In total, 22 subjects answered that the significance did not change. Other 20 subjects pointed out that the importance of television has increased, but only in the sense that people spent more time at home during that period, so television served as a way to fill their free time. Next 26 subjects stressed the importance of informing through news and press conferences of the National Civil Service, which were extremely important during the examined period because they brought viewers the latest information on the situation in the country and in the world. Thus, it can be concluded that the subjects see the only positive shift in the role of television in timely informing the population. Some of the answers are shown in Picture 2.

Yes. Because more people spend time at home and turn on TV to learn information on the Coronavirus and other news.

Partially. Mostly because of the Civil Protection Headquarters conferences and reports on the pandemic and epidemiological situation in the State. Also, because of the educational project on HRT3. I will not go into the quality of that content. As for the entertaining part of television as such, it has not changed since the beginning of the pandemic and remains at a low level of content quality.

Yes, it affects the elderly and their mental state due to constant disturbing news.

I think television viewership has increased. Especially News due to earthquakes and pandemic. The standard channels continued airing the same series, movies, and reality shows, and I think people in general got fed up with television. Viewership has increased, but anyone who has access to Social Networks and the Internet in general can watch it all online. The importance of television in the first lockdown has increased, but not in the second.

Exclusively in the news program due to the pandemic. Not personally, but for those who otherwise watch television.

Yes, but only because of the News and the uncertainty due to the current situation. Television companies haven't actually done anything to come up with different or new content. They mostly play reruns.

Significance increased only in the way of transferring classes because children could not attend school, broadcasting Holy Masses that churchgoers could not attend, stopping trainings that people could follow when the gyms were not working. However, given that all this is available online, I don't think that significance is too big. It depends from household to household. I doubt it was of greater importance to people who normally don't watch TV. I believe that beforementioned things and the daily news on the Coronavirus, interviews with various scientists have bothered them more. If the viewer thinks critically, this information can serve for a better understanding, but otherwise it can lead to a negative impact such as fear.

I don't know because I don't actually watch television at all. I watched the News here and there during the pandemic, but I did it as well even before the pandemic. What changed in my habits during the pandemic was that I opened Netflix account and now I binge the series.

Yes. More people are at home and they don't want to think about the current pandemic.

Yes. More people are at home and they don't want to think about pandemic.

Yes. More free time.

I think so, because it informs us about the pandemic.

Yes, because people spend more time at home.

Yes, because the extra free time forced people to watch the TV.

News. Due to the expectation of new results and possible return to normal.

I think so! Especially at the beginning of the pandemic when everyone was waiting for the announcements from Headquarters.

Yes, because people had more time!

Picture 2: Selection of provided answers

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Based on the obtained answers, it can be concluded that the subjects spent on average more time watching television than in the time before the pandemic, but the reasons for the higher ratings are mainly related to the excess of free time. According to the received answers, it is evident that the majority of subjects are not satisfied with the content offered on Croatian television programs, and believe that the program has not changed significantly in that period. Also, it is very important to highlight the news as an aspect of informing on the everyday situation, which subjects cited as an important reason for watching television. By watching news programs, the subjects received timely and accurate information about the Covid-19 virus pandemic, as well as about the newest decisions of the National Civil Service of the Republic of Croatia, the number of newly infected and new scientific knowledge about the virus. Therefore, it can be concluded that the importance of television is most visible in this domain, and the usage of other contents was same as before.

Conclusion

The strong advancement of technology in the last thirty years has brought many benefits to humanity and has greatly eased daily functioning. In the context of this progress, it is necessary to emphasize the role of the Internet and the changes that have taken place in communication technology. The mass media of communication have used the Internet to their advantage, enabling people to be connected to the rest of the world at all times, breaking the time-space barrier that has so far been a crucial factor for the way of informing and communicating. Social networks have become a higher reality, a world that has become more important to many than reality itself. Truth becomes a subjective concept, different for each individual. The postmodern spirit is still widely recognized in the field of popular culture, which developed in parallel with the development of postmodern thought. A significant part of popular culture is also (popular) television. In this paper, we tried to show the relationship between technology and television as a communication medium that carries the pop-cultural characteristics of its time, but also a pandemic that greatly disrupted the development of media (television) communications, occupying the television space with information and news infection caused by the Covid-19 virus. After conducting the research, it can be concluded that the subjects spent on average more time watching television than in the time before the pandemic, but the reasons for the higher viewership is mainly related to the excess of free time. According to the answers received, it is evident that the majority of subjects are not satisfied with the content offered on Croatian TV programs, and believe that the TV program has not changed significantly in that period. Also, it is very important to point out the aspect of informing in the form of news, which the subjects cited as an important reason for watching television. By watching the news programs, the subjects received timely and accurate information about the Covid-19 virus pandemic, as well as about the current decisions of the National Civil Service of the Republic of Croatia, the number of newly infected and new scientific knowledge about the virus. Therefore, it can be concluded that the importance of television is most visible in this domain, and other contents were consumed as usual.

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PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE ERA OF SMARTPHONE JOURNALISM

Eva Jonisová

Abstract:

Every day, we carry in our pockets a device that is currently no longer designed just for telephoning or sending messages, but contains a variety of other functions. This has also helped modern journalism – smartphones are for journalists what a pen and paper once were. They can use it to take notes, as well as record respondents' statements, shoot pictures or stream live through a social network. News can thus get to the viewers or listeners almost immediately, by simple sharing. Current smartphones have integrated cameras, which are approaching the resolution of a professional single-lens reflex camera. What place do smartphones have in journalism? Doesn't the fact that they can technically never reach single-lens cameras due to absence of a chip disqualify them? And aren't the boundaries between a professional and amateur photographer becoming blurred? In the following article, we will try to find answers to these questions and demonstrate the findings on examples of foreign and local photojournalists.

Key words: Iphonography. Mobile Journalism. Mobile Photography. Smartphone Journalism. Smartphone Photojournalist.

Introduction: Mobile and Smartphone Journalism

Mobile, or smartphone, journalism is becoming more and more popular, not only among professional journalists but also among common people. We have gotten used to having in our pockets a device that allows us to work (record, edit, publish, photograph) immediately, and, on the other hand, from the percipient point of view, we realize that we can get to topical news information easily, cheaply, and quickly. The simplest way to explain this term is probably the following: *“It is a form of digital storytelling where the primary device used for creating and editing images, audio, and video is a smartphone.”*¹ According to television producer, journalist, and academician Ivo Burum, it is *“a holistic form of digital storytelling that combines journalism, videography, photography, writing, editing, and publishing, all done on a handheld smart device”*.² He states that the important part is the story which is vital in doing mobile journalism. Naturally, when photographing sports or wildlife, the important role is also played by technology – professional DSLR camera or long lenses –, but it must be added that technology is not the answer to everything, as a focus on story is what determines the level of technology.³ In literature, mobile journalists are also referred to as MOJO (short for Mobile Journalist). The simple definition would be: *“Mobile journalists are journalists who work alone in the field using mobile phones for newsgathering.”*⁴ Besides this, many of them also use other portable devices, such as laptops or DSLR cameras, but the smartphones remain essential for mobile journalism and are used more and more often by journalists for recording radio news and podcasts or for shooting videos for TV news and documentaries, as well as videos and photographs for social media platforms.⁵ We also must add that in the literature, studies, and specialist articles, the term “mobile journalism” is used more frequently than “smartphone

¹ *Understanding Mobile Journalism*. [online]. [2021-04-19]. Available at: <<https://www.mojo-manual.org/understanding-mobile-journalism/>>.

² BURUM, I.: *Mojo Workin' – Essential Mobile Journalism Tools*. [online]. [2021-04-21]. <<https://gijn.org/2017/04/11/mojo-workin-essential-mobile-journalism-tools/>>.

³ See: KARHUNEN, P.: *Closer to the Story? Accessibility and Mobile Journalism*. Oxford : University of Oxford, 2017. [online]. [2021-04-19]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-09/Karhunen%20C%20Accessibility%20and%20Mobile%20Journalism.pdf>>.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

journalism”, which is, naturally, related to the fact that the term smartphone has only started to be used with the advent of smart telephones. In our article, we regard both terms as synonyms.

Mobile phone could be defined as a portable device used for voice, text, image or data communication, which requires mobile network coverage for full-fledged functioning. Presently, the aforementioned smartphones are the most used devices. Current generation of these smartphones uses wireless 4G network, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, etc. for communication. Besides this, these phones are characterized by a large selection of various functions, such as Internet connection, web browsing, sending and receiving multimedia messages, photographing, recording video-sequences, and connecting with other devices. In January 2007, at the Macworld Conference & Expo in San Francisco, the first iPhone was launched onto the market by the former CEO and co-founder of Apple, Steve Jobs. iPhone is the only smartphone that uses iOS operating system that was also introduced in 2007 and started to be sold in Great Britain, Germany, and France the same year.⁶ According to T. Harcup, with the onset of new digital technologies, mobile phone has become as essential a tool for journalists as the pen or the notebook had been for earlier generations. That is why mobile phones currently significantly influence also the work of journalists and editors. These devices have become the best assistants for creating, editing, and communicating multimedia content. Besides basic edits, such as brightness, contrast or sharpness, they also provide complex editing options for audio-visual material.⁷

1 Democratization of (Journalistic) Photography

Roger Fenton and Marcus Sparling were among the first people who shot war photographs that have been preserved to this day. In 1855, they set off to Crimea. Photographing had become generally known only some ten years before and it was still significantly technologically limited. The couple of photographers had to embark on their journey with three horses, a photographic wagon, 36 cases of equipment, five cameras, and more than 700 glass plates.⁸ Since then, photography has gone through 160 years of development, during which a lot has happened. We only have to think about the small mobile phones that each of us have in our pocket and can use for photographing even under low light conditions. The development of photography at the end of 19th century influenced the positivistic approach to world exploration. The camera was considered a device that is able to depict the world in a scientifically exact way without distortions. Photographed object is perceived as real, because if it was photographed, it had to exist at some point. It evokes an opinion that the photographed thing must have had a physical form for the photographer to be able to come to the object and capture it with their camera. Therefore, psychologically, one feels that what they see on photographs is more real or true than something painted by someone’s hand.

Big change of perception of photography as an authentic image of the world came in the last third of the 20th century with the development of digital photography. Today’s photographs are notably different than the ‘old’ classic photographs made on the basis of chemical-physical processes. Although digital photographs are still generated through light that falls on photo

⁶ VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Paralely digitálneho novinárstva a jeho rozmach v kontexte rozvoja informačných a komunikačných technológií v spoločnosti. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky. Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2017, p. 240-241.

⁷ HARCUP, T.: *Dictionary of Journalism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 180.

⁸ QUINN, S., FILAK, V. F.: *Convergent Journalism: An Introduction*. Burlington : Focal Press, 2005, p. 100.

sensitive material, celluloid film is replaced by a chip. The falling light information is thus coded into numerical data. Cameras recording images on the digital principle appeared in the market at the beginning of the 1980s. Photography theoretician William John Mitchell reflects the consequences of photography digitization in his essay *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in Post-Photographic Era*. His work follows up on another visual theoretician Kevin Robins, who regards the times of digital photography as a completely new era of image recording. To emphasise this era, he uses the term “post-photography”.⁹

Digital cameras started to reach photojournalism a decade later. In the 1990s, this new technology began to spread in the image magazine offices. Photojournalism became one of the first photographic genres that was open to innovation. Speed and simplicity of processing digital photographs were a clear advantage. Compared to digital photography, the analogue process that required long hours spent in darkrooms was no longer efficient for the newsrooms that are always under pressure of deadlines. Celluloid film that had been used to record images up to then have been replaced by binary code. Postproduction no longer took place in the darkroom; it has been replaced by computer monitors. The possibilities of creating credible manipulations of photographs caused a great deal of discussion about photography ethics. The first published digitally modified photograph (Figure 1), when National Geographic shifted two pyramids closer together to fit the vertical format of the cover page, upset many people.¹⁰ Computer editing of photographs posed a question of the possibility of it being abused. Until then, photographs had been perceived as an objective view of the world, so the new digital editing caused heated debates.



Figure 1: Manipulated photograph on the cover of Time magazine

Source: Bronx Documentary Center. *Altered Images: 150 Years of Posed and Manipulated Documentary Photography*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<http://www.alteredimagesbdc.org/national-geographic/>>.

The question of ethics of photograph manipulation also arises in connection to the usage of mobile phones in photojournalism. Using applications for image editing and filters alters the original appearance of the photograph. Some photojournalists completely refuse the usage of filters and prefer as few alterations of photographs as possible. On the other hand, it could probably be stated that it has become generally accepted to make such modifications in digital journalistic photographs that are also possible in the analogue process with chemicals in darkrooms. Mitchell in his book summarizes alterations of photographs that are not acceptable in ethical journalism, highlighting the four main image manipulations that lead to “visual

⁹ LÁB, F., LÁBOVÁ, A.: *Obraz v digitálním věku*. In OSVALDOVÁ, B., TEJKALOVÁ, A. (eds.): *Žurnalistika v informační společnosti: Digitalizace a internetizace žurnalistiky*. Prague : Karolinum, 2009, p. 113-124.

¹⁰ Bronx Documentary Center. *Altered Images: 150 Years of Posed and Manipulated Documentary Photography*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<http://www.alteredimagesbdc.org/national-geographic/>>.

deception”. These elements comprise insertion, replacement, rearrangement, and removal of a part of an image. And these should be avoided at all times.¹¹

2 Practical Use of Smartphones in Journalism

The advent of mobile phones brought a dramatic change of the face of journalism. Nowadays, almost everybody owns a touchscreen smartphone that has a high-quality camera with a microphone, which allows us to record quality image and sound. Not only journalists, but also common people are able to shoot images and videos in high definition and offer them for broadcasting. The advantage of using smartphones has visibly manifested itself in connection to news from far and/or risk areas, where standard journalists might not get in time – and, mainly, where it is impossible to get with a camera and a whole film crew. For example, during the Arab Spring, it was the photographs and videos recorded by smartphones by the protesters themselves that became the basis of live coverage of several television channels. Following the overthrow of the president Morsi in 2013, Egyptian activist Shayma Awadh used iPad to stream live, surrounded by demonstrators, from a mosque in Cairo where common journalists could not get. Her iPad images were broadcast by television channels such as Al Jazeera, Al Hiwar, Haber Turk.¹² Al Jazeera especially is regarded as a pioneer of mobile journalism and even today, it focuses on news reporting dependant on smartphones. It offers wide range of courses for their reporters and correspondents, where they are taught the necessary skills and proficiency of using smartphones to cover news. In this connection, the Al Jazeera Media Institute also published a guidebook called *Mobile Journalism*.¹³ Giving away iPhones to their journalists, but also common citizens, blurs the distinction between professional and citizen journalism.

Some authors think that the iPhone device has become a cause of controversy among many professional photographers. On the one hand, it provides access to photographs to all people, on the other hand, it is then not difficult to distinguish a professional from an amateur. Renowned contemporary photographer Annie Leibovitz regards iPhone as “*the snapshot camera of today*”. When asked by the presenter of NBC Nightly News Brian Williams what kind of camera she would recommend to her friends, she replied that it would be iPhone, because it is really accessible and easy.¹⁴ Ultimately, we can also mention the famous quote: “*The best camera is the one you have with you.*” It is attributed to several authors, so there remains the question of who said it first. With the first images taken by iPhone came also a new term “iphonography”. It emerged in 2008, when the British photographer Glyn Evans started to make interesting pictures with his phone. The young photographer combined the name of his telephone iPhone and the word photography to create the term “iphonography”.¹⁵ Although, in past, mobiles phones served only as tools for calling, or sending short or multimedia messages, it is all different now. It is obvious that radio journalists were the first users of smartphones

¹¹ See: MITCHELL, J. W.: *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in Post-Photographic Era*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 1994.

¹² MOHAMMEDSALIH, S.: *Mobile Journalism*. [Master’s Thesis]. Uppsala : Faculty of Social Sciences of Uppsala University, 2017, p. 8. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1305490/FULLTEXT01.pdf>>.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ DILGER, D. E.: *Annie Leibovitz Recommends iPhone as “Snapshot Camera of Today”*. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <https://appleinsider.com/articles/11/11/16/annie_leibovitz_recommends_iphone_as_snapshot_camera_of_today.html>.

¹⁵ EVANS, G.: *A New Beginning*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://www.iphonography.com/>>.

even before the cameras in smartphones became so popular, as the microphones in the majority of smartphones have been sufficient to record sound for news or current affairs for over a decade.¹⁶ Although many of us choose their mobile phone mainly on the basis of the quality and number of megapixels of the camera, we would like to mention the fact that photographing is not the actual purpose of a smartphone. Smartphone is defined by its producers as a multifunctional device, and thus photographing or video recording are not its key roles, just some of its options. Many mobile journalists appreciate the ‘all-in-one’ function of smart phones; however, they often use computers and professional devices for editing, as it is faster than on the phone.¹⁷

Ellen Hume from MIT, Centre for Future Civic Media, speaks of a shift of journalism from 2D to 3D and 4D.¹⁸ With the arrival of DSLR cameras, journalistic photography has, according to the American photojournalist Dennis Dunleavy, gotten to an “age of the instant” photojournalism that is characterized by elements such as accessibility, availability, immediacy, and mobility.¹⁹ Thanks to the established software, web and mobile applications, sharing platforms or social networks, it has never been easier to become a ‘photojournalist’. Low price of mobile devices, together with the platforms for content sharing, have created a new space for communication and possibilities of producing, sharing, and spreading user-generated content. Digitalization and Web 2.0 have transformed the aesthetics of a photographic image into the aesthetics of snapshot photography and cell-phone imagery. The slogan of the model of amateur creativity, such as Flickr or Instagram, could now be: “*Here are the buttons, you do the rest.*”²⁰ Thanks to mobile devices, we can share photographs more frequently, more quickly, and instantly. According to Cameron, we are capturing our “stream of life”.²¹ Each day, we produce and spread an enormous number of photographs. We document the expected and unexpected events that we witness. Nonetheless, the image quality is still not as high as that of most professional digital cameras. However, Daisuke and Ito predicted in 2003 that “*if the camera phone image we take has an impact on the future, it will be not because of its quality, but because of its content*”.²² Nowadays, we can see that they were right. Camera phone photographs have found their success in many online news media. Popularity of social networks as news distributors is growing and many photojournalists are worried for their future. Instant imagery is also blamed for deprofessionalisation of photojournalism due to the reduction in the quality of image and professional experience. However, David admits that their low quality could be compensated for by their highly emotional content and relevance.²³ Amateur photographs can, however, be beneficial in places that the professionals cannot access, places ruled by technological dictatorship or places with interrupted regular communication.

¹⁶ *Understanding Mobile Journalism*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.mojomanual.org/understanding-mobile-journalism/>>.

¹⁷ See: KARHUNEN, P.: *Closer to the Story? Accessibility and Mobile Journalism*. Oxford : University of Oxford, 2017. [online]. [2021-04-19]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-09/Karhunen%2C%20Accessibility%20and%20Mobile%20Journalism.pdf>>.

¹⁸ *Ellen Hume on What We Get When Journalism Migrates to the Internet*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skNLetSzsRE>>.

¹⁹ See: BARDAN, A.: The Dual Model of the Digital Photojournalist: A Case Study on Romanian Photojournalism beyond the Economic Crisis. In *Journal of Media Research*, 2015, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 19-40.

²⁰ Remark of the author: Reference to the famous quote “*You Press the Button, We Do the Rest.*” This slogan was created by George Eastman, the founder of Kodak.

²¹ See: DAVID, G.: Camera Phone Images, Videos and Live Streaming: A Contemporary Visual Trend. In *Visual Studies*, 2010, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 89-98.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Ibidem*.

London bomb attacks in 2005 (Figure 2) are considered the first instance of citizen journalism. Thanks to Internet access, amateur photographs from underground reached the surface almost immediately.²⁴ Professionals were not able to access the underground at the time. The second example was the execution of Saddam Hussein, the deposed president of Iraq that was documented in secret by a mobile phone camera (Figure 3). Unauthorized video sequences were then leaked on the Internet.²⁵



Figure 2: Photograph from underground during bomb attacks in London, 2005

Source: ADDLEY, E.: *7/7: How Victims and Heroes Were Made with a Terrible Randomness*. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/27/7-7-bombings-victims>>.



Figure 3: Footage from Saddam Hussein's execution, 2006

Source: PARTLOW, J.: *Guard at Hanging Blamed for Covert Video of Hussein*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010300358.html>>.

Technical benefits of new media are invaluable for photojournalism in crisis situations. Mobile phone photographs are shot in unexpected situations as a substitute in case of an absence of a professional camera. Such photographs contain personal resonance, feelings, and emotions. They are often blurry, out of focus, underexposed, overexposed, with low colour balance or poor composition. However, they are gaining popularity all over the world. Another example is the airplane landing in the Hudson River in 2009. Janis Krums was just sitting on a ferry when he heard the captain say that a plane had landed in the river. He took only one photograph (Figure 4) with his iPhone and posted it on Twitter. It has gone viral immediately and this photograph made it to the cover of several magazines.²⁶

²⁴ ADDLEY, E.: *7/7: How Victims and Heroes Were Made with a Terrible Randomness*. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/27/7-7-bombings-victims>>.

²⁵ PARTLOW, J.: *Guard at Hanging Blamed for Covert Video of Hussein*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010300358.html>>.

²⁶ KRUMS, J.: *I Took the Iconic 'Miracle on the Hudson' Photo*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://mashable.com/2014/01/15/miracle-on-the-hudson-photo/?europe=true>>.



Figure 4: Mobile phone photo on the front covers of newspapers

Source: KRUMS, J.: *I Took the Iconic 'Miracle on the Hudson' Photo*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://mashable.com/2014/01/15/miracle-on-the-hudson-photo/?europa=true>>.

3 Smartphone Photography in Journalism

The most notable instances of using smartphones in journalism could be demonstrated on the aforementioned examples – mainly the amateur videos that have reached the online space very quickly thanks to phones. Audio recordings made by phones have also become natural. At the evening discussion that concluded this year's Megatrends and Media Conference, the host of news podcast Dobré ráno, Jana Mařková, stated that mobile phones are a great help during the pandemic situation. The quality of remote recording is often insufficient; therefore, both the host and the respondent on the other side of the screen record the interview on their phones. The respondent then sends their recording and the podcast team synchronizes both recordings.²⁷ But where does smartphone photography stand?

3.1 Smartphone Photography in Global Journalism

We can state that, abroad, using smartphones have become a common practice. The first well-known case is from 2012, when *Time Magazine's* photo editor Kary Pollack sent out photographers with iPhones to capture storm Sandy. This way, the photographers were able to upload the pictures immediately.²⁸ The photograph of a giant wave, captured by Benjamin Lowy with his iPhone, made it to the cover of the magazine (Figure 5).²⁹

²⁷ Megatrends and Media 2021 – Evening Discussion. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/FMK.UCM/videos/465167041400943>>.

²⁸ COLEMAN, S.: *Kathy Ryan, Kira Pollack, and Benjamin Lowy Discuss iPhone Photography Commissions*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.featureshoot.com/2013/11/kathy-ryan-kira-pollack-and-benjamin-lowy-discuss-iphone-photography-commissions/>>.

²⁹ STERN, J.: *iPhone Photo of Hurricane Sandy Makes the Cover of Time*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2012/11/iphone-photo-of-hurricane-sandy-makes-the-cover-of-time>.



Figure 5: Mobile photograph by Benjamin Lowy on the cover of Time magazine

Source: STERN, J.: *iPhone Photo of Hurricane Sandy Makes the Cover of Time*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2012/11/iphone-photo-of-hurricane-sandy-makes-the-cover-of-time>>.

Another interesting example is the multimedia project of *Time Magazine* called *Firsts*. It is a collection of 46 women who have been first in their field. Their portraits have been shot by Brazilian photographer Louisa Dörr using her iPhone and on the occasion of the promotion of this project, they printed 12 different covers of that issue of the magazine (Figure 6).³⁰ The interviews with the smartphone photos have also been published in a book.



Figure 6: 12 different covers shot by iPhone

Source: *Time Magazine Uses iPhone to Shoot 12 Covers*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<http://www.tinyformat.com/time-magazine-uses-iphone-to-shoot-12-covers/>>.

One of the famous ‘smartphone journalists’ is Michael Christopher Brown, a member of Magnum Photos agency. When he went to Libya to cover the civil war in 2011, he brought all of his photographic equipment, which, however, stopped working within a week. In his own words, he continued the documenting through his phone.³¹ It is no wonder. Camera phones have undergone a tremendous progress in the last 20 years (the first such mobile phone was

³⁰ *Time Magazine Uses iPhone to Shoot 12 Covers*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<http://www.tinyformat.com/time-magazine-uses-iphone-to-shoot-12-covers/>>.

³¹ *Capturing Life in Africa through the Lens of a Smartphone*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/partner-content-capturing-life-in-Africa-with-a-smartphone>>.

manufactured in South Korea in 2000³²) and today we can state that out of 1.2 trillion digital photos taken in 2017, 85 percent were captured by smartphones (Figure 7).³³

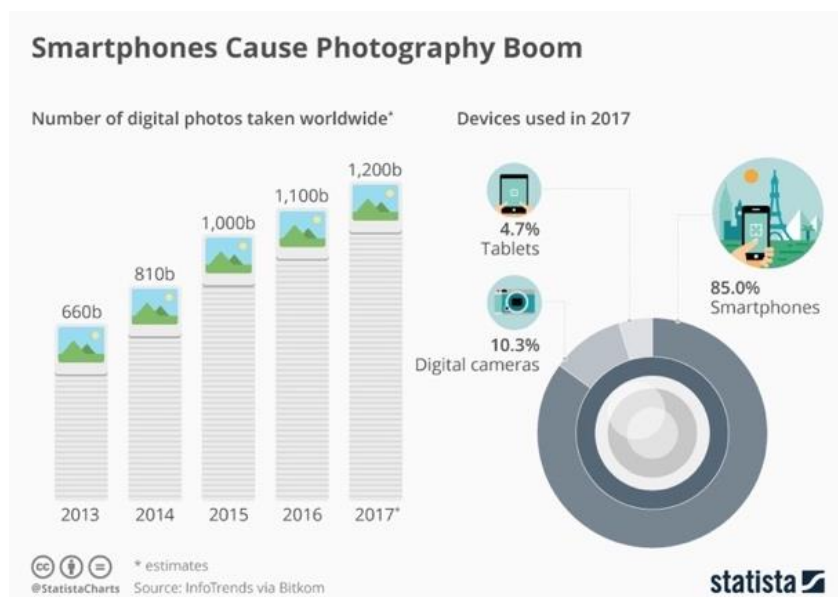


Figure 7: As many as 85 % of all digital photos in 2017 were taken by smartphones

Source: RICHTER, F.: *Smartphone Cause Photography Boom*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/chart/10913/number-of-photos-taken-worldwide/>>.

Humanitarian photojournalist Karl Grobl also uses a smartphone as his main work tool. He says that anything could be a suitable tool – from a full frame DSLR, to a Mirrorless, Polaroid or a smartphone. It depends on where you want to share the pictures. If you want to publish in magazines, quality is important, but a smartphone is really sufficient for online platforms or social networks. He also predicts that with the gradual improvement of camera phones, the ‘classic’ cameras (that professionals and enthusiasts will still enjoy to use) will get smaller and smaller until they reach the size of something that will fit in a pocket. He also claims that using smartphone camera allows him to practice lighting and composition, and keeps his ‘photographic eye’ sharp. Thanks to smartphones, he also shares his images more, because shooting with a DSLR requires downloading the photographs to the computer, editing them, outputting them in low resolution, and then uploading them to the Internet, so he often does not even get to it. Phone can do this in a few clicks.³⁴ On the one hand, the facts we mentioned in the paper introduction apply: thanks to smartphones, a journalist has a better access to some events and situations, is less conspicuous. Grobl, however, provides an interesting point of view. He mentions a time, when he photographed Sikh warriors in India in compelling and elaborate costumes. As he says, these people enjoyed showing off and posing for photographers. But they did not want to be photographed just by tourists; on the contrary, they would seek out photographers with the most professionally looking equipment and spend more time posing for them.³⁵

³² HILL, S.: *A Complete History of the Camera Phone*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/camera-phone-history/>>.

³³ RICHTER, F.: *Smartphone Cause Photography Boom*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/chart/10913/number-of-photos-taken-worldwide/>>.

³⁴ *Shooting with a Smartphone | Humanitarian Photojournalist Karl Grobl*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://wordsandimages.battleface.com/shooting-with-a-smartphone-humanitarian-photojournalist-karl-grobl/>>.

³⁵ Ibidem.

3.2 Smartphone Photography in Czech and Slovak Journalism

Jan Šibík, a renowned Czech photographer, was slightly sceptical at first. He points out that the quality of camera phones can never reach the DSLR cameras, because a chip and lens would not fit in them.³⁶ Nonetheless, he states that mobile photography is becoming a distinct genre, an independent branch of photography – he refers to the cover of *Time Magazine* that we mentioned in the previous chapter. Šibík says that, at first, he used a phone to photograph kitsch he would be ashamed to capture with the DSLR, but he has changed this approach. To differentiate his work, he uses the DSLR to photograph in colour and 2:3 format and a phone for black-and-white images in a square format. He also distinguishes it by photographing important things with the DSLR; he is worried that if he had iPhone instead of DSLR in his hand, he could miss the important objects. He photographs with the mobile phone mainly in his free time. He also pointed out a case, when he was supposed to cover a story for *Reflex* magazine about Kolbenka flea market, where, however, the security would not let him in with a camera. After a week, he went to the same place with only a mobile phone and it resulted in a four-page story in the magazine with a two-page photo. All the used photographs were shot on iPhone 4s and most people (including photographers) did not notice any difference. That is when he told himself that it is also possible with a mobile phone.³⁷ Another highly interesting case is Czech reporter Stanislav Krupař, winner of the Czech Press Photo 2017 in the Reportage category. Together with German journalist Wolfgang Bauer, they went undercover on a journey to Europe with the Syrians. Reportage about the refugees was made for German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, but was also published in Czech magazine *Reportér*. It was not at all expected for Krupař to bring brilliant pictures, because he was only able to photograph in secret.³⁸ His powerful shots (Figure 8) are often blurry, taken in bad lighting conditions, but that more impressive.



Figure 8: Stanislav Krupař: Over the Sea to Europe! – the winning series in reportage category, Czech Press Photo

Source: VÝBORNÁ, L. (presenter): *Host Lucie Výborné*. Broadcast on 24th April 2015. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/stanislav-krupar-se-vydal-s-uprechliky-z-afriky-do-evropy-takhle-mohlo-vypadat-v-6208839>>.

International jury of the prestigious competition Czech Press Photo similarly awarded a Slovak photographer for a mobile phone photo (Figure 9). Martin Bandžák became the winner of the Photo of the Year in 2017. The photo was taken in Lebanon, at a stadium where Hezbollah

³⁶ OBR, F.: *Budu pro ně spojenec nebo mi uříznou hlavu? Rozhovor s Janem Šibíkem*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://tipyjakfotit.cz/rozhovor-jan-sibik/>>.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ VÝBORNÁ, L. (presenter): *Host Lucie Výborné*. Broadcast on 24th April 2015. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/stanislav-krupar-se-vydal-s-uprechliky-z-afriky-do-evropy-takhle-mohlo-vypadat-v-6208839>>.

(political and militant organization) celebration was taking place. It was strictly forbidden to photograph there; his camera had been taken away right at the entrance. He was, however, able to photograph on his mobile and that is how the winning photo was taken.³⁹ Bandžák is a co-founder of humanitarian organization MAGNA which provides assistance to Syrian refugees in this region. He photographs only in the regions where MAGNA operates; in an interview for *Denník N* he said that he would not be able to photograph human suffering if he knew he could not help those people.⁴⁰



Figure 9: Martin Bandžák – Photo of the Year 2017 at Czech Press Photo

Source: BALLOVÁ, D.: *Bandžák: Učíme Slovákov, že svet sa nekončí za našimi hranicami*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/321272/bandzak-ucime-slovakov-ze-svet-sa-nekonci-za-nasimi-hranicami/?ref=in>>.

The category Mobile Phone Photography of the Slovak Press Photo was won by Czech documentary photographer Jana Hunterová. She also points out the advantage of a mobile phone which lies in it being small and discreet. According to her, this eliminates shyness felt by people who are being photographed. “*After a while, they forget you as a photographer and stop being aware of you, which allows you to move around in their environment naturally and capture their lives much better,*” she said in an interview.⁴¹ Tomáš Benedikovič and Jozef Jakubčo are among the most renowned contemporary photojournalists in Slovakia; they were among the finalists of the aforementioned competitions many times. In the discussion that constituted the evening programme of the Quo Vadis conference, they touched on the subject of smartphone usage. They both use professional DSLR cameras as their main work tool; however, they admit the advantage of smartphones that undoubtedly lies in the fact that a journalist always has it on them, which is useful in unexpected situations. They point out that everything is in the head, in the eye – photographers with many years of experience see the reality and shots even before they photograph them; they are trained for it. They know what is important for news coverage. At such times, it matters less whether the photojournalist carries great equipment or just a smartphone.⁴²

³⁹ *Martin Bandžák vyhrál Czech Press Photo 2017*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://www.czechphoto.org/detail-novinky/613-43/martin-bandzak-vyhral-czech-press-photo-2017/>>.

⁴⁰ BALLOVÁ, D.: *Bandžák: Učíme Slovákov, že svet sa nekončí za našimi hranicami*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/321272/bandzak-ucime-slovakov-ze-svet-sa-nekonci-za-nasimi-hranicami/?ref=in>>.

⁴¹ *Fotografka Jana Hunterová vyhrala prestížnu súťaž s fotkami z mobilu: Je to prirodzenejšie, zachytím omnoho lepšie zábery*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://hashtag.zoznam.sk/fotografka-jana-hunterova-vyhrala-prestiznu-sutaz-s-fotkami-z-mobilu-je-to-prirodzenejsie-zachytim-omnoho-lepsie-zabery/>>.

⁴² *Quo Vadis Mass Media and Marketing – Evening Discussion*. [online]. [2021-04-30]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/63588048783/videos/759417124935668>>.

Instead of Conclusion

Smartphones are currently used by many reporters. It is a tool that we always carry with us and is always ready to be used. The ability to send the material to our employer immediately is a distinct advantage. We are not talking only about audio recordings, but also about the overlap between the professional and citizen journalism. It is proven by the well-known case of Al Jazeera television that could be described as a pioneer of mobile journalism. It teaches its journalists and reporters different tips and tricks of working with a smartphone in field. In this connection, we must also mention citizen journalism that provides amateur shots of areas that are difficult to access for the journalists. Another reason for using a smartphone is that journalists do not draw as much attention as they would wearing professional cameras around their necks. We have shown on several cases that many catastrophes or war zone photos were able to reach around the globe only because a journalist promptly used their smartphone – despite the lower quality of the built-in camera. Within the context of global journalism, we could state that it has become common practice. For the online portals needs, the quality of mobile phone photographs is sufficient. Some agencies, such as Magnum, also employ pure ‘smartphone photographers’, which would have been unthinkable not so long ago. Although mobile phones have not trumped DSLR cameras in the environment of Slovak journalistic photography, we can presume that they will be given more attention in future. The newest smartphones already contain cameras with such high resolution that they can compete even with professional DSLR cameras with bigger chips and interchangeable lenses. However, photographers agree that the thing that determines a good photo is experience and the eye of the photographer themselves, not the technology used.

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AUDITIVE SPACE AS AN INFORMATION CHANNEL

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Abstract:

Popularity of the auditive media channel is again very high. It reached back its own attractivity level also thanks to new technologies (digitalisation) and relatively unlimited availability of the Internet. Development in technologies brought a new option - uploading media content on a publicly available online archive. Time management and efficiency as the motto of the modern world also caused the younger generation to be a great target for auditive media. Innovations in media redefined the auditive media channel and formed a new product - podcast. Nowadays we already distinguish the amateur and professional field of podcasting. Aim of the authors of the article is to point out selected advantages and limitations of this unique information channel in the context of the needs of today's media market, and describe the tools and practices influencing quality transmission of information through the media channel. The article also offers a functional categorisation of auditory means of expressions, which reflects the current auditive and audio-visual practice. Moreover, the authors define several so-called parasitic signal issues often present in amateur media products as well as they offer functional and simple solutions in this very topic.

Key words:

Information. Communication. Mass Media. 'Parasitic' Phenomena of Sound Production. Sound.

Introduction

The acquisition and transmission of information is a necessary condition for the survival of an individual in any society, as well as a condition for the preservation of that society and its development. The term *informare* has a Latin origin and we can explain it as the ability to create and present an idea, to give a form to a message, to represent, describe, communicate, transmit a message, to teach. Today, there exists a great number of definitions of the term "information", and this word is being used in many meanings, and in many scientific fields (for example, statistics, journalism, linguistics, computer science or cybernetics). We distinguish physical, biological and social information. Social information plays different roles in society – communicational, educational, managerial and cognitive science. Precursor to information is data. Data becomes information after its inclusion into the systemic context, i.e., when supplemented by further data, enabling its use in decision-making.¹ In interpersonal communication, information is the cornerstone of both monologue and dialogue between individuals, groups and communities over time. In the context of media communication, information is in the broader sense the essence of media as such, in the narrower sense the bearer of the essence of media product/content. As Tušer writes, "(...) *the essence [of journalism, remark added by the authors] is information, and its inclusion into the journalistic communication has its genesis*".² He also adds that "*information itself is the content of the process of human communication. It creates social information with the mission to circulate in society and participate in the management of social processes*".³ As Tušer suggests, the so-called social information is a kind of public product, flowing through society. The path of information from the communicator to the recipient in media communication takes place through a media channel whose task is to influence or ensure the relationship between them. We call such a process mediation.⁴ "*Mediation is considered to be one of the main functions*

¹ RUSKO, M., HALÁSZ, J.: *Základné pojmy z oblasti informatiky a informatizácie*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.sszp.eu/wp-content/uploads/Zakladne-pojmy-z-informatiky-a-informatizacie.pdf>>.

² TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2010, p. 16.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ JIRÁK, J.: *Úvod do studia médií*. Brno : Barrister & Principal, 2001, p. 123.

of the mass media.”⁵ However, in order for information to become media, it must go through a process of medialisation. We understand media coverage as the process of transforming a certain message into a specific media product.⁶ The form of the media product corresponds to the medium in which it is created, and to the media channel through which it spreads. At present, it can be the press, radio, television, film, the Internet. Technological devices, on the one hand, facilitate and speed up communication and transmission of information, and on the other hand, can impair their intelligibility. In the paper, we deal more specifically with the individual components of sound in the auditive space, the information channel and the factors that may affect their perception and intelligibility in a positive or negative sense of the word. In this work, we use methods of logical analysis and give examples from the professional environment, but also practice.

1 Auditive Information Channel

Media information is the essence of mass media communication. Hradiská characterises the process of mass media communication as follows: “*It is a social process of transmission of various types of information (the basic one being social information) through technical means (press, radio, television, Internet) from institutions represented by communicators to a large, dispersed audience*”⁷. Therefore, at the beginning of the process of mass media communication, is the media creator – they are the communicator of information and the creator of the media product in which the information is contained. The media creator sends their communication – composed of information – through the communication channel to the recipient. In the present, a media creator can use a large number of media channels, which can include both classic, and also new media. In the case of auditive media, the information is contained exclusively in audio form, in print it is in visual form, (text, photographs and infographics) and in audio-visual media, the information is contained on both levels - image (static and dynamic image) and audio (spoken text, music, other sounds). In the online environment we are talking about the so-called multimedia elements. Brečka emphasises that unlike newspapers or magazines, the Internet space offers not only texts, but also multimedia elements. Information can be conveyed visually, audibly and audio-visually simultaneously in one media content, so that the online selection can be referred to as the symbiosis of traditional media.⁸

Thus, we can say that the form of information, its scope and strength are determined by the communication channel through which it is presented to the recipient. In the world of audio-visual art, there also applies an interesting principle: Although it is technically possible to broadcast a film made and post-produced for cinemas within television broadcasting (terrestrial, via satellite or cable), in practice such a product is often adapted for the needs of television broadcasting. As a result, its means of expression come closer to the language of television. It follows that the communication channel is not only based on technically feasible principles, but that specific means of expression, which take into account common and proven creative principles, form information into a logical whole must be adapted to create the desired effect in the recipient’s mind. Monaco sees the difference between television and cinema mainly in the quality and size of display technology – according to him, the number of image information is lower in the case of television content. On this basis, according to him, television is largely

⁵ JIRÁK, J., KÖPPOVÁ, B.: *Média a spoločnosť*. Prague : Portál, 2007, p. 42.

⁶ SVOBODA, V.: *Public Relations*. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2009, p. 157.

⁷ HRADISKÁ, E.: Vplyv médií. In KOLLÁRIK, T. et al.: *Sociálna psychológia*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2008, p. 481.

⁸ HRADISKÁ, E., BREČKA, S., VYBÍRAL, Z.: *Psychológia médií*. Bratislava : Eurokódex, 2009, p. 237.

dependent on the sound component.⁹ In the context of information transfer, we can deduce from this that the quality distribution of information and its ratio in the auditory and visual component needs to be adapted when transforming film language into television language, as they differ from each other as communication channels. The communication channel is thus a platform that is able to transfer information to the recipient and is dependent on technological devices and the environment in which it is transmitted in the media environment. The auditory information channel is currently one of the major media channels. This is also due to the popularity of podcasts, which attracted the attention especially of the younger generation, after the boom of television broadcasting, one of the main characteristics of radio broadcasting, namely audience, in the older generation. Radio communication can be defined as “*an organised sound system for the transmission of information, opinions, and knowledge in the form of journalistic, artistic, and musical content from the communicator to the recipient, through radio technological processes*”.¹⁰ A very similar description would also be applicable to podcast communication, but the mentioned radio technological processes would replace podcast technological processes, especially in the field of Internet signal transmission. In auditory communication, the recipient receives information exclusively by hearing. Because the creator of auditory content can only use audio means of expression, the ‘language’ of such media is different from the ‘languages’ of other media products. In order to be able to communicate the issue on theoretical and practical level, it is important to categorise the sound in auditory, as well as audio-visual media products. Lehoczká and Chudinová state the following sound categorisation used in radio communication:

- a) human speech;
- b) music;
- c) sounds.¹¹

Although, as mentioned, the categorisation of individual means of expression into the given groups is essential, said categorisation can be confusing. We consider the category c) sounds to be problematic, as each of the mentioned categories is in its essence sound, and therefore such a term is ambiguous. The authors of the publication do not define individual categories in it. From the publication as a whole, however, it is possible to understand that the term “sounds” refers to all non-verbal and non-musical sound means. In addition to radio production, sound is used as a relevant information channel in film, television and other video production, so we will use help of terminology from this area. In film terminology, Bláha defines 3 basic categories of sound:

- a) spoken word;
- b) music;
- c) foleys.¹²

Bláha further defines foley as follows – it is a “*characteristic manifestation of objects in their action, movement*”.¹³ However, categorising sound in media products into the smallest possible number of sound categories is not easy. As with the previous two authors, and with Bláha, we consider the categorisation to be not entirely effective. The problem is that even Bláha did not create a separate category for the so-called atmospheres. On the contrary, he classified them not to be the sound category but the way of using sound. He argues that sound atmospheres are not a category of sound itself. He defines the sound atmosphere as follows: “*The sound atmosphere*

⁹ MONACO, J.: *Jak číst film*. Prague : Albatros Media, 2006, p. 472.

¹⁰ LEHOCZKÁ, V., CHUDINOVÁ, E.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007, p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹² BLÁHA, I.: *Zvuková dramaturgie audiovizuálneho diela*. Prague : FAMU, 2014, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

can be best characterised as a form of sound suitable for the function of the acoustic background.”¹⁴ He further complements his claim with functional arguments that the sound atmosphere can be primarily verbal (jabber at school), bustling (rustling leaves in the woods), as well as musical (music in the hallway coming from behind the door of the music classroom). Although, on a theoretical level, Bláha’s division is applicable and logically ‘bulletproof’, in practice it is much more effective when atmospheres are given their own category – in some respects equivalent to other categories. At the project level of the auditive work, the sound atmospheres will have their own tracks, into which they will be implemented by the sound master. They will always be recorded separately – be it spoken word, music, or (in most cases) foleys. We see another problem in Bláha’s definition of foleys. Bláha describes foleys as an acoustic manifestation of an object in its action or movement. The problem, however, is that in none of the mentioned categories does the author describe special sound effects that are used, e.g., when amplifying the expression of the mental state or the survival of the character, or other sounds that are not directly related to the physical nature of the sound arising from the movement of an object. Based on the above, and on our professional experience, we propose to categorise sound in media products into 5 categories:

- a) spoken word;
- b) music;
- c) foleys – characteristic sound made by object (car ignition, an incoming train slowing down, baby farting);
- d) effects – sounds expressing a subjective state – it is not possible to record them on set, therefore they are added in post-production (tinnitus after an explosion, bass tone emphasising a dramatic moment when the character makes a decision);
- e) atmosphere – continuously sounding sounds, the function of which is to characterise the space in which the event takes place (sound of traffic in the city, sounds of the forest, jabber of children at school).

Technical noise or other ‘parasitic’ phenomena may still appear in the sound recording, which get into the recording ‘unintentionally’, and do not represent conscious sound work during information processing. We will talk more about them later. The information that flows to the recipient from the creator of the auditive media product is thus in a verbal form, as well as in the form of music, noises, effects and atmospheres, characterising the real or unreal environment in which the media product takes place. The type and number of selected auditive components depends mainly on the genre, but also on the intention of the author. The professional creator is expected to be able to use individual auditory means of expression effectively so that the recipient achieves the desired informational and emotional effect.

2 Advantages and Limitations of the Auditive Channel

As we have already mentioned, perhaps the biggest advantage of an exclusively auditory media product is its listenability. That is why we think that auditory media will always be represented in our media world. Today, as in the past, research confirms that people listen to the radio during various activities (multitasking). According to Edison Research surveys from 2018, up to 54 % of American listeners listen to radio only in the car.¹⁵ According to wave-agency.com, 49% of podcast listening happens at home, 22% happens while driving, 11% at work, and 8% while

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 42.

¹⁵ ROSSIN, L.: *Over Half of Daily Listeners Listen Only In-Car*. [online]. [2021-04-09]. Available at: <<https://www.edisonresearch.com/over-half-of-in-car-radio-listeners-only-listen-in-car/>>.

exercising.¹⁶ The results of these surveys show that auditive media output can very often be a part of the listener's multitasking. Using a single communication channel can offer other benefits. According to Lehoczká and Chudinová, "*it often happens that radio is a companion during falling asleep, and waking up*".¹⁷ We think that stimulation of a single sense may be less disruptive during falling asleep than stimulation of multiple senses. Thus, an auditive information channel uses only one sense – hearing. The entire concentration focuses only on auditive stimuli in order to decode incoming information. Words, foleys, atmospheres, and even music help the recipient to visualise that which is received and understood. Visualisation takes place in the mind of the recipient, whose ability to imagine is a large part of the effectiveness of auditive communication, whether it is an understanding of the traffic news or an artistic experience. The power of the combination of all sound components can evoke a comparatively more intense or suggestive experience than other forms of media communication. This is also confirmed by Lehoczká and Chudinová, who emphasise that radio broadcasting can be "*a wonderful means of communication*"¹⁸ for a person endowed with imagination.

One of the advantages of an auditory information channel is that we do not see the communicator (a professional or in the role of a respondent). Moderators or hosts (but also guests) do not have to be photogenic; they do not distract listeners by their appearance, or styling – image. Their body language, e.g., excessive gesticulation, nervous tics or looking away from the camera, is also not distracting. On the other hand, it can also be a big disadvantage, because unlike in print or online space, we do not even see their static image – a photograph that can help us complete the image of the speaker. The non-verbal communication of the actors does not even help us 'explain' the situation/topic they are talking about. We create an idea only on the basis of colour of the voice, pace of speech and the way of speaking, as well as the content they present, or the choice of language means they use for it. Therefore, in auditive communication, great emphasis is placed on verbal expression. Actors must focus on:

- a) good articulation;
- b) adequate speech intonation;
- c) adequate tempo-rhythm;
- d) quality breathwork;
- e) work with voice intensity.

In addition, the communicator should also have an unobtrusive colour of the voice – the so-called microphone voice. Deeper voices that bind when evoke situations of peace are desirable. On the contrary, if we hear a higher-pitched voice, we very often decode the increased tension in it, which disturbs the perception of the content. These requirements should always be met by communicators. Every disturbing deviation in the paralinguistic manifestations of the communicator's speech distracts from the understanding of the content, disrupts concentration and emotional experience. An exception can only be when an actor, for example in a radio play, uses his vocal expression to stylise themselves into the character of a dragon, elf, drunkard, etc. In that case, the listener tolerates such sound defects. The advantage of the auditory channel is also that information is received through only one sense, and therefore it can better concentrate on auditory perception. At the same time, such presentation develops the imagination and creativity of the listeners. On the other hand – presentation and reception through only one sense can also be limiting. Thus, e.g., if we compare television reportage and radio reportage – they will be quite fundamentally different in the use of means of expression. In both cases, the aim

¹⁶ *What Makes Podcasts So Popular and What's in It for Brands?* [online]. [2021-04-09]. Available at: <<https://www.wave-agency.com/2021/03/17/podcasts-are-on-the-rise/>>.

¹⁷ LEHOCZKÁ, V., CHUDINOVÁ, E.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007, p. 88.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

is for the recipient to have enough information, to be able to form their own opinion on the issue after listening/viewing. TV host will use various images to set the atmosphere, demonstrate the issue, and at the same time, on the sound level, a set of information that the recipient needs will be given. The visual and audio plane must complement each other. The audio-visual contribution will therefore affect the two senses of the recipient. If the recipient in the auditory medium is dependent only on auditory perception, they will try to decode the characteristic properties of the object from any hint of sound in addition to the heard text. Thus, instead of an illustrative image that would contain information about the space where the story takes place, the radio host or podcaster will use, in addition to a verbal description, also a sound atmosphere, either recorded on site (such sound is called contact) or downloaded from sound banks (so-called archival sound), which can convey an authentic experience. In news and in some types of journalistic coverages, only authentic recordings are used, in journalist-artistic field, a combination of contact and archival sound is used, in artistic verbal work, the environment and atmosphere are created by 'artificial' sounds. Foleys play an important role in the auditory product in terms of significance. If a dog barks in the auditory channel, the recipient will estimate its size, breed, distance, environment, or the reason for barking based on the available information.¹⁹ Knowledge and experience are also very important. An eight-year-old child and a dog breeder will form a different idea. Or, if the editor announces that he will come to the guest's home, they can use a real environment of recorded foleys and atmospheres to create an information-rich collage that will bring a new aesthetic and informational dimension, as opposed to describing the environment in words. This can be done by adding the sound of squeaking gate hinges, distant barking of a dog, and the atmosphere containing birdsong in the post-production phase. It can also be aided with the foleys from the database of sounds, but the sounds used must be similar to the image he experienced as a host in the real environment. The recipient can synthesise these sounds into the overall information and imagine the environment in which the reportage takes place. It can also put the collected information into context and e. g. distinguish whether it is a spring or a winter village by identifying sounds. The more the genre transcends into artistic creation, the more the author can use sounds from the databank to create the idea. However, overuse of foleys can also unnecessarily distract from spoken word. This is the case if the report is not based on depicting the atmosphere of the environment or the situation, but the spoken word that carries the essence of the information is important. From this point of view, it is important for the creator to clarify the hierarchy of simultaneously sounding sounds, and to set the volume priorities accordingly. Each environment also has its so-called iconic sounds. Iconic sounds are sounds that are characteristic of a given environment, and the recipient learns them through experience. For example, one of the iconic sounds of the city is the sound of an ambulance. If the creator sets its volume too high – it is present in the so-called (volume) first plan, it may happen that the recipient will expect this sound to directly enter the content, and become the topic of the media content. A problem can occur even if the media content would require the aid of complex graphs or tables. In an audio-visual work or print/online format, where we perceive information even visually, infographics are a standard part of the means of expression. In contrast, radio or podcast media creators can only use verbal description of the issue, which can greatly complicate the understanding of the information without visual demonstration. Upon hearing, we are able to keep 4 – 5 facts which must not have a very extensive form in the short-term memory. For example, if the host wanted to present 5 numbers, each a few digits and with a four- or five-digit number after the decimal point, a problem would arise. Therefore, in order to understand and maintain informative value, the creator must strongly select and reduce this type of content, as it will require more concentration from the listener to receive this type of information.

¹⁹ BLÁHA, I.: *Zvuková dramaturgie audiovizuálního díla*. Prague : FAMU, 2014, p. 13.

Limiting oneself to the auditive channel without ability to use the visual component can be a problem for inexperienced communicators. Our survey of various podcasts shows that podcasters very often first record audio-visual output using visual aids. In doing so, they use a language characteristic of audio-visual production, and not a detailed descriptive language which would replace the pictorial side of communication, but a language which is a supplement to figurative expression. Subsequently, without any adaptation, they use the audio track of the recording, save it in audio format and publish it on the Internet as a podcast. For a listener unfamiliar with the pictorial part of the content, such a partial output can be confusing, as it is difficult to understand the information itself, the issues presented, and its context. The condition for understanding information presented through the auditive channel is that the communicator must actively transform the information into a new verbal form (descriptive way of expressing oneself), different from the language we use when there is also an image. In the analysis of radio broadcasting, we recorded only a very small number of cases where the information was not processed in a manner necessary for transmission through the auditory channel. We think that the reason may also be the fact that there is a historical experience of working with radio language, which radio workers pass on between generations of creators. On the other hand, the podcast is a relatively young format for amateur communicators, where such a collective experience has not yet been built. Although the historical experience of listening to radio broadcasts is there for almost everyone. A significant disadvantage of the auditive information channel can also be the absence of a quick information search. If information is heard in the auditive information channel during a live broadcast as part of a session that the radio does not archive, the recipient cannot search for it on the Internet later. If the recipient has access to the recording (i.e., if the information is heard in the podcast, or is archived by the radio after the premiere of the broadcast), they can search for specific information by ‘clicking’ on individual places on the recording timeline, trying to orient themselves in the content, and find the place where the information came from. When we compare the auditive information channel with the text one in this respect, we can state that this lengthy and inaccurate search can be considered as a significant deficit of the auditory information channel. For textual information (print, online text), the recipient can use the so-called fast reading (reading along the axis) so that they can quickly orient themselves in the text and find the necessary information. If they have digital access to the text, they can use the search function, when the necessary information is searched by a computer algorithm. We do not yet have a similar technology in the auditory media space. In addition to the disadvantage of fast information search, the disadvantage in terms of cognitive processing is also the remembering of information passed through the auditive channel. There are several studies that show that the acoustic information channel is at a disadvantage in many respects in human communication compared to other information channels. In some respects, the human brain is set to the detriment of hearing. Hradiská, Hudíková and Čertíková state that “(...) people remember – 10% of what is heard, 30% of what is seen, 50% of what is seen and heard and up to 90% of what is done, which can also be a form of thinking, i.e., mental activity”.²⁰ From the above-stated, it follows that in audio-visual work, the recipient can remember up to 5 times the amount of information compared to an auditory media product. The percentage of memorability of an auditory product is further reduced if the communicator does not comply with the basic standards of creation of an auditory product, such as redundancy (repetition of key information), content intelligibility (choice of language means) and articulation, adequacy of speech pace, unobtrusive colour of the voice, as well as the use and setting of other sound elements (music, foleys, effects, atmosphere). In this context, Lehoczka and Chudinová state that the optimal cadence of syllables of a radio broadcasting performer is

²⁰ HRADISKÁ, E., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., ČERTÍKOVÁ, H.: *Praktikum sociálnej komunikácie*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2013, p. 306.

5 syllables per second (with ten syllables per second, intelligibility is reduced by up to half).²¹ Another influencing factor is also that people prefer different types of channels for content perception and learning. Usually, two types of channels are dominant in an individual. Boothman emphasises that up to 55% of people prefer perception by sight (visual types), 30% by touch and physical perception (kinaesthetic types) and only 15% of the population prefer to perceive information by hearing, i.e., using the auditive space as an information channel (auditory types).²² It follows from the above that quality transmission and perception of information through the auditive channel has several limitations, both in terms of media product processing, transmission, and perception. In order to achieve the desired effect, it requires specific forms of processing respecting the professional standards of creating an auditory media product.

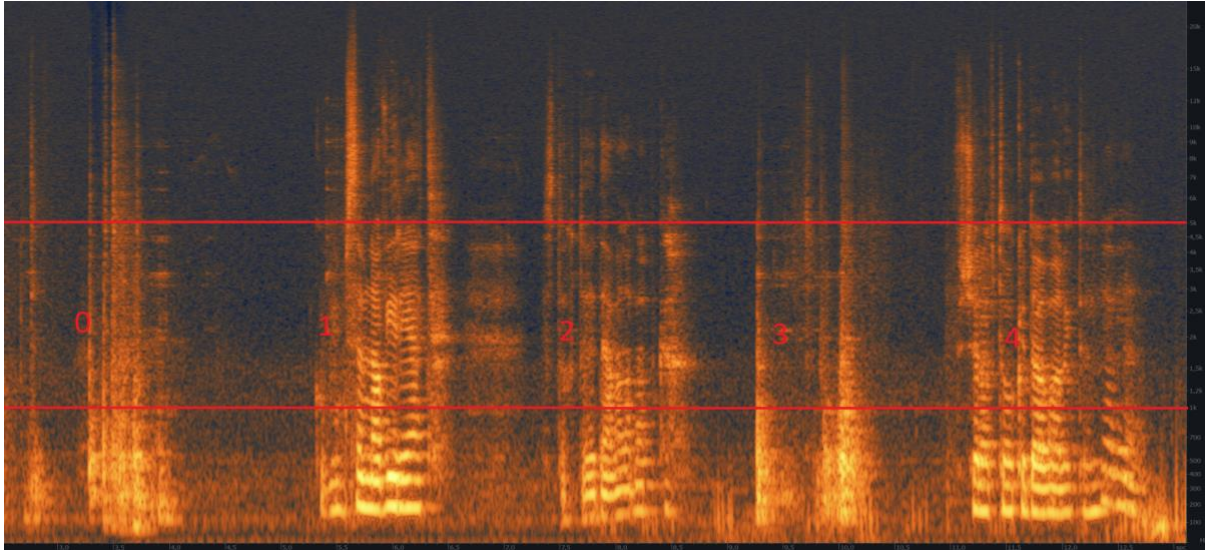
3 'Parasitic' Acoustic Signals in Auditory Channel and Their Correction

Quality of coding, decoding and transfer of information are determined by the quality of technical aspects of audio recording. Each and every sound, which is not the author's intention, is disturbing auditory perception. Every such sound is a technical problem distracting the recipient. At the very moment the problem becomes information itself. So, in conclusion: not only is the recipient given the (intended) information A, they also get information B presented by rustling of clothes, continuous or noncontinuous noise, crackling, clicks... All of these problems are forcing the brain to analyse and decode both useful information as well as 'parasitic' signal. Since the perception of the information A is disturbed by perception of the information B (in periodical or non-periodical intervals), the brain is focusing primarily on identifying disturbing elements, which are subconsciously (instinctively) perceived as a danger. Since the information perception is 'corrupted', the recipient has got to reconstruct perceived information and also handle unpleasant emotions caused by perception of the same useful and distracting information. In the media environment, the nature of technical problems can have different causes and discourse (noise, lack of comprehensibility, distortion, etc.). One of the most common technical problems is when the noise is present (in the recording). Technical noise is an acoustical signal often operating on the 20hz to 20kHz interval (sometimes it operates on a narrower band). So, in the whole hearable spectrum. Technical noise is considered to be one of the 'parasitic' signals. When contained in recording, technical noise is played and/or heard at the expense of useful signal (for example the dialogue).

The noise is the result of an incorrect set of signal input adjusted on the recording device. In case of incorrectly adjusted signal input, it tends to record very quiet material. Raising the volume of recorded material in postproduction to the required level of volume, artist not only raise the volume of material recorded on purpose, but he raises the volume of naturally included noise as well. So, the final material will obtain intensive noise that disrupts the whole quality of the recording material. The intensity of noise can be so high, that it can reduce the comprehensibility of dialogue or other sounds in the recording. It happens mostly when the intensity of noise occurs in the field of the so-called presence band (1 – 5 kHz), that is the range the human brain uses mostly to understand the content of words. No matter what contains the recording, any noise included in recording not added specifically on purpose is an unwanted variable. Nowadays, there are plenty of relatively sophisticated methods on how to eliminate the noise. They are also available for amateur media creators. Usually, for these purposes, creators use a software – so-called denoiser.

²¹ LEHOCZKÁ, V., CHUDINOVÁ, E.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007, p. 17.

²² BOOTHMAN, M.: *Trénink obchodní komunikace*. Prague : Portál, 2004, p. 76-79.

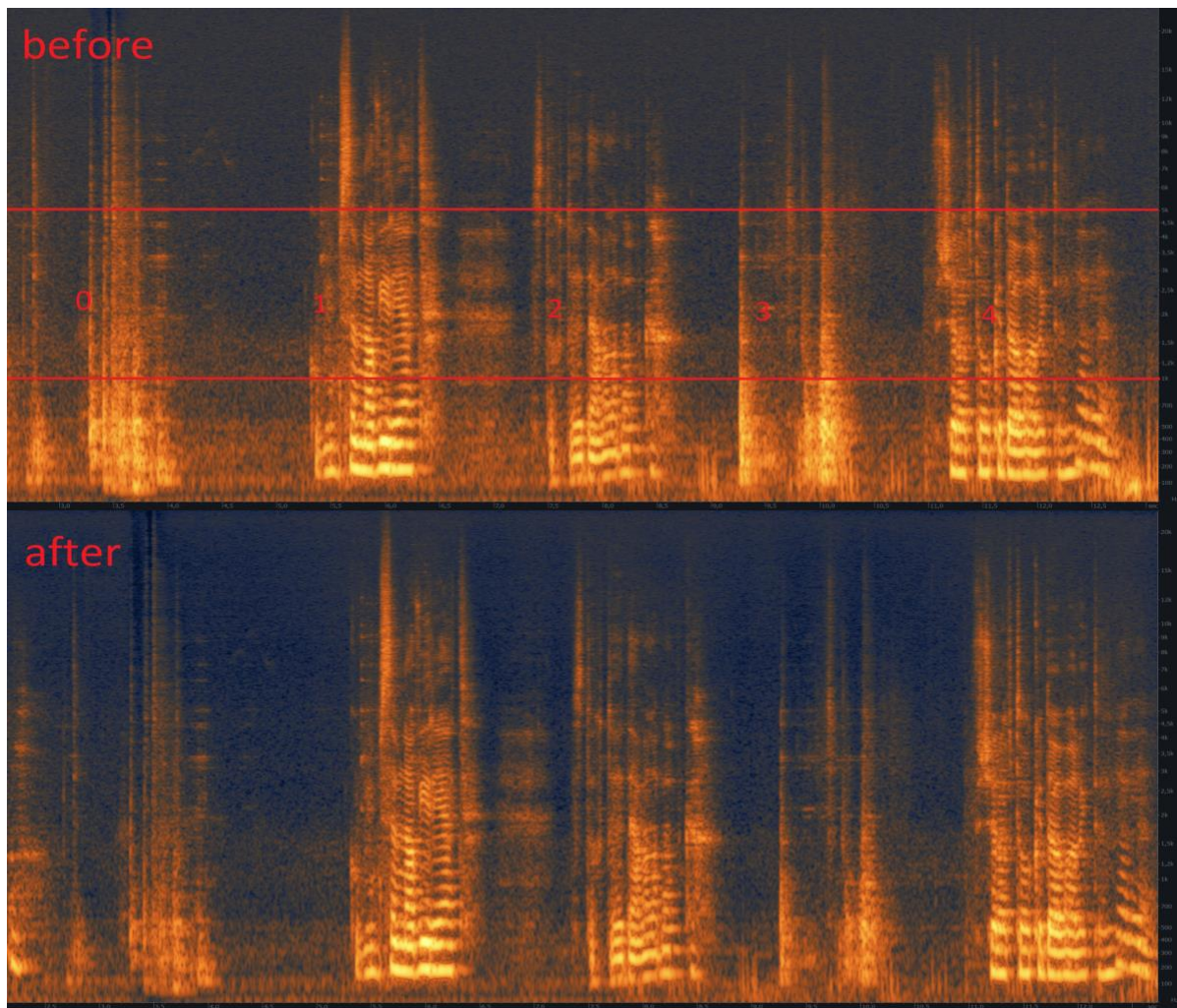


Picture 1: Recorded material displayed in denoiser

Source: Own processing.

Picture 1 represents the image of a recording displayed by denoiser (produced by the Isope corporation) RX8. It is a professional tool used by sound master engineers all over the world. The recording contains one foley (no. 0), four sentences (no. 1, 2, 3, 4) and various ‘parasitic’ sound signals. Axis X shows the duration of the recording, axis Y represents hearable frequency rate. The displayed red rectangle highlighted on the picture represents the presence band. The foley, as well as the four sentences, can be described as a useful signal. Lighter the colour of the graph is, the higher volume is in the exact frequency. Darker the colour of the graph is, the nearer is the displayed signal to the absolute silence on the exact frequency at the exact time.

As we can see, foley and each of the sentences are louder than other signals, while in between them, there are intervals, which also contain the pale orange colour, mostly in case of lower frequencies (in lower section of the picture). In higher intensities (in upper section of the picture) we can see the zones in between the lines (sentences) that are rather grey-blue coloured. These intervals, located between useful signal areas (sentences) happen to be interesting indicators. These zones represent the so-called background of the recording, which (in this case) consists of the wider amount of technical noise and to a lesser extend of the various sounds such as the sound of refrigerator, muffled sound of traffic behind the closed window, as well as other sounds that represent the environment of average flat, in which the recording was taken. The sound background of the displayed recording (technical noise in particular) has high intensity volume. Even if the noise does not have the direct impact on the lower comprehensibility of dialogue (in this case), it reduces the aesthetic of the recording and disrupts the continuity of the perception.



Picture 2: Recorded material displayed in denoiser before and after noise reduction

Source: Own processing.

Picture 2 reflects the process of effective elimination of the noise from recording. Thus, we might observe that the colour mainly between useful signal areas changed from brighter to darker bluish shade. It indicates that noise was partially eliminated. Thanks to the effective denoise process, the noise will not be able to distract perception of useful signal anymore or any other form of decreasing the quality of recording. Interesting is, there are other denoisers, even natively inbuilt in editing programs like Adobe Premiere Pro or Da Vinci Resolve, able to relatively effective noise reduction. Correct parameters setting of denoiser during postproduction of recorded material decreases the volume of noise in recording. The artist has to decide how much does he affect the recording. In the case, the artist operates with denoiser with too much intensity, they decrease the quality of recording. It also means that too noisy background of recording will not allow the artist to denoise the whole noise, because the denoiser would not only eliminate the noise, but also decrease the quality of useful signal. Thus, in some cases, the artist is forced to leave some noise in the recording and has got to decide the rate between how much noise is eliminated and how much does he affect the quality of recording. The unscrupulous way of denoise creates feeling, the recording sounds ‘from behind the glass’.

Similar postproduction methods can be applied on the recording to eliminate other ‘parasitic’ signals like crackles, hums, clicks and others. These can be eliminated by software instruments as well. Clicks are very short (few msec intervals) high intensity signals. Clicks could be

described as unpleasant snapping in recording – typical example is vinyl recording. Depending on their origin it is possible to use either De-click or Mouth De-click (clicks caused by technical problems or clicks caused by saliva in the mouth of a recorded respondent) to remove them. In the past, clicks were edited manually one by one, today, artists are able to eliminate them in the whole clip area using specified instruments. Hum is a constant signal resonating on a particular frequency caused by “*lack of proper electrical ground*”.²³ Hums are constant sound similar to typical ‘monk hum sound’ but its electronical origin defines it to be much more annoying. Artist has to either manually find the frequencies of hums and eliminate them with equaliser, or use the DeHum, which simplify the whole process. All of mentioned instruments are developed by iZotope, but similar instruments are produced by many other companies like Waves, Cedar and others.

Conclusion

The auditive information channel is a complex phenomenon, as well as an object of scientific research in mass media communication. As the auditive information channel is a means of communicating the content of several media – radio, television or the Internet, it is used by a wide range of creators – journalists, podcasters, vloggers, sound engineers, editors and others. That is why it is important that all these creators, as well as theorists, have clear and functional theoretical background and knowledge based on practice, which will help them grasp the issues, and understand the communication about content presented through the auditive information channel, to know its possibilities and limitations, as well as tools, in order to eliminate these restrictions. Being able to use sound properly and make the most of its communication potential is a condition for quality communication of the content of any media using sound. Today, the possibilities of high-quality sound processing for professional recording are increasingly accessible also to amateurs. There is a large number of tools and programs for creating and editing sound. This brings more and more possibilities in the field of recording even in natural, ‘non-ideal’ conditions, and the possibility of additional adjustment in the post-production phase. Today, it is no longer such a problem to record sound in ‘inhospitable’ locations, such as the highway, in the relative vicinity of an aircraft with the engine running, and the likes, because several kinds of unwanted signals can be removed from the recording with the help of various tools. Great demand is placed on the editor or the sound engineer, as they are often expected to be able to correct even a very poor primary sound recording, and achieve the best possible sound recording. In order for both the media professional and the podcaster-amateur to use the auditive media space as effectively as possible, they must monitor the following factors affecting the information quality of the resulting auditory media product:

1. The construction of media content and the selection of stylistic means must comply with the principles of perception solely through the auditive channel.
2. High quality of speech is expected from the presenters.
3. The host or the realisation team should ensure the highest quality of the auditory recording, even under natural conditions.
4. The host or a member of the realisation team should be familiar with, and be proficient with the available audio software used to complete the sound and eliminate technical deficiencies.

It follows from media practice that only a quality work in terms of content and technology can attract listeners and ensure the effective transmission of all information in a way that fulfils the author's intention. Although the listener today is tolerant of the shortcomings in the recording,

²³ *Removing Audio Hum with iZotope RX*. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://www.izotope.com/en/learn/removing-audio-hum-with-izotope-rx.html>>.

these still reduce the information impact. As follows from our paper – while adhering to the stated principles and building the stated skills, both professionals and podcaster-amateurs can create a media product that will make full use of the communication potential of the auditive information channel.

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OPPORTUNITIES OF PODCASTING DURING PANDEMIC IN SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Jana Kozmonová

Abstract:

In recent years, Podcasting has been considered the rising star of online journalism formats. What were the consequences of the first year of the coronavirus pandemic on the production and listening of Podcasts? At first glance, it might seem that the Pandemic that has locked people in homes and behind computers will give rise to a new type of broadcasting. But is it really so? The first numbers of listening caused a little nervousness, experts noted a change in user behaviour. However, the entertaining podcasts maintained good listening numbers even at the beginning of the pandemic crisis, after the year of the pandemic they also recorded a significant, direct jump in listening compared to the period before the pandemic. Podcasting is expected to undergo major changes in 2021, as global streaming companies have announced several changes, including charging for this service, but also better collaboration with social networks, including improving the visuals of sharing podcasts on social networks.

Key words:

Broadcasting. Pandemic. Podcasting. Radio Entertainment. Social Media.

Introduction

Since 2018, the ever-increasing numbers of listening to podcasts from streaming companies around the world have anticipated this new form of audio journalism without further threatened growth, and of course the associated increase in advertising and profits. Therefore, podcasting in 2019 was considered not only in the world but also in Slovakia as a rising star of new formats of online journalism. The coronavirus pandemic and related security measures have affected people's daily habits and changed people's daily behaviour, not to mention the way and frequency of receiving information. What were the consequences of the first year of the coronavirus pandemic on the production and listening of podcasts? The first numbers of listening to information (news) podcasts of the Slovak media in the first months of the pandemic, from March to May 2020, caused a slight nervousness, as experts noted a change in user behaviour, and this caused a slight decline in listening. Already the second half of 2020 marked a return to listening numbers before the pandemic, and the first months of 2021 recorded the highest numbers of downloadable information podcasts in virtually all relevant Slovak media. Not only the most listened (most downloaded) news podcasts, but practically all podcasts offered by the monitored Slovak media, recorded a high increase in listening compared to the period before the pandemic. Even the number of podcasts offered by the Slovak media increased significantly, for example, the offer of SME daily podcasts was more than 50% higher in April 2021 than in March 2020 – while in March 2020 the SME daily offered 10 podcasts, in March 2021 there were 23 podcasts.

1 Changes in Listening to News Podcasts in the Coronavirus Pandemic in Slovakia

The start of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 marked the beginning of measures against the spread of the virus, which significantly changed the behaviour of users – consumers of information, and experts around the world began to immediately discuss the implications of a pandemic for podcasts. The first listening numbers for March, April and May 2020 caused a slight nervousness in the market, as the change in user behaviour caused a

drop in listening in units of up to tens of percent.¹ According to a survey by the SME daily in 2019, podcasts were listened to by people during transfers to work or by public transport,² as a result of anti-pandemic measures and the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, these habits changed temporarily, and this was reflected in listening. Podcasts around the world have also seen this change.³ For example, the Spotify streaming service reported that people's morning habits had changed, starting to look like a weekend every day.⁴ This trend was more pronounced in podcasts than in music, according to Spotify, probably because car use and commuting have changed dramatically.⁵ The Slovak media also saw a decline at the beginning of the pandemic.⁶ Although Denník N in March 2020 recorded a record in the number of podcast downloads, which explained the emergence of a new daily show (podcast) *Koronapodcast*, which had an average of 10,000 downloads per episode, since May, the daily show has changed to a weekly. However, already in April 2020, the numbers of downloads fell, while the listenership of the daily *Newsfilter* program also fell, from 19,000 downloads in February to more than 14,000.⁷

Listening to SME daily podcasts for April 2020 and May 2020 declined, including the most listened to the daily *Dobré ráno* podcast, while in March 2020 the show, as well as all podcasts in total, recorded the highest number of downloads in a month-long month.⁸ *Dobré ráno* show averaged 28,000 downloads per episode in February and dropped to 24,000 in April.⁹ After a year, however, it reached the level of 36,000 downloads per episode,¹⁰ which is an increase of almost 30%. Almost all programs of the SME daily recorded an increase in listening in March 2021 compared to March 2020. The fact that this is not a one-off issue, but a long-term trend, is evidenced by the fact that since July 2020, the listening to SME podcasts has not fallen below 1.4 million downloads per month.¹¹ During the coronavirus pandemic since March 2020, SMEs also started releasing several new podcast projects. Within a week of the introduction of the first nationwide lockdown on 12th March 2020, they started a new daily podcast *Rozprávky SME*.¹² These were classic Slovak fairy tales by Pavol Dobšinský and fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, and later new Slovak author's fairy tales were

¹ CRIDLAND, J.: *How the Coronavirus Is Affecting the Podcast Downloads*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podnews.net/article/coronavirus-covid19-affecting-podcasting>>.

² TVRDOŇ, D.: *Kto počúva podcasty na Slovensku? Pozrite si výsledky veľkého prieskumu poslucháčov*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22110022/vysledky-prieskumu-posluchacov-podcastov-dennika-sme.html>>.

³ *Podcasts Downloads Drop during Coronavirus Outbreak*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.axios.com/podcasts-coronavirus-173c52fd-1ca0-43e4-a359-70bd5d1ff2f6.html>>.

⁴ *Spotify Technology S.A. Announces Financial Results for First Quarter 2020*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://investors.spotify.com/financials/press-release-details/2020/Spotify-Technology-SA-Announces-Financial-Results-for-First-Quarter-2020/default.aspx>>.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Dobré ráno si vypočulo v priemere viac ako 36-tisíc ľudí*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22641788/dobre-rano-si-vypoculo-v-priemere-viac-ako-36-tisic-ludi.html>>.

⁹ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

¹⁰ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Dobré ráno si vypočulo v priemere viac ako 36-tisíc ľudí*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22641788/dobre-rano-si-vypoculo-v-priemere-viac-ako-36-tisic-ludi.html>>.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² *Rozprávky SME*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/t/8317/rozpravky-sme>>.

added to them.¹³ The fairy tales are read by Robert Roth, a member of the Slovak National Theatre. One week after their launch, the fairy tales have reached a high audience (more than 22,000 per episode),¹⁴ so far (May 2021), the average audience of one fairy tale is 18,000.¹⁵ It was one of the most successful new podcast projects of the SME daily. In addition to fairy tales, he recorded more than 10,000 listeners for episodes from the new projects podcast *Vedátorský podcast* (created in July 2020) and *Piatoček* (created in May 2020). The new projects *Mimóza*, *Klímapodcast* and *Pravidelná dávka* have seen lower audiences.¹⁶

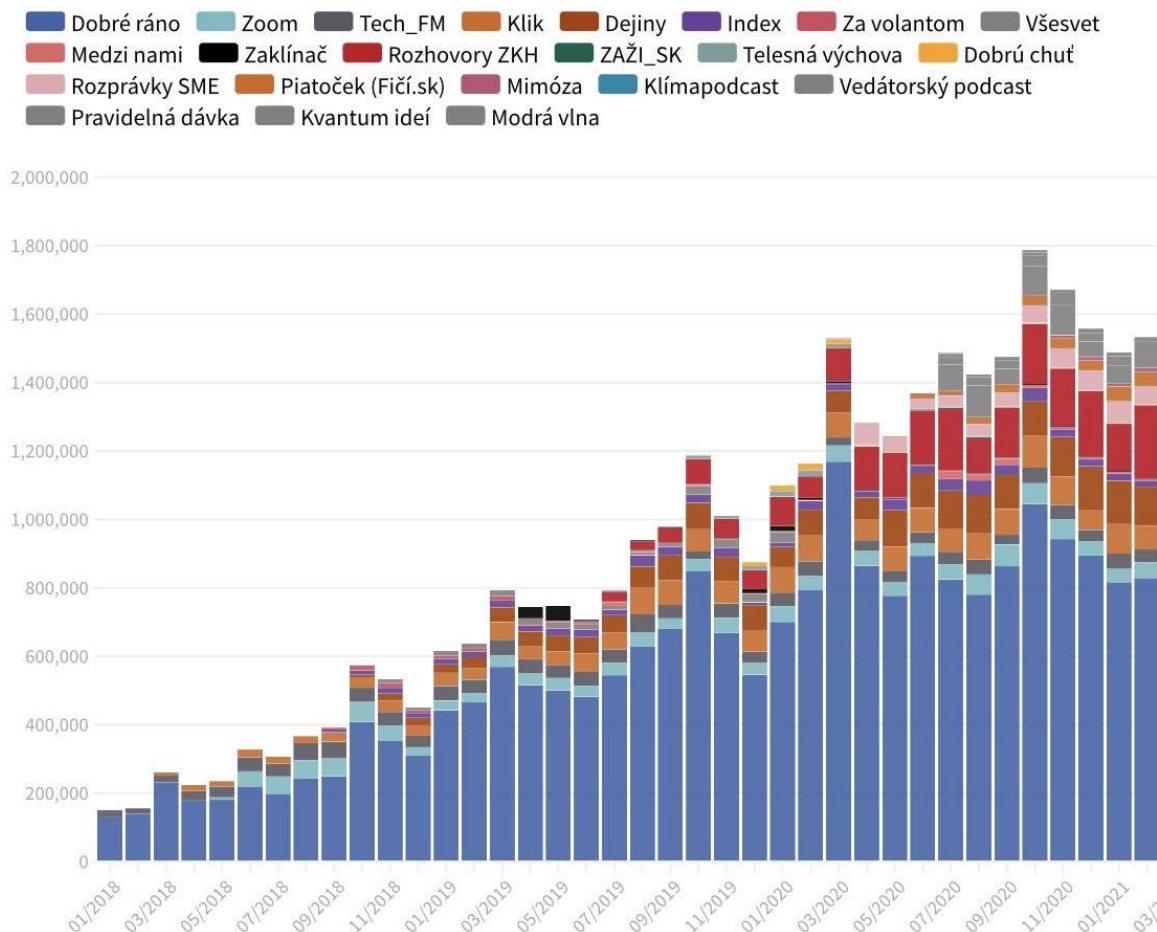


Chart 1: Listening of podcasts on sme.sk

Source: TVRDOŇ, D.: *Dobré ráno si vypočulo v priemere viac ako 36-tisíc ľudí*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22641788/dobre-rano-si-vypoculo-v-priemere-viac-ako-36-tisic-ludi.html>>.

Rádio Expres with the most listened news podcast *Braňo Závodský – Naživo* a drop in listening in March 2020 and April 2020, while in February it was almost 10,000 downloads per episode, in April it was just over 5,000 downloads.¹⁷ However, account must also be taken

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Dobré ráno si vypočulo v priemere viac ako 36-tisíc ľudí*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22641788/dobre-rano-si-vypoculo-v-priemere-viac-ako-36-tisic-ludi.html>>.

¹⁵ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Slovenské podcasty: Pozrite si aktualizovaný rebríček*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/20836316/podcasty-na-slovensku-zoznam.html>>.

¹⁶ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Dobré ráno si vypočulo v priemere viac ako 36-tisíc ľudí*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22641788/dobre-rano-si-vypoculo-v-priemere-viac-ako-36-tisic-ludi.html>>.

¹⁷ *Braňo Závodský Naživo*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://podmaz.sk/podcast/brano-zavodsky-nazivo>>.

of the fact that the high February figures reflected people's interest in the February parliamentary election held at the end of February 2020. *Expres* saw an overall decline in listening to podcasts but explained that they had to produce some podcasts pandemic measures.¹⁸ After these two months, however, the listening situation stabilized. On the other hand, *Expres* was satisfied with the greater interest in online streaming¹⁹ and an increase in the number of active mobile application users in May 2020, by as much as 47 percent compared to the fourth quarter of 2019.²⁰ *Rádio Expres* also manages the largest database of Slovak podcasts²¹ on web site www.podmaz.sk, where by May 2021 more than 400 podcast projects had been included in 23 thematic areas, a total of 22,000 episodes had been recorded in a volume of 12,000 podcast hours.²²

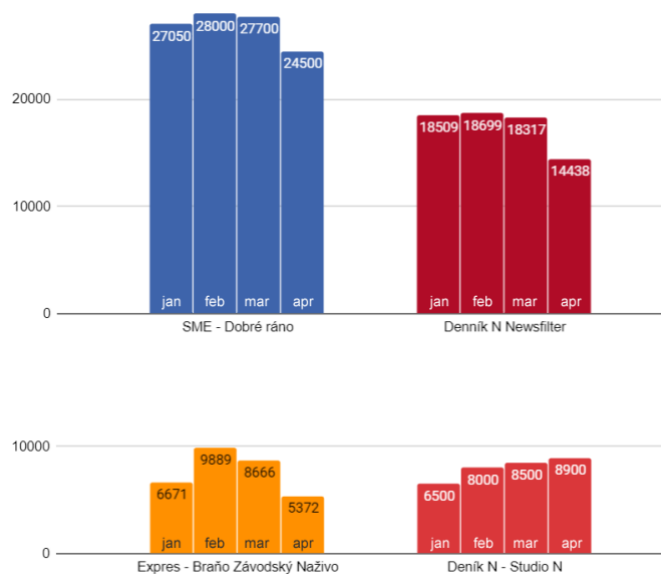


Chart 2: Average podcast listening per episode

Source: STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

News web portal *Aktuality* (www.aktuality.sk) does not publish exact listening numbers for podcasts, but the editors admitted a slight decline in listening in April and May 2020,²³ however, they expected a slight decline, even if there was no coronavirus pandemic, as record numbers from February and March 2020 were explained by interest in the parliamentary

¹⁸ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ KERNOVÁ, M.: *Rádio Expres predstavuje nový vietor v digitálnej audio reklame. Na svete je prvý chatbot, znalec slovenských podcastov*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.omeiach.com/tlacove-spravy/20072-radio-expres-predstavuje-novy-vietor-v-digitalnej-audio-reklame-na-svete-je-prvy-chatbot-znalec-slovenskych-podcastov>>.

²² *O podmaze*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://podmaz.sk/o-podmaze>>.

²³ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

election.²⁴ Aktuality however, during the pandemic in 2020, they launched new programs on sports, historical events and misinformation.²⁵

2 Listening to Entertaining Podcasts during Coronavirus Pandemic in Slovakia

Unlike news podcasts, entertainment podcasts offered on the largest entertainment podcast portal on the web portal www.zabavapodcaste.sk have kept listening since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.²⁶ They have even jumped from January 2021 to almost half a million hearings in December 2020, almost 690,000 hearings in January 2021 and more than 800,000 hearings in March, a new record since the platform was established in June 2019 (less than 29,000 hearings).²⁷ While daily news podcasts focus on current events and thus become outdated and unattractive to listeners relatively quickly, leisure and entertainment shows do not lose their appeal to listeners for weeks or months. Therefore, the coronavirus pandemic did not have immediate consequences for listening to this type of podcast. If there was a decline, it was small.²⁸ The entertaining podcasts did not hit the onset of the 2020 pandemic, as confirmed by listening statistics in the first week of the episode, which remained stable after preventive measures were taken on 12th March 2020.²⁹ During 2020, several podcasts also began producing more episodes,³⁰ and thanks to that, they achieved record statistics.³¹ This is the case with the women's podcast, for example *jauuu, PS: to bolelo*,³² which is recorded by actresses Petra Polnišová and Eva Kramerová, known as Evelyn. While in the past they released two episodes a month, in April 2020 they made up to four, thanks to which they have achieved a record listening of 257,000 downloads. For comparison, in December 2019 they had almost 164,000 downloads and in January 220,000.³³ The podcast also has the highest average number of hearings per episode in 30 days, at 40,000.³⁴ Men's podcast *Boris a Brambor*³⁵ by former hockey players Marián Gáborík and Boris Valábik maintains a periodicity of about four episodes per month and in April 2020 it reached almost 174,000 downloads. It is a lower number than the podcast had in the previous three months, but still surpasses December 2019 (151,000 downloads).³⁶ Both podcasts are produced by ZAPO – entertainment in podcasts. In addition to these two podcasts, ZAPO began making four more podcasts in March 2020 and April 2020: *Nehanební hokejoví bastardi*, *Veselá pani*,

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ *Podcasty*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/spravy/podcasty/>>.

²⁶ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

²⁷ KRŠKO, P.: *Portfólio*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/reklama/>>.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ KRŠKO, P.: *Portfólio*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/reklama/>>.

³² For more information, see: *jauuuuuu. PS: to bolelo*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/podcast/jauuu-ps-to-bolelo/>>.

³³ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

³⁴ *jauuuuuu. PS: to bolelo*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/podcast/jauuu-ps-to-bolelo/>>.

³⁵ For more information, see: *Boris a Brambor*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/podcast/boris-a-brambor/>>.

³⁶ Ibidem.

Bububu a Všetko čo ste chceli vedieť o zvieratách. As of May 2021, the number of entertainment podcasts offered in the ZAPO portfolio was already 18. The total number of downloads and hearings of podcasts exceeded 8 million (June 2019 to March 2021)³⁷ and has a high potential to continue to grow.

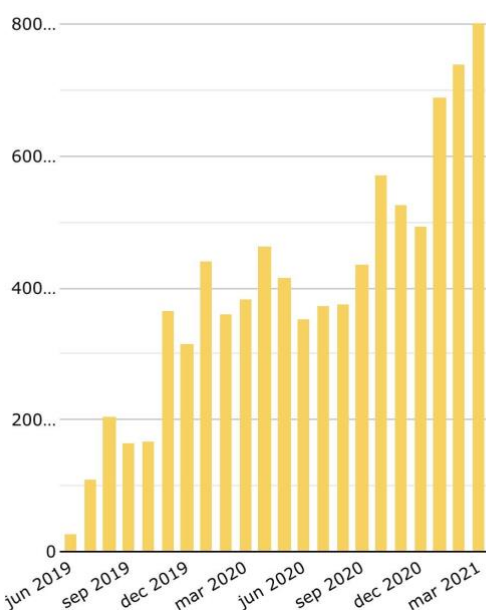


Chart 3: Listening to ZAPO podcasts since the platform's inception (in thousands of listens)

Source: KRŠKO, P.: *Portfólio*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/reklama>>.

With the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of episodes doubled in April 2020 *Lužifčák*,³⁸ which is made by comedians Gabriel Žifčák and Jakub Lužina.³⁹ Thanks to this, they achieved a record more than 87,000 downloads in April 2020.⁴⁰ Average numbers per episode show that although there was a slight decline in listening in March 2020, by April 2020 the podcast had almost 20,000 downloads per episode.⁴¹

3 Upcoming Changes in 2021 in Podcasting around the World

In 2021, streaming companies announced several upcoming innovations that could influence, even significantly change, the area of podcasting in the world. In April 2021, Apple introduced a podcast charging system.⁴² This is an important change for the creators, thus expanding the possibilities of financing the creation of podcasts, which can lead to new and more ambitious audio productions. According to Denník N, podcast creators will be able to

³⁷ KRŠKO, P.: *Portfólio*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zabavapodcastoch.sk/reklama>>.

³⁸ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

³⁹ *Lužifčák podcast*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://luzifcak.libsyn.com>>.

⁴⁰ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Blížia sa platené podcasty? Novinka od Applu môže zmeniť trh*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://e.dennikn.sk/2363775/mediabrifing-blizia-sa-platene-podcasty-novinka-od-apple-moze-zmenit-trh/?ref=in>>.

offer their subscribers, for example, ad-free shows, bonus episodes or earlier access to new works.⁴³ Apple has introduced a new version of its podcast application, in addition to a completely redesigned and more attractive design, it also brings a subscription system. For example, people will be able to pay podcast creators for listening without ads, for bonus episodes, or for earlier access to new works. The novelty has been available in 170 countries around the world since May, including Slovakia.⁴⁴ Why is it important? The business of podcasts is mainly based on advertising or sponsorship revenue. However, the market for digital audio advertising is not yet fully developed. In the second half of 2020, Slovak advertisers spent almost 480,000 euros on advertising in podcasts, online radio and streaming services, i.e., only 0.6 percent of all spending on online advertising.⁴⁵ Another source of revenue for subcasters are crowdfunding platforms such as Patreon. However, new experiments are emerging to help them get more money from listeners. Although Luminary and Stitcher Premium services have not been extremely successful in the world so far,⁴⁶ but the giant Spotify is already testing its own subscription model in the USA,⁴⁷ In the long run, subscribing to Apple podcasts may not only affect Apple device owners. Apple is currently the dominant player in the podcast market, for example *Newsfilter Denník N*⁴⁸ about 38 percent of people listen through Apple Podcasts, followed by Spotify (21%), Podbean (13%) and Google Podcasts (7%).⁴⁹ SME's most listened-to podcast, *Dobré ráno*, offers the log via streaming services Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, RSS.⁵⁰

Even the most widespread social medium Facebook presented its plans in the field of audio at the beginning of 2021, currently they want to cooperate with Spotify rather than compete directly with it.⁵¹ There are already 2.6 million podcasts on Spotify⁵² and is listened to by about a quarter of the 356 million streaming service users. These numbers will grow thanks to Spotify's cooperation with Facebook, which is to significantly facilitate the distribution of podcasts. Podcasts had a problem with sharing on social networks, as their visuals were not attractive and visually disappeared in the feeds. Facebook and Spotify have introduced a player that looks visually appealing in the newsfeed and allows you to play podcasts or music from Spotify directly in the Facebook application. In addition, it will be possible to listen in addition to how users scroll through Facebook posts. In addition, Facebook is preparing its

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ *Výdavky do digitálnej reklamy vzrástli o 2,4 %*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.iabslovakia.sk/tlacove-centrum/vydavky-do-digitalnej-reklamy-v-roku-2020-rastli-o-24>>.

⁴⁶ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Blížia sa platené podcasty? Novinky od Apple môže zmeniť trh*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://e.dennikn.sk/2363775/mediabrifing-blizia-sa-platene-podcasty-novinka-od-applu-moze-zmenit-trh/?ref=in>>.

⁴⁷ PEREZ, S.: *Spotify Launches Paid Podcasts through New Anchor Feature*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://techcrunch.com/2021/04/27/spotify-launches-paid-podcasts-through-new-anchor-feature/>>.

⁴⁸ *Denník N Newsfilter*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.podbean.com>>.

⁴⁹ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Podcasty čakajú novinky, chystajú ich Spotify, Facebook aj Seznam*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <https://e.dennikn.sk/2372915/mediabrifing-podcasty-cakaju-novinky-chystaju-ich-facebook-spotify-a-seznam/?_ga=2.77092565.1191771434.1620288127-1603319767.1589181817>.

⁵⁰ *Dobré ráno. Denný podcast denník SME*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://domov.sme.sk/t/4104/dobre-rano-denny-podcast-dennika-sme>>.

⁵¹ FLYNN, K.: *Facebook Is Joining the (Very) Crowded Audio Space with Soundbites, Live Rooms and Podcasts*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/19/tech/facebook-audio/index.html>>.

⁵² SPANGLER, T.: *Spotify Q1 Total User Growth of 24% Misses Expectations amid Podcast Surge, Strong Ad Sales*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://variety.com/2021/digital/news/spotify-q1-2021-results-user-growth-podcast-1234962083/>>.

own podcast player,⁵³ which will not be connected to Spotify in any way. This will give podcast creators more options for sharing their shows. Apple's competitive struggle with Spotify and their better work with podcasts can change the habits of listeners over time who are not currently used to paying to listen to podcasts. New tools can make it easier to monetize podcasts, attracting more creators – and with them new audiences.

Conclusion

While in 2016 podcasts were little known in Slovakia and a marginal genre with limited production and a few enthusiasts⁵⁴ and you would count their number on the fingers of two hands in 2017,⁵⁵ at the beginning of 2019, the number of original domestic shows exceeded 70,⁵⁶ but at the end of 2019 there were already more than 100 of them⁵⁷ and a year and a half later, in May 2021, their number exceeded 400.⁵⁸ In 2020, up to 40% of people aged 16 – 55 listened to daily podcasts at least once a month⁵⁹ and up to 60% listen only to Slovak podcasts.⁶⁰ In April 2019, the SME daily conducted the largest survey on podcast listening in Slovakia,⁶¹ in which 1,800 respondents – readers of the newspaper – took part. According to the survey, more than half of the students are under 35 years old. People between the ages of 18 to 44 listen to the podcasts the most. Nearly three-quarters of podcast listeners have a university degree, and 63% of respondents say they listen to podcasts most often at home.⁶² The interesting age structure of podcast listeners means an attractive target group for advertisers and at the same time with the continuous increase in listening list brought the fact that more funding went to online audio advertising in the crisis year 2020, digital advertising spending grew by up to 2.4% in 2020.⁶³ After online media, private radio stations and several independent producers, marketing agencies, various companies and, most recently, well-known Slovak youtubers and stand-up comedians also have their own podcasts.⁶⁴ This

⁵³ CARMAN, A.: *Facebook Is Building Its Own In-App Podcast Player*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/26/22403617/facebook-podcast-player-release-in-app-pages>>.

⁵⁴ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Slovenské podcasty: Pozrite si aktualizovaný rebriček*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/20836316/podcasty-na-slovensku-zoznam.html>>.

⁵⁵ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Kto počúva podcasty na Slovensku? Pozrite si výsledky veľkého prieskumu poslucháčov*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22110022/vysledky-prieskumu-posluchacov-podcastov-dennika-sme.html>>.

⁵⁶ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Známi youtuberi a stand-up komici začali robiť podcasty*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22045469/znami-youtuberi-a-stand-up-komici-zacali-robit-podcasty.html?ref=tab>>.

⁵⁷ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Kto počúva podcasty na Slovensku? Pozrite si výsledky veľkého prieskumu poslucháčov*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22110022/vysledky-prieskumu-posluchacov-podcastov-dennika-sme.html>>.

⁵⁸ *Katégorie*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://podmaz.sk/kategorie>>.

⁵⁹ KERNOVÁ, M.: *Rádio Expres predstavuje nový vietor v digitálnej audio reklame*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.omediach.com/tlacove-spravy/20072-radio-expres-predstavuje-novy-vietor-v-digitalnej-audio-reklame-na-svete-je-prvy-chatbot-znalec-slovenskych-podcastov>>.

⁶⁰ Remark by the author: According to a survey by the KANTAR agency, client: Rádio Expres, sample of 600 respondents, November 2020. Source: KERNOVÁ, M.: *Rádio Expres predstavuje nový vietor v digitálnej audio reklame*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.omediach.com/tlacove-spravy/20072-radio-expres-predstavuje-novy-vietor-v-digitalnej-audio-reklame-na-svete-je-prvy-chatbot-znalec-slovenskych-podcastov>>.

⁶¹ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Kto počúva podcasty na Slovensku? Pozrite si výsledky veľkého prieskumu poslucháčov*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22110022/vysledky-prieskumu-posluchacov-podcastov-dennika-sme.html>>.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ *Výdavky do digitálnej reklamy vzrástli o 2,4 %*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.iabslovakia.sk/tlacove-centrum/vydavky-do-digitalnej-reklamy-v-roku-2020-rastli-o-24>>.

⁶⁴ TVRDOŇ, D.: *Známi youtuberi a stand-up komici začali robiť podcasty*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://podcasty.sme.sk/c/22045469/znami-youtuberi-a-stand-up-komici-zacali-robit-podcasty.html?ref=tab>>.

increases not only the listening ability, but also the number of podcast profiles offered. Podcasts were also launched by TA3 television in April 2021⁶⁵ and plans to expand the portfolio of audio programs offered.⁶⁶ They see the launch of podcasts as a step by which television enters the audio world in news and journalism. They will not only work with television content, but also plan to use partnerships.⁶⁷ In February 2021, Rádio Expres introduced a unique chatbot service in Slovakia⁶⁸ – it is called PodmazBot and recommends to listeners a podcast according to selected parameters (“according to your mood and hobbies”), which has created a new advertising platform for online audio advertising on the market.

Although the coronavirus pandemic has affected the area of podcasting with many negatives (the creators report mainly from the beginning of the measures limiting the possibility of welcoming guests in recording studios, limiting topics, reducing the volume of advertising from clients, changing the behaviour of listeners and their daily habits, etc.),⁶⁹ but at the same time the pandemic brought a significant, direct jump in the number of podcasts offered both by the mass media and by leisure profiles. After a year of the pandemic, in May 2021, listening to podcasts reaches record levels, both news and leisure. This was despite a low, temporary, reduction in listening to news podcasts immediately after the introduction of anti-pandemic measures in March 2020. It follows from the above that the listening of podcasts in Slovakia is constantly growing, while the rate of increase in listening is also increasing and at the same time the number of offered podcast projects is jumping sharply. Therefore, there is a presumption that podcasts will soon form a significant part of the news content in the Slovak news media. Expanding the possibilities of placing podcasts in the content of social media and increasing their visual attractiveness in the newsfeed of these media will also be reflected in increasing the listening and offering of podcasts. Podcasting in Slovakia in 2021 clearly confirmed the position of the rising star of new journalistic formats and copies developments abroad.

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⁶⁵ *Podcasty.* [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.ta3.com/kategoria/336/podcasty.html>>.

⁶⁶ KERNOVÁ, M.: *TA3 spúšťa podcasty.* [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.omediach.com/tv/20769-televizia-ta3-spusta-podcasty>>.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ KERNOVÁ, M.: *Rádio Expres predstavuje nový vietor v digitálnej audio reklame.* [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.omediach.com/tlacove-spravy/20072-radio-expres-predstavuje-novy-vietor-v-digitalnej-audio-reklame-na-svete-je-prvy-chatbot-znalec-slovenskych-podcastov>>.

⁶⁹ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Mediabrifing: Niektorým podcastom klesla pre koronu počúvanosť.* [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1886587/mediabrifing-niektorym-podcastom-klesla-pre-koronu-pocuvanost-statistiky/?ref=list>>.

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PODCAST – A MODERN FORM OF ORIGINAL AUDIO FORMATS?

Viera Krúpová – Zora Hudíková

Abstract:

Radio broadcasting has been bringing its listeners information, opinions, education, entertainment, and art for decades. It is characterized not only by its specifics but also by genres that have evolved and changed over time. The creators of podcasts, a format that is becoming increasingly popular in the world as well as Slovakia, also work with the base of these principles and characteristics. Their authors intuitively or consciously build on the specific values of radio and work with its genres. The extent to which the authors of the modern communication format of podcasts base their work on the original auditory media has so far been little explored and described. Therefore, this study aims to point out the tendencies of podcast creators to shape the content of their sessions and their creation into specific genres in three case studies. The study maps the genres of classical radio broadcasting, indicates how individual genres have changed and adapted to the needs of a current era, and describes the most common podcasting formats. At the same time, it analyses and compares the use of genres in classical audio formats; their intertwining with podcast work defines the differences in radio broadcasting compared to the modern form of podcasts.

Key words:

Audio Formats. Genres. Journalism. News. Podcast.

Introduction

After the emergence of radio broadcasting, its genres gradually began to be profiled. They went through a development that always reflected the current situation of the society and the needs and requirements of its listeners. Radio genres were gradually formed based on the genres of journalism in print; new genres were created, all of which went through a transformation until they reached their current form. From the genres initially used, those used today by audio media were selected. After the creation of podcasts and their expansion and popularization in Slovakia, their creators followed the specifics of the auditory form and also build on the classic genres of radio production. At first glance, it might seem that podcasts in their genre typology copy contemporary radio production. The premise is here; however, it remains to be part of a discussion, if only to a certain extent or as a whole. Thus, the creators of podcasts are using the base of the specifics and advantages of acoustic dissemination of information through classical radios. The authors agree on their characteristics. In general, K. Orban describes the essential elements of radio broadcasting as *“the word, music and collection of radio sounds”*.¹ According to I. Jenča, radio is characterized by several specifics; among the peculiarities of radio journalism, he lists *“acoustic principle, readiness, differentiated effect on a wide range of listeners, continuity of broadcasting, accessibility – i.e., availability in any place, operability, the possibility to be listened to in addition to other activities, authenticity”*.² However, as several authors point out, the rapid development of new communication channels, including the Internet, ceases some of the uniqueness of this form. E. Hradiská, S. Brečka and Z. Vybíral, in this matter, state: *“And so we guess the only specific feature of radio remains the fact that it is possible to listen to it while conducting other activities, especially those that do not require attention.”*³

¹ ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 159.

² JENČA, J.: *Rozhlasové spravodajstvo*. Bratislava : X Art, 2004, p. 13-14.

³ HRADISKÁ, E., BREČKA S., VYBÍRAL, Z.: *Psychológia médií*. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2009, p. 234.

Podcast creators also work with the concept of precise specifics of radio and affiliation. They use it as a base of their broadcasting, keep developing and transforming it into specific genres. The intention is relatively easy to state: the ability to listen to podcasts while conducting other activities. The new format of podcasts must reflect the change in lifestyle of a modern person, which is the increasing pace of life, the demand for high quality and the work process's performance, often not easily feasible need to materially provide for the family as well as oneself. This is directly related to the effort to use working time as well as time that is intended for relaxation, rest, sports activities, social contact, family care to its maximum. This results in looking for a way to do more things at once. The affiliation of auditory work, including podcasts, provides the opportunity to listen to spoken word or music in addition to other activities, at anytime and anywhere. As podcasts have become a relevant form of media, the fundamental question in this context is to what extent do the genres of classical media blend into podcasts, i.e., to what extent do podcasts copy commonly used genres in radio broadcasting? There is also a minimal description of the methods of creating podcasts. The authors take orthodox classical audio forms or adjust the formats of their work and reflect the new situation that is adapted to the needs of the present and the lifestyle of a modern person. These are all starting points and topics for reflection.

The question of the usability of the genres of classical auditory work in podcasts, i.e., the degree of their overlap, is, as we have already mentioned, a topic that has not yet been heavily discussed in Slovak media environment. If we want to discuss it in greater detail, it is appropriate to pay more attention to radio genres in-depth. Specifically, to define the classical genres that have been and are being used at the end of the last and the beginning of this century and the genres that have evolved and subsequently established themselves in current radio broadcasting. And only then we will examine the case studies to what extent the genres established in the radio are taken over and used by the podcast. Several authors discuss genres in classical radio broadcasting. In addition to the already mentioned authors, K. Orban also deals with the topic. The authors E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczka discuss the phenomenon of radio in the mass media system, J. Motál et al. describe new trends in media, and Z. Hudíková and E. Habiňáková describe the genres that are currently used.⁴ The meaning of this study is to define genres of classical radio while taking into consideration the perception of available authors. Stating the degree to which original genres blend into podcasts, their possible hybridization, combination, as well as stating standard features of podcast formats with original audio forms. When examining the problems mentioned above, we will use methods such as deduction, comparison, categorization and generalization.

1 Genres of Classical Auditory Production

Radio production has a wide variety of genres. There are several definitions of what a genre actually is. According to A. Tušer, it is *“a special form of reflection of reality, which has established features and is rooted in the consciousness of creators and addressees”*.⁵ The same principle is used by other authors when defining genre: *“a genre is a collection of designations*

⁴ See, for example: ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 159-188; CHUDINOVÁ E., LEHOCZKA, V.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007; MOTÁL, J. et al.: *Nové trendy v médiách II*. Brno : Masaryk University, 2012; HUDÍKOVÁ Z., HABIŇÁKOVÁ, E.: *Radio Broadcasting and Radio Production*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018.

⁵ TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava : Sofa, 2007, p. 82. See also: PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky. Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2017.

for a group of journalistic pieces, which are characterized by certain common elements, in particular, thematic and compositional, which can be characterized by specific features”.⁶ According to E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká, the genre in radio journalism can be characterized as a set of audio-textual identifiers, which are “in a relatively stable structure of key elements and their relationships in the multilateral process of reflecting objective reality, while they represent a certain type pattern, which is rooted in the consciousness of creators and recipients”.⁷ The genre is thus a model with certain common features, which have the task of maintaining a uniform content and form despite the diversity of the theme. It is the “genre features that lead the author to adhere to certain rules, a certain method of creating, sequence of events, a certain linguistic approach and style”.⁸ It is obvious that within a genre, there is a precisely defined procedure required an order to maximize the quality of the chosen topic’s output. However, as I. Jenča points out, the systematization of genres must be understood “as an open process, some theorists even claim that genre classification is only indicative for practice”.⁹ That is why several authors emphasize the so-called genre dominance, according to which the contribution always leans towards a certain genre. According to E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká, the phenomenon of radio production is “an open system in which individual types of audio-textual and musical components intertwine and functionally complement each other within the variable structure of broadcasting. They create a diverse combination of author’s intentions of content, as well as a sound specification in the implementation process”.¹⁰ From the information stated above, it can be concluded that the genres are not presented in their pure form, even in professional radio production. In reality, creation of a broadcast, genres are combined and interweaved. Only the essential characteristics of the genres on which the radio materials are based can be identified in the individual author’s contributions. When dividing genres, the authors agree on a fundamental division of types, in other words, categories of radio broadcasting. The primary two are news and opinions. The names of the third category vary. According to Z. Hudíková, the third category is “entertainment or artistic programme”.¹¹ K. Orban defines the basic categories of broadcasting as radio news, rational opinions and emotional-pictorial opinions.¹² Authors E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká discuss the so-called trichotomous division of radio journalism; specifically, they name “news genres, analytical genres, art-documentary genres”. Although they also admit that a more straightforward, dichotomous division of journalistic genres in radio broadcasting into two categories is possible: news and opinions.¹³

The basic element of radio broadcasting is news. Its main aim is to provide up-to-date information on political, economic, cultural and social happenings. Based on its form, we distinguish their types of news genres: monological, dialogical, synthetic.¹⁴ The authors agree on the premise that the main element is a report. According to D. Slančová, a report can also be

⁶ OSVALDOVÁ, B., HALADA, J. et al.: *Encyklopedie praktické žurnalistiky*. Prague : Libri, 1999, p. 217.

⁷ CHUDINOVÁ, E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Fenomén rozhlasu v systéme masmédií: Základy teórie rozhlasovej žurnalistiky v systéme masmediálnej komunikácie*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2005, p. 53.

⁸ ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 161.

⁹ JENČA, I.: *Rozhlasové spravodajstvo*. Bratislava : X Art, 2004, p. 84.

¹⁰ CHUDINOVÁ, E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Fenomén rozhlasu v systéme masmédií: Základy teórie rozhlasovej žurnalistiky v systéme masmediálnej komunikácie*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2005, p. 54.

¹¹ HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Prejav v elektronických médiách. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 260.

¹² See: ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 161-172.

¹³ CHUDINOVÁ, E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Fenomén rozhlasu v systéme masmédií: Základy teórie rozhlasovej žurnalistiky v systéme masmediálnej komunikácie*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2005, p. 56.

¹⁴ See: RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2011.

considered to be “*the basic genre of journalism*”.¹⁵ A radio report is also referred to as “*prompt, concise, clear and comprehensible notification of a current event or phenomenon, delivered by means of a sound*”.¹⁶ Based on the definition of news, as the cornerstone of news broadcasting, the most commonly used genres of radio broadcasting can be derived as follows: report (short, flash, extended, compound, framework, situational), source report – official (communiqué), agency, author, audio message, message of report, press review, survey.¹⁷ There are also other names of genres used in the news, as well as other complementary formats, which are based on the historical development of radio news. In addition to the most widespread classical monologue report, “*several other types or forms have developed: audio report, message report, news interview, flash report, report, newscast, dot after the news*”.¹⁸ The authors E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká also have their own interpretation of the types and genres used in news. According to them, they include “*sound response, informative performance in front of a microphone, survey, news interview, news broadcast, report, montage, press review*”.¹⁹ J. Souček also brings his view of news genres, categorizing them as “*fleet report, read report, audio report, message report, news interview, news performance, news broadcasting, report, survey*”.²⁰

Similar to news, the authors also use great diversity when examining the second category of radio broadcasting, which is opinions. If we only considered the opinions of K. Orban, E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká, we would find several differences in views. According to K. Orban, “*journalistic genres inform, penetrate into the depth of the problem, analyse, explain, generalize current phenomena and influence the opinions and attitudes of listeners*”.²¹ In the context of this claim, he divides them into a discussion, reflection, lecture, analysis, review and radio reportage.²² According to E. Chudinová and V. Lehoczká, the priority of journalism is “*providing a sufficient number of thought stimuli to form views and attitudes of the addressee. Therefore, it is intended to serve as an orientation, to deepen information about the current reality, but it does not replace real reality*”.²³ Monologic types of analytical genres include commentary, note, review, speech, gloss. As dialogical types of analytical genres, they consider an interview. As synthetic types of analytical genres of radio, they consider radio discussion, radio analysis, journalistic cross-section, journalistic mosaic, journalistic band, talk show.²⁴ According to I. Jenča, journalistic genres also have several differences. He defines and divides them as follows: genres, note, gloss, journalistic interview, survey, radio discussion, discussion with the participation of listeners, reflection, reportage, radio program. The third category of genres, which belongs to the artistic entertainment or emotional radio genres, is also described in various ways. The most frequently mentioned genres include chicory, feature and feuilleton.²⁵

¹⁵ SLANČOVÁ, D.: *Praktická štylistika (2nd Edition)*. Prešov : Slovacontract, 1996, p. 180.

¹⁶ CHUDINOVÁ E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007, p. 48.

¹⁷ ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 162.

¹⁸ OSVALDOVÁ, B. et al.: *Zpravodajství v médiích*. Prague : Karolinum, 2011, p. 75-76.

¹⁹ CHUDINOVÁ, E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2007, p. 51-54.

²⁰ SOUČEK, J.: Rozhlasová dramaturgie a žurnalistika. In MOTAL, J. et al.: *Nové trendy v médiích II. Rozhlas a televize*. Brno : Masaryk University, 2012, p. 94-95.

²¹ ORBAN, K.: Rozhlasová tvorba. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Žilina : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 166.

²² Ibidem, p. 166-172.

²³ CHUDINOVÁ, E., LEHOCZKÁ, V.: *Rozhlasová komunikácia*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2007, p. 57-58.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 59.

²⁵ JENČA, I.: *Rozhlasová tvorba*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2013, p. 76-77.

There is no clear agreement between the authors on the names of radio genres. There are many variations and combinations of their names and meanings. Based on a rational examination and analysis of the information stated above, it can be concluded that the basis of genre studies lies in the content. It can possibly be divided into three main categories: informational genres, opinion-based genres and entertainment-educational genres. In the context of the above, we perceive news as factual and brief information reflecting current happenings and journalism as extended information about the current events. Opinion-based genres bring the listener a particular point of view, perception, author's analysis or comparison of his opinion with other creators. The most emotionally based is the creation of an entertaining-educational character, where the boundaries of genres practically do not exist and are defined only by the creativity of the creators.

2 Radio Genres at Present

In the temporal application of genres, we could make a rough division into so-called historical genres and contemporary genres. We perceive historical genres as those that were formed and originated in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Subsequently, they were applied mainly in the 1990s, until their gradual 'destruction'. Some of them disappeared completely; some were transformed while reflecting the demands of the time. As the specifics of radio were transformed over time and with the addition of new communication channels, the genres used in the classical medium were also evolving, which are also the result of changes in the forms of expression. According to T. Rončáková, *"the process of stylistic differentiation has a permanent character and new forms of expression are constantly evolving"*.²⁶ According to Z. Hudíková and E. Habiňáková, there are two terms in journalistic theory that refer to news or opinions – *"we are talking about a journalistic genre or a journalistic speech"*. According to the authors, the terms are not synonymous; each has its own mission and status. *"A genre can be understood as a certain model, a speech as a specific statement of a journalist. This means that when a journalist writes a specific text (journalistic speech), it contains certain features that result from his attitude, opinion on the event, idea, phenomenon or fact and the nature of the event or topic and based on the predominant features (genre dominant) it is possible to determine the genre of the contribution."*²⁷ Even in contemporary radio production, genres can be classified into three main categories: radio news, opinion-based radio production, artistic radio production. Within these categories, it is possible to distinguish genres currently used in auditory work:

- **Radio news:** radio report (short report, flash report), extended report (interpreted, commented), audio report, report, press summary, live broadcast, briefing, interview.²⁸
- **Opinion-based radio production:** radio commentary, opinion, note, gloss, analysis, review, radio reportage, essay, reflection, radio interview, survey, dispatching, discussion/debate, streaming.²⁹
- **Artistic radio production:** poetry, short story, sequel, radio dramatization, radio play.³⁰

²⁶ RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre. 2nd Revised Edition*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2019, p. 305.

²⁷ HUDÍKOVÁ Z., HABIŇÁKOVÁ E.: *Radio Broadcasting and Radio Production*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 72.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 78-81.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 86-97.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 102.

If we were to summarize the radio genres used today, it could be concluded that the fundamental division is identical to the one 20 – 30 years ago. Once again, the content and basic features of radio production are dominating feature. The division into news radio production – i.e., news, opinion-based radio production and the third category, which in this case is radio art production, are still valid today. It is more difficult with the specific genres. In this case, too, it can be said that most genres are still valid today, although, over time, they have been given different names. It is probably natural that some formats are no longer used in modern broadcasting, while others are created – such as podcasts or streaming. It is related to technological development and a different way of life, faster and more modern communication of ordinary people and new forms of communication by representatives of the state, local government, or the private sector.

As we mentioned above, a popular new communication format is a podcast. Two forms of sound recordings can be referred to as podcasts. The first was created directly in the traditional medium. It is a radio broadcast stored in the Internet archive of the radio or on social networks or a YouTube channel. The second form arises outside the classical medium. These recordings can usually be listened to through applications – Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, Anchor, Pod Bean, Breaker, Google Podcasts, Cast Box, Overcast and more. At first, it can be assumed that podcast authors use genres common in audio formats. Of course, this applies to podcasts, which are archived after they have been officially broadcasted. As it is created initially as radio content that has been already broadcasted, and only afterwards it is a podcast that is a rerun that is available at any time. The question is, what about the podcasts that are specifically created for this type of communication channel – as original content that podcast users can hear for the first time. Various authors produce podcasts. They are made by professionals who are currently engaged in audio work, by people who have worked on the radio in the past but have already moved to other occupation, or even complete amateurs. They have either minimal or no experience in the sphere. Podcast creators also differ generationally; that is one of the reasons why they use what is close to them and then creatively shape and connect it. The most common formats of podcasts that originated outside of classical radio include interview (one-on-one interview), monologue, discussion (with several guests), story-telling, fictional story-telling, fiction (a combination of several contents), used content (podcasts already broadcasted).³¹ We will examine the extent to which these podcast creators copy the genres commonly used on radio in three case studies. As part of the study, we will focus on whether the sound recording replicates the genre used in radio broadcasting, whether the use of the genre remains in its classical form or a combination of genres. We will also examine how the authors of podcasts approach the interpretation of content within genres and whether this interpretation does not distort, modify, or completely change the genre used.

3 Case Studies

Through case studies, we will take a closer look at three selected podcast formats. Specifically, *Dobré ráno* by Denník SME, *Newsfilter* by Denník N and the independent podcast *Boris and Brambor*. *Dobré ráno* by Denník SME is referred to as a news podcast, *Newsfilter* by Denník N is an opinion podcast, and *Boris and Brambor* podcast is an entertainment-based genre. *Dobré ráno* by Denník SME is a podcast that reflects the current events of the day. It is a combination of an overview of current short messages and a more extended conversation. The topic of the interview is also selected based on topicality and importance on the monitored day. *Newsfilter*

³¹ LEONARD, M.: *The Seven Most Common Podcast Formats: With Examples*. [online]. [2020-09-01]. Available at: <https://medium.com/@mark_leonard/the-seven-most-common-podcast-formats-87bbc3ecf40d>.

by Denník N is a podcast that comments on current events from domestic politics and economic events. They also produce it on a daily basis, commenting on current events. Foreign policy events are analysed on a weekly basis, and the Weekly Newsfilter comments on the most important events of the week. The Boris and Brambor podcast is an entertaining show in which the moderators invite a guest. They discuss various topics, mainly concerning the professional focus of the guest. They also discuss current social happenings. We chose these podcasts because of their variety of genres as well as because of their popularity. According to the 2muse agency, which regularly conducts surveys of podcast popularity among listeners in Slovakia, the first two podcasts (by Denník SME and Denník N) were placed in the top ten.³²

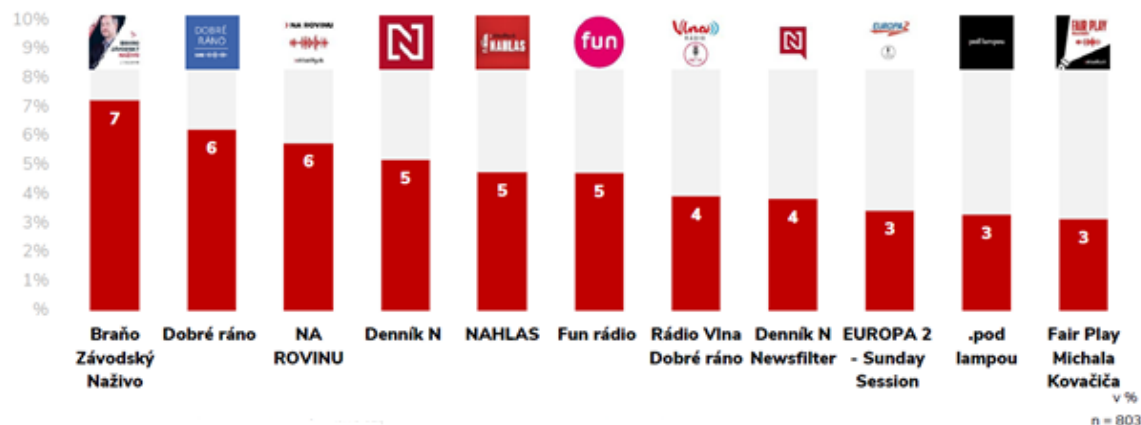


Chart 1: Listening to podcasts – additional

Source: *Počúvanie podcastov*. Final Report of 2muse Agency, obtained by the authors on 24th March 2020.

The third of the selected is one of the podcasts that is not created by any official medium. It originated from the workshop of two popular men who had no experience moderating sessions. Podcasts are produced on a monthly basis, with a periodicity of one to four podcasts per month. Their podcast gradually gained high popularity and became an entertainment program on television.³³

The first type of podcast we analyse is *Dobré ráno*. It is ‘broadcast’ every morning from Monday to Friday. It always appears in the evening the day before or at night, between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. This is to make the podcast available to listeners from early morning. According to the platform, iPhone Podcasts referred to as the Daily News Podcast in Slovakia, which offers interviews with reporters, commentators and guests of Denník SME. It takes an average of 20 to 25 minutes. The moderators of the podcast are Zuzana Kovačič Hanzelová, Tomáš Prokopčák, Jana Maťková and Nikola Bajánová. Guests are reporters, commentators, editors of the SME daily who specialize in political events, economics, foreign policy, such as Adam Valček, Peter Tkačenko, Lukáš Onderčanin, Peter Kováč, Tomáš Vašuta, Jozef Matej and others. The podcast’s structure:

- Sound;
- Short naming of the podcast theme;
- Date, name day, weather information;
- Welcome by moderator;
- Short overview of messages;
- Notice on the SME website and application;

³² *Počúvanie podcastov*. Final Report of 2muse Agency, obtained by the authors on 24th March 2020.

³³ *Boris & Brambor – Od mikrofónu pred kameru*. [online]. [2020-11-03]. Available at: <<https://www.rtvs.sk/novinky/tipy-z-programu/235436/boris-brambor-od-mikrofónu-pred-kameru>>.

- Interview with the guest;
- Recommendation for the conclusion (book tip, film);
- Moderator's farewell.

If we take a closer look at the genre of the podcast *Dobré ráno* by Denník SME, we can state that it is a combination of several genres. The news report is based on a radio report, specifically a short (or flash) report. There are 4 to 6 short messages in one broadcast, which include information about current events at home and abroad. The messages in the *Dobré ráno* podcast meet the features of a short message – it is a prompt, concise, clear and understandable announcement of the current event. This is followed by an interview with the guest, which can be categorised as a journalistic genre. Its length in the podcast is approximately 18 to 23 minutes, which means that it takes up most of the broadcasted time. The interview is not only informative, but it goes more into depth, analyses, explains, generalises, which affects the views and opinions of its listeners. It, therefore, can be categorised as a journalistic interview. At the end of the podcast, there is a recommendation or tip from a moderator, such as a tip for an interesting book, article or movie. In radio broadcasting, such recommendations are not used in news genres but rather in journalistic ones. Although it is possible to name the genres that the *Dobré ráno* podcast uses, they are not used in their pure form. The moderator's texts, the form and way of asking questions and often the answers of the respondent, bear elements of personal character, there is a legible opinion, the opinion of the participants (i.e., they have commentary elements that belong to journalistic genres – analysis, commentary, reportage, possibly a column or feature). In addition, participants often express themselves very openly, naming people from public life, often using behaviour or expressions that communicate how they subjectively perceive them; sometimes, these labels may seem inadequate – especially if we expect a strictly informative, neutral, objective approach. It happens that they violate the principle of impartiality, objectivity, but they try to substantiate the statements. It is also less traditional to insert various quotes and statements, especially politicians, into the conversation without mentioning or introducing the people who appear in the demonstrations or citations. The *Dobré ráno* podcast can be considered to be a mini-news-journalistic session – it has regular sections, a musical introduction, a conclusion and a partition jingle.

The second model example is the *Newsfilter* by Denník N – comments. This genre has appeared before; it was broadcasted on Rádio Slovensko as a domestic and foreign policy commentary of the week. In the regular podcast show *Newsfilter*, Denník N brings annotated summaries of the most critical events from politics, economics and the world. Domestic politics comments are published on a daily basis (on working days) under the name *Newsfilter*. Also, on a daily basis (on working days), comments on economic events are published under the name *Ekonomický Newsfilter*. Every Friday, a podcast that comments on world events called *World Newsfilter* is released. Every Sunday, there is an annotated overview of the week's events called the *Weekly Newsfilter*. The length of all types of podcasts is about the same, ranging from 10 to 13 minutes. Podcasts are released in the evening, no later than 8 p.m. The moderator of the podcasts, i.e., the person who also presents them on behalf of other fellow authors, is Braňo Bezák. Comments are prepared by editors, reporters and editors of Denník N – for example Zoltán Salay, Roman Pataj, Oliver Brunovský, Rastislav Kačmér, Tomáš Gális, Konštantín Čikovský, Filip Obradovič, Mirek Tóda and others. The podcast's structure:

- Welcome;
- Headline/Introduction of the topic;
- Advertising;
- Commentary on current events;
- Advertising;

- News in one sentence;
- Trailer/Notice.

The structure of podcasts is mostly the same, but that is not a 100% rule. In some podcasts, the moderator introduces the main topic or states the headlines at the beginning – he makes a short introduction to the topics to be discussed. The same goes for the main part of podcasts. It consists of comments on events – from political, economic to world events. There are usually 3 – 4 comments read by the moderator; one comment lasts 2.3 – 3 minutes. There is news in one sentence at the end of the podcast, but there are also podcasts where this summary is not included. The summary contains 7 – 8 important reports from political or economic events. This is very brief information – the scope of each message is one, a maximum of two sentences (flash). At the end of the podcasts, there is a trailer or a notice for other podcasts of Denník N, or a reference to other editorial content of Denník N. However; this is not a rule either; there are also podcasts where the trailers are not included. It is similar to advertising. Usually, advertisement is part of the podcasts, but there are exceptions. This probably depends on the success of your ad's sale in this format. If we were to name the genres of a podcast, it would be short news and a commentary. Short messages meet the features of this genre – it is a prompt, concise, clear and understandable announcement of the current event. In the commentary, journalists explain a particular phenomenon or opinion. The commentary usually follows directly or indirectly on the relevant report. The commentator may take a personal standpoint or act impartially, the purpose being for the listener to have their own idea of a certain phenomenon in order to reach their own opinion and conclusions. We recognize two basic types of commentary – domestic and foreign politics. All features of a commentary appear in the podcast Newsfilter by Denník N. The authors explain a specific phenomenon or opinion based on current events, i.e., relevant news. In the case of Newsfilter podcasts, commentators take a personal stance, but they also bring information, arguments based on which the listener can make his own opinion or conclusion. They comment on current events in domestic politics, foreign politics and the economy.

The third model example is the entertaining podcast Boris and Brambor, in which the moderating duo Marián Gáborík and Boris Valábik talk to their guests. In the Slovak Radio (RTVS), entertaining shows have a tradition, today the listener can hear for example: Spojky (moderator Adela Banášová), Dvojbodky (moderators Milan Lasica, Pavol Danišovič), Siren Test (moderators Tomáš Hudák, Samo Trnka), Pichli vidli (Peter Kočiš and Karin Hajdu), Boris Filan Distillery (moderator Boris Filan), etc. Leading members of the podcast are two former hockey players, Marián Gáborík and Boris Valábik. Based on Podcasts in iPhone, their podcast is not only about sports. But the gentlemen mainly invite guests from the field of sports, not only hockey players but also other athletes, coaches, sports commentators, as well as other people active in the field. Once in a while, personalities from different fields are invited. Sporadically, the content of the session is only their dialogue. Among the guests there were moderator Adela Banášová, tennis player Filip Polášek, hockey players Richard Zedník and Michal Handzuš, epidemiologist Vladimír Krčméry, the first Slovak cosmonaut Ivan Bella and others. The podcast's structure:

- Introduction;
- Welcome of the guest;
- Interview (via divisions);
- Conclusion – farewell by moderators;
- Advertisement/PR/space for a podcast producer.

At the beginning of the session, both moderators talk freely. The topics are different – they relate to current events, mainly in the field of sports. At other times, they express an opinion on societal, political, economic issues. Sometimes, they also talk about their lives, their families, their experiences, and their plans – work or leisure. An informal introduction is followed by a welcome and introduction by the guest. This is followed by an interview that takes up a substantial portion of the podcast, lasting 45 minutes to 60 minutes. It is divided into several parts based on the topics covered, usually 5 to 7; a musical jingle separates the individual parts. After the interview, a farewell from the moderators follows. The format of the session – a two-on-one interview, i.e., questions from two moderators directed at the guest, could meet the genre of journalism – debate or interview. However, the real performance of Boris and Brambor in podcasts ‘transcends’ these genres. First, because of its high degree of informality in conducting all conversations, as well as mutual dialogues between the moderators. As a result, the genre tends to lean more towards the artistic field; it could be described as a talk show, even though it does not meet the features of this format one hundred per cent. Both moderators tend to include their own experiences and knowledge, which can be a part of entertainment shows. However, it is no exception that they also go to more personal, even intimate spheres of the guest’s lives. There is often a subtle irony in their expressions. But they can also make fun of themselves. They also use more vulgar words from time to time, although in a mild form and with emotion, they are never used self-purposely. Neither the structure of the podcast nor the periodicity of Boris and Brambor is strictly stated. The content structure is free; it adapts to the given situation, guest, atmosphere, topic. The periodicity is variable, averaging on one to four issues per month. The length of podcasts varies from 50 to 80 minutes. Partitions and musical jingles are used during the podcasts.

Conclusion

Suppose you would like to address further the question raised – the extent to which genres in classical audio work are transferred to the creation of podcasts. In that case, it is necessary first to summarize the researched information about radio genres in general. Although we have divided them into historical and contemporary, depending on the time at which they were used in radio broadcasting, it can be stated that the basis on which both groups of genres are based is the same. It works on the premise of what does the author want to convey to the listener through genres. Whether it is primary or extended information without their personal opinion or view, or on the contrary, they want to present their idea or a statement of other personalities on the problem. The creator’s intention may also be more creative, interactive, hoping to provide entertainment, guidance, or art forms. The classic auditory formats of radio production in the past were based on this basic categorization and are the basis for them even today. If we want to characterize the used genres specifically, it is appropriate to focus on the already mentioned genre dominance. Genres in radio have their specific characteristic basis, but it is possible, even permissible, for their mutual intertwining or combination. An undeniable fact is that no matter how precisely the currently used genres are named, their development cannot be stopped. This is also confirmed by new forms of genres, which are constantly emerging in audio production, according to Ľ. Bôtošová, genres are created almost on a daily basis, not only in commercial but also in public media: *“The analysis of radio genres has raised several questions about the need to define new genres that have only recently emerged ... within the approach to the listener, there are parts of the broadcast that are not defined in detail.”*³⁴ It is very similar

³⁴ BÔTOŠOVÁ, Ľ.: Genre Diversity in Journalism in Public Service Broadcasting. In KVETANOVÁ, Z., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: On the Edge*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2020, p. 25.

when it comes to podcasts as well. Here, too, new broadcasting formats are constantly emerging, although it can be concluded that some forms are emerging more repeatedly than others. The question is whether they are based on the original radio production. Based on an examination of three case studies, it can be said to be true. This was confirmed by the fact that in *Dobré ráno* by Denník SME, we found the genre of short news and the genre of a journalistic interview, in the podcast *Newsfilter* by Denník N, we also found the genre of short news combined with commentary and the podcast *Boris and Brambor* could be categorized as entertainment. This was also confirmed by the authors themselves, who categorize their work and mark it as news, commentary or entertainment.

When it comes to analysis and examining podcasts, several authors point out that there are more minor and more significant differences between the content of podcasts and the content of traditional auditory formats. According to S. McHugh, “*podcasting encourages a new, more informal genre of audio narratives, focused on a strong host-listener relationship with content that is more prompt and less elaborate*”.³⁵ Based on our case studies, we agree with such a statement. Podcast creators choose a less formal style, bringing more of ‘themselves’ into their work. For example, in the podcast *Boris and Brambor*, informal and colloquial phrases such as “now you go”, “come on”, “oh wow”, “are you serious” and alike appear in the communication between the moderators. But this type of language can also be found in the commentary of the podcast *Newsfilter* by Denník N, where the moderators informally address politicians: for example: “Matovič – the prime minister of Facebook communication”, “Boris Kollár – a supporter of the family, mainly his own”, and others. Authors or creators of podcasts speak openly about their opinion, attitude, and some even go to the edge of possibly insulting the person commented. This tendency is also visible in interviews in terms of the content or the way questions are formulated. For example, in podcast by Denník SME, *Dobré ráno*, we can see questions such as: “*The Ministry of Health has no idea what we will be vaccinated with, does it? Does anyone, from the political representatives, know?*” or “*Prime Minister Heger has endured Matovič’s unpreparedness, is it his win or loss?*” Overall, podcasts could be described as personal, open, relaxed, with a more significant dose of improvisation and with more pronounced elements of ‘humanity’. In comparison to classical radio, listeners often do not mind if the podcasts do not reach the same quality when it comes to the content or presentation. On the contrary, the emotional and more personal colouring of podcasts can be attractive to listeners. However, this is only as long as the creators do not ‘touch’ listeners’ core opinions or beliefs. It is evident that editors, reporters, or commentators in classical audio media, public and commercial, cannot afford a significantly personal approach. The content of broadcasting and mediated information is regulated by valid legislation, which is binding for the media and in the event of its violation, they risk sanctions. The broadcasting of electronic media is regulated mainly by Act No. 308/2009 Coll. on broadcasting and retransmission, Act No. 532/2010 Coll. on Radio and Television of Slovakia, should also take into account the code of ethics of a journalist issued by the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists and other documents. It may be interesting to watch the development of podcasts in the future if the content and genres will be eventually regulated, similar to speculations about the possible regulations in relation to social media. This may result in limitations of the specific characteristics that distinguish podcast genres from those of a traditional auditory media – greater informality, personal style of communication, which sometimes moves along the ‘edge’ of decency or society-defined appropriate behaviour.

³⁵ See: MCHUGH, S.: How Podcasting Is Changing the Audio Storytelling Genre. In *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 2016, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 65-82.

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UTILIZING THE DARK SOCIAL AND ECHO ROOMS IN THE EXPENSE OF TRUTH: THE CASE OF “CLUBHOUSE” (CELEBRITIZENSHIP VS. CITIZENSHIP)

M Selahattin Okuroğlu – Turancan Şirvanlı

Abstract:

Political communication is prominent in its role and essential for the political system in any models of public sovereignty. The problem of this paper is to discuss the political potential of dark social networks which can be recognized as closed virtual spaces, where persons are selected by others and then select others. Clubhouse seems to be a perfect subject of dark social however, the platform should be considered with the emerging ones following its example. Any political potential and supporting feature for public sphere can be existed with contradictions from consumer society and life-styles. First, social network platforms and Internet communities based on them are mainly commercial and it is not possible to be sure that platform owners would not make profit from the data obtained from users. Second, commodification prevails not only for platforms themselves but also communication and users are commodified. The situation can be considered as a consequence of the mediatization in late-modern societies. Looking through the current samples and depended on the critics of modernity, this paper concludes that structural logic of dark social networks oppresses any potential for political criticism. In this context, massive admiration for life-styles and popular culture results in celebritization and the rise of celebritizenship against citizenship.

Key words:

Clubhouse. Concept of the Political. Consumerism. Dark Social. Digital Capitalism. Life-World. Mediatization. Prosumption. Public Sphere.

Introduction: Speech and Freedom Under the Structures of (Digital) Capitalism

The closed or private manner endarken the social networks for analyses but also gives users a sense of community with the feelings of intimacy, sincerity and solidarity. These are the attributes of life-world.¹ Nevertheless, media investments are not realized for sincerity. Moreover, it can be similar to 17th century semi-closed saloon meetings, against the surveillance of monarchies.² However, global corporations which supply interfaces like clubhouse are not similar with 17th century trade companies and even they have more capacity to observe communities and to sell their holdings of data. The literature about dark social is limited and even absent in the case of clubhouse specifically.³ Nevertheless, a new literature can be shaped based on the Frankfurt School’s critical theory and economy politics of media.

1 The Revival of the Political or a Final Death to It?

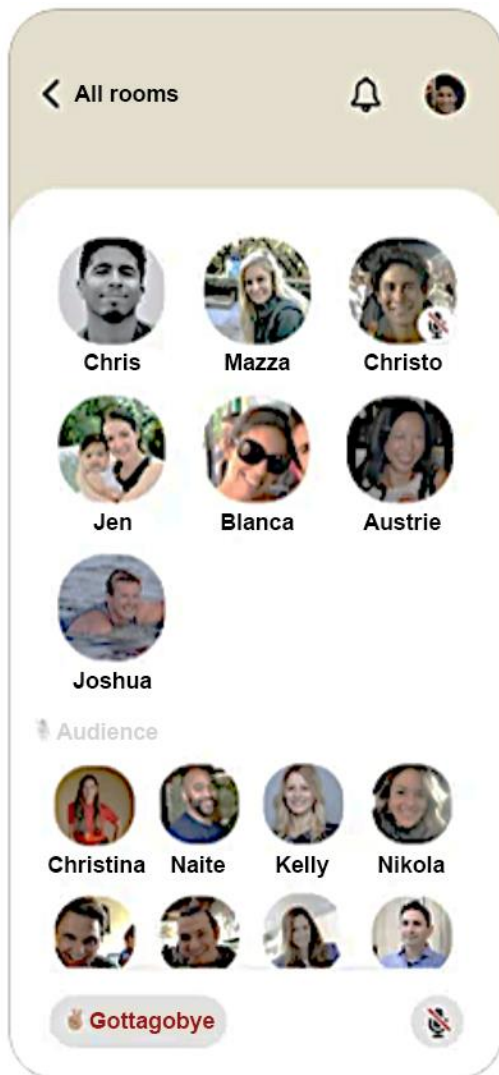
The present situation worldwide can be described with isolation and mediated personal connections. Pandemic definitely alter our ways of communication; however, it does not create new ways, more likely it improves contemporary tendencies existing in late modern societies. In other words, pandemic only augments trends and investors find ways to take

¹ HABERMAS, J.: *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston : Beacon Press, 1984, p. 16-17, 21.

² HABERMAS, J.: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1992, p. 13, 24, 51.

³ STRIELKOWSKI, W: The Clubhouse Phenomenon: Do We Need Another Social Network? In *Preprints*, 2021, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 2-3. [online]. [2021-04-21]. Available at: <<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202103.0503/v1>>.

advantages of it. Then, the recent pandemic worldwide brought a new medium of communication to life. Bringing podcast, talkback radio, group conversation and online video conference together, clubhouse is a new Internet phenomenon, emerging from current social situation.⁴ Its interface is a mobile application used to create social networks for users.



Picture 1: Clubhouse screenshot
Source: Author's screenshot, 2021.

Clubhouse is an invitation-only social network app which only works on iPhones. Only in 9 months its valuation jumped to 1 billion USD from nearly nothing.⁵ By Spring 2021, its monthly downloads have decreased sharply, and this means lesser potential users.⁶ However, because of high user retention, the platform probably accommodates more than 15 million

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ SOLIS, B.: *Latest Silicon Valley Unicorn, Clubhouse, Raises \$100 Million; Accelerates Rise of Audio-Based Social Networking*. [online]. [2021-04-16]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/briansolis/2021/01/26/the-latest-silicon-valley-unicorn-clubhouse-raises-100-million-and-also-raises-attention-to-the-importance-of-audio-based-social-networking/?sh=55bebd0823a6>>.

⁶ CANALIS, C.: *Clubhouse Downloads Are Falling Off a Cliff: The App Was Downloaded Only about 900,000 Times in April, Down from February's Peak of 9.6 Million*. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/clubhouse-downloads-900000-in-april-2021-5>>.

users who has already installed the app.⁷ A reason for this decrease may be the migration to other similar platforms. There are many platforms following the success of clubhouse, in other words, new platforms of *dark social* are available. For example, twitter spaces and telegram are attracting users, proposing alternatives for ‘real’ human communication. Clubhouse is available for updated iPhone users only and those with an invitation, and consequently it offers two ingredients for digital capitalism. First, contents from users or prosumers; second, an expansion for marketing strategies. These are inconsistent with any practices supporting a public sphere and critical discourses. Homogenization of users within echo chambers could make truth insignificant and politics unattractive for the same users.

2 The Problem: Transformation of Social Media – Networks Broken into Pieces

Dark social is the term for spaces connects people’s private worlds to public life.⁸ Beginning from WhatsApp then evolved to clubhouse and newer ones, they are closed virtual spaces where personals select each other’s. Political potential of dark social networks does exist, but it is under suspect. Adding more attraction to be a member of the club, people first have to be selected or to be appreciated first. Then, they have got the power to invite others more. In this structure, any kind of political potential or critical discourses may be existed in weaker forms because of contradictions of consumer society and life-styles.

Even it seems to be a perfect subject of dark social; however, Clubhouse should be considered with the emerging ones following its example. The milestone of the analysis is the recent position of social media platforms and their interaction with consumer societies. In this case, the individuals’ ways of use and their reasons for preferring some specific functions among many possibilities, have to be discussed. Still, dividing networks and their private spheres could maintain political activism and civic competences; however, the evolution of social networks into dark social, most probably will result in depolitization. Life-style groups and their sharing of common pleasures may support similarities of ideas, not support differences and discussions. Open social media platforms like Facebook were rather used for their civic capacity and it was hard to say they produce rational criticism towards reconciliation of arguments. It is even more difficult for dark social to be a place of critical public sphere. The current situation can be compared with re-feudalization of public sphere after the 19th century.⁹ However, social networks or the Internet cannot be considered as the only reason of the situation. Parallel with neo-liberal policies, late-modernity and its way of globalization are the main components to cause depolitization and indifference to critical public debate.

2.1 Speech and Freedom under the Structures of (Digital) Capitalism

Discussions about the popular social media application Clubhouse today can be framed within the homogenization and unification of audiences or in an opposite way, creating a public sphere open to democratic participation. From an optimistic point of view, such media or dark social, could have a great potential of political activism and self-realization. Clubhouse

⁷ ESPOSITO, F.: *Clubhouse Downloads Plummet to 900,000 in April as Competition Grows*. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://9to5mac.com/2021/05/03/clubhouse-downloads-plummet-to-900000-in-april-as-competition-grows/>>.

⁸ SWART, J., PETERS, C., BROERSMA, M.: Shedding Light on the Dark Social: The Connective Role of News and Journalism in Social Media Communities. In *New Media & Society*, 2018, Vol. 20, No. 11, p. 4329-4330. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444818772063>>.

⁹ HABERMAS, J.: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1992, p. 231.

disseminate messages via podcast, using the natural appeal of human voice and the groups of selected individuals seem to be immune from surveillance. However, there is no evidence to show realization of political potential. In fact, clues suggest that neither the creators design it for political sphere, nor the users articulate it in this way, at least common users in general way. The restrictions can be also explained by the logic of digital capitalism. Online subjects or users, not only benefits from social media platforms but also plays an active role in creating economic value for platforms. Prosumers are consumers of the network platforms; at the same time, they are producers of digital contents on the medium.¹⁰ If users do not pay for media, they are commodities for the corporations. Their labours are lucrative for social media platforms which are belonged to global corporations.

2.2 Digital Gap and Niche Marketing: From Publicly-Social to Privately-Social Media

The former platforms like Twitter and Facebook, were indeed operated in the logic of free markets; however, there was a kind of equality and openness in their structures. Once, social media platforms were used to build massive networks, but they are evolving to echo chambers. In case of clubhouse, dark social is a new social phenomenon and it is naturally born to be used within the tendencies of consumer society, niche marketing and homogenization of users. Capitalism colonizes and commodifies the (digital) public sphere.¹¹ Commodification is the key for analyses. Commodification of users or commodification of the contents produced by users are the only way of accumulation in the logic of capitalism during the digital era. In this case people who own less to pay, must be commodified more. Contrary to the utopian discourses claiming that capitalism is approaching perfection via the Internet, technologies could deepen existing inequalities and increase the digital divide.

As the sample case of concern, clubhouse already has been announced to support ‘performances’ and the emerging celebrities to be paid by other members. In other words, the main function of the platform will be prosumption, i.e., commodification of users. It shall deepen the digital gap in several ways. First, Clubhouse can be downloaded by update di-phone users and this is an absolute threshold for being networked. Second, the platform seems to be dominated by celebrity elites and main shareholders of technology corporations, though it has reached millions of users. The distinction between these two kinds of elites has been getting ambiguous. Silicon Valley shareholders are keen on being popular and they are close with persons from show business in their private lives. Third, platforms of dark social supplies a useful infra-structure for capitalist expansion through niche marketing. Feeling of freedom from surveillance is general for any kind of dark social and this may give opportunities to the platform owners. Personal profiles can be sold for marketing purposes and consumer preferences could be gained from conversations with the use of artificial intelligence. In case of clubhouse, the network includes top segment consumers, and this means great opportunities for marketing efficiency. In other words, digital gap between access and non-access is a desirable situation for marketing. Moreover, niche marketing may cause other restrictions for attending critical debates. Network groups’ interests can be steered on consumer life-styles and online identities can be built on consumerism.

¹⁰ RITZER, G., JURGENSON, N.: Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital ‘Prosumer’. In *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 14. [online]. [2021-04-17]. Available at: <https://www.csub.edu/~ecarter2/CSUB%20F18/Production_Consumption_Prosumption.pdf>.

¹¹ FUCHS, C.: The Digital Commons and the Digital Public Sphere: How to Advance Digital Democracy Today. In *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2021, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 10. [online]. [2021-04-17]. Available at: <<https://www.westminsterpapers.org/article/id/917/>>.

2.3 The Networks of Consumers: The Irresistible Apolitical against Political

The digital public sphere is not a different space of social life but can be a perspective of the public sphere in societies in which networked communication is pervasive.¹² So, if there is a general depolitization and indifference against critical public debate, digital public sphere could not be probable. On the other hand, people need to discuss about the politics, and they could question about social reality that they live in. In this case, the Internet and social networks may support public debate and the communicative action based on the mutual understanding. However, conditions can be contradictory preventing to create a critical public sphere, online or offline. Many users are naturally born apolitical, consumption or pleasure oriented and only action model they are taught is interest oriented, based on the instrumental reason. Since its very beginning, globalization has been steered by liberal capitalism in the form defined by Western (capitalist) industrial societies.¹³ Risks like pandemic, atomization of individuals, worldwide networks of production-consumption and social networks via the Internet are all the facets of the current situation or the globalization of this specific form. If to find a holistic term, late-modernity can be the name for the situation during globalization. Digital communities, mediated through platforms like clubhouse has emerged from late-modern societies.

2.4 Cyber-Balkanization and Echo Rooms

With a different definition, Clubhouse is a platform accommodates conversation rooms, unlimited in number. Rooms or groups are created according to the interests of founder users, then they expand with accepting new members. The closed groups based on political opinions or non-political interests have resemblance with cognitive islands. This can be a brief explanation of fragmented life-world and mediatization of social life according to Jürgen Habermas's critics of modernity.¹⁴ Another approach for the same issue is cyber-balkanization.¹⁵ Closed groups or tribes are not interested in anything other than their beliefs. Without any connection between them, the rooms are able to prevent from considering other ones, without any recognition to one another. Isolated groups could be places for sharing common views and biased information; consequently, opinions cannot be challenged or criticized. In this case reaching reconciliation or finding a common ground is not possible. These behaviours are contrary to public sphere and weaken life-world against system. Fragmented life-world, shattered and colonized, is the primary system process to commodify people. This mechanism is rather useful for creating public sphere but definitely suitable for creating *echo rooms*. In many cases, the commodification continues with willing participation of people. People can be voluntarily commodified, which is reification of consciousness.¹⁶

¹² FUCHS, C.: The Digital Commons and the Digital Public Sphere: How to Advance Digital Democracy Today. In *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2021, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 21. [online]. [2021-04-17]. Available at: <<https://www.westminsterpapers.org/article/id/917/>>.

¹³ SCHMITT, C.: *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 36, 48, 65.

¹⁴ HABERMAS, J.: *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston : Beacon Press, 1984, p. 332.

¹⁵ KOBAYASHI, T., IKEDA, K.: Selective Exposure in Political Web Browsing. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2009, Vol. 12, No. 6, p. 931, 951. [online]. [2021-04-17]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13691180802158490>>.

¹⁶ LUKÁCS, G.: *History & Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Massachusetts : MIT Press, 1999, p. 84, 124.

3 Celebritization and Celebritizenship vs. (Political) Citizenship

Depolitization of societal structures and even the societies themselves, first defined with its prerequisites by Carl Schmitt before Second World War.¹⁷ However, it could have been observed as an absolute trend in the last quarter of the 20th century, with the prevalence of neo-liberal policies, the discourses about ultimate triumph of capitalism and the obligatory globalization of all national economies. These were all the conditions which Schmidt counted before. Schmidt's theories about national identity and political consciousness are subject to controversy, because he did not concern himself with individual freedom. Nonetheless, his concept of the political can be still elucidatory today. Within his "political" based on hostility, he objected mass domination of global (liberal) policies over nations. Also, he described prevailing irrationality with transfiguration of political sphere by the means of a discourse resembling to the theological field. On the other side, he considered a mass consciousness processing with reason. In his nationalist frame, he considered reference points or some conditions for the political space. These references were a rational public sphere and the societal organism based on a common identity. Then, he blamed liberalization and cosmopolitanism for the national depolitization. However, in case of echo rooms and cyber-balkanization, there can be roots of depolitization in individual levels. The rooms or communities are not nations but alike tribes. The members have common identities and even they show signs of hostility against other groups or any other views, different than theirs. Their identities are not necessarily constructed upon political opinions, so groups can be based on consumer life-styles or admiration to a celebrity. On the other hand, political views upon which the identities are established are not always rational and many groups are built on the admiration to celebrity-like politicians. This kind of grouping is similar to celebrity following and helpful to understand irrationality in political echo rooms. The irrationality and closed behaviour against different views can be signs of the recession in public sphere or the non-public character of dark social.

If theories of Schmitt about depolitization are accepted, contemporary situation can be the last phase of a process having continued for a long time. In this case, another system process, first defined after First World War has been taking place among digital communities. It is reification of consciousness being executed by the means of ideological state apparatuses. Lukács pointed out that mass media can be operated for emancipation; however, social structures based on power hierarchies and instrumental reason make use of media in the opposite direction, prevailing reified consciousness.¹⁸ In this case individuals voluntarily consent to power relations, they only seek positions to take part in the system and any structures cannot be used for freedom and democracy. In fact, reification explains general mediatization of social relations in individual level and in institutions respectively. As a specific form of mediatization, celebritization of society and politics is the term for mediated life-worlds and mediated communication. Celebritization has always been observable among celebrities, show business and agenda setting via soft-news. However, presently it prevails in political communication and among capital owners, especially of IT corporations in Silicon Valley. In case of Clubhouse, the rooms (communities) are nesting for show-biz celebrities from Hollywood. Beside these literal celebrities, shareholders of IT corporations have central

¹⁷ SCHMITT, C.: *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 36.

¹⁸ LUKÁCS, G.: *History & Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Massachusetts : MIT Press, 1999, p. 84, 163.

positions in the rooms.¹⁹ Other ones or followers carry signs of admiration and desire to be close to them. For the ordinary users, clubhouse is the place to show their own performances, to win recognition and to be paid through the platform. Though it is a social process, mediatization is fed by total efforts of ordinary users to be a celebrity or to imitate celebrities to feel like them. In fact, being a member of the network may only feed the desire to live like a celebrity or to be close to celebrities. The other process, celebritization is the term for depolitization of late-modern societies in relation with consumer life-styles. This can be observed through the efforts of citizens to feel like celebrities and their praise for consumption signs. In this case, group interests focus on popular culture and self-realization is perceived within a success in the commercial culture, i.e., popular performances. Desire for consumption and life-styles imitating celebrities is also prevalent. Celebritization shows correlation with depolitization, however it is not the only reason for the fall of critical public sphere. This is waning interests for real politics, receding from political participation and consent for neo-liberal globalization or perceiving it as only possible existence for societies.

Conclusion

The agenda of global consumer society could not reconcile with any discourses criticizing free market capitalism and not argue about a different way than instrumental action models. In this case social networks like clubhouse may support dissemination of consumption based life-styles and hierarchies of power, praising the accumulation of capital. In case of life-style groups or celebrity followers, commodification of contents and commodification of user interactions are so obvious that it is very hard to find something to support public sphere. On the other hand, some kinds of politically oriented groups are rising from the twilight of dark social; however, these are closed, not only because of their membership protocols but also because of their manners against different ideas and their intolerance of rational criticism. Although their identities are based on ‘hostility’, such group identities may not be considered within the “concept of political”. The hostility of social network groups against everything other than their own opinions is different than rationally described and critically determined enemy. In this case, the splintered nature of the rooms of Clubhouse makes it very hard to find any indicators about public sphere and rational criticism to produce conciliation. Moreover, following celebrities, following celebrity-like executives of IT corporations and supporting celebrity-like politicians show many similarities in group characteristics. Two concepts can be submitted to frame the common depolitization observed in the groups around celebrities and the groups around politicians, who make use of discriminative discourses.

For conclusion, the paper offers two novel terms, celebritization and celebritization to define the social change being observed and the consumerism as the dominant societal model worldwide. “Celebritization” is the term underlying the avoidance from political participation, the increase in the interest in contents about celebrities and a massive desire for consumer life-styles represented by celebrities. The concept of “celebritization” is based on the mediatization process, which integrates the commodification of consciousness and the colonization of life-world in modern societies. It describes the admiration for celebrities and eagerness to become celebrity among social media users, or ordinary people. Also, celebritization is the general situation to indicate the tendency for soft content in news media.

¹⁹ STRIELKOWSKI, W.: The Clubhouse Phenomenon: Do We Need Another Social Network? In *Preprints*, 2021, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 8. [online]. [2021-04-21]. Available at: <<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202103.0503/v1>>.

Like most of the system processes, first it prevails with celebrity-like attitudes among politicians and capitalist elites. Dark social networks like clubhouse can be the place for observing these two phenomena.

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PORTRAYAL OF JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION IN THE SUPERHERO MOVIE VENOM

Jana Radošinská – Zuzana Kvetanová

Abstract:

Today, superhero films are seen as the most popular and financially valuable forms of globalised movie production. Given the fact that the market segment they are a part of is quite oversaturated, their producers and creators tend to seek new or rather innovative ways of portraying movie characters with supernatural features and special talents. The movie *Venom* is one of the most financially successful film products of 2018. Its story differs from other similar movie narratives in various aspects. The paper aims to discuss *Venom*'s main protagonist, Eddie Brock played by Tom Hardy. Brock is not only an unlucky man, who is forced to live in a symbiotic relationship with an alien organism named Venom, but, still and above all, a talented journalist. We offer a narrative and discourse analysis of the movie in question, which focuses on Eddie Brock's role as a journalist, pointing out how he embraces his symbiosis with Venom and what it means in relation to his former (and future) career in the media. While discussing the outlined topic, we argue that Eddie Brock's occupation is one of the key factors driving the film's narrative.

Key words:

Film Superhero. Investigative Journalism. Movie Production. Multimedia Journalist. Sony Pictures Universe of Marvel Characters. *Venom*.

Introduction

In 2018, *Venom* (directed by Ruben Fleischer) became the most successful movie of the year created by the production company *Sony Pictures/Columbia*. This blockbuster's box office performance shows worldwide cinema revenues exceeding 856 million USD, which makes the project the seventh most profitable movie of 2018.¹ However, the film's public introduction was associated with certain discontent, as its target audiences were surprised by *Venom*'s low MPAA rating (PG-13). This meant that the film's producers did not fulfil their ambition to present the story in a more violent, mature and controversial manner, within the boundaries of rating R. Anyways, *Venom* became the first feature film labelled as a part of a newly established movie franchise – *Sony's Spiderverse*, also called *Sony's Marvel Universe* or *Sony Pictures Universe of Marvel Characters* (SPUMC). It is necessary to remind that many *Marvel* characters, including *Venom*, were acquired by *Sony* in the 1990s, when the company *Marvel Comics* went through bankruptcy.² Centred on Spider-Man's allies or opponents, *Sony's* movie franchise aims to explore the same production procedures that are used by the company's greatest competitors on the global movie market, *Marvel Studios* (*Disney*) and *DC Entertainment* (*Warner Brothers*). *Sony Pictures Universe of Marvel Characters* is based on co-production activities of *Columbia Pictures* and *Marvel Entertainment*, using *Sony's* worldwide distribution lines. Although it has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, this film universe should continue in the years to come – we may mention ambitious projects such as *Venom: Let There Be Carnage* (currently scheduled to premiere in September 2021, directed by Andy Serkis), *Morbius* (currently scheduled to be publicly introduced in January 2022, directed by Daniel Espinosa) or *Kraven the Hunter* (currently scheduled to be released in January 2023, directed by J. C. Chandor).

¹ 2018 Worldwide Box Office. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/world/2018/>>.

² See: RADOŠINSKÁ, J., LAKATOŠ, L.: Analýza mediálnej organizácie: Prípadová štúdia spoločnosti *Marvel*. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L., BUČKOVÁ, Z. et al.: *Empirické aspekty filmov o superhrdinoch*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 350-388.

Our discussion reflects on *Venom* (2018), more specifically on the film's main protagonist, Eddie Brock/Venom (Tom Hardy). The character's (anti)heroic and rather schizophrenic story is intertwined with images of Eddie Brock's previous personal life and career. Prior to becoming Venom, Brock was a promising and popular investigative journalist engaged to a successful career woman. This adaptation of Venom's story is loosely based on the line of comic book narratives created by David Michelinie and Todd McFarlane for *Marvel Comics*.³ The analysed feature film is not directly associated with any other movies, at least not yet. However, the character of Venom has been seen on the silver screen before; for example, in *Spider-Man 3* (2007, directed by Sam Raimi). Although the analysed work is not followed by any already existing sequels, the follow-up film story will be distributed to cinemas over the next year. It is therefore not a 'one-off' film, but the first part of the above-mentioned cinematic franchise. Moreover, the movie is indirectly related to several other film stories of the superhero Spider-Man. The paper aims to identify what kinds of journalistic processes and types of journalism are depicted in the discussed movie, especially in relation to its main protagonist, Eddie Brock/Venom. Although Brock's role of a television journalist may seem to be just secondary, we work with the assumption that his former career in the media is what drives the narrative and helps the film's creators to present Venom's origin story as both engaging and morally or ethically questionable. The first part of the text focuses on the ways the analysed movie portrays various topics and environments via narrative analysis. Following this overview and outlining the profession of multimedia journalist, the second chapter applies discourse analysis in order to discuss Eddie Brock's journalistic profession as presented in the film.

1 'We Are Venom': A Short Reflection on Eddie Brock's Story

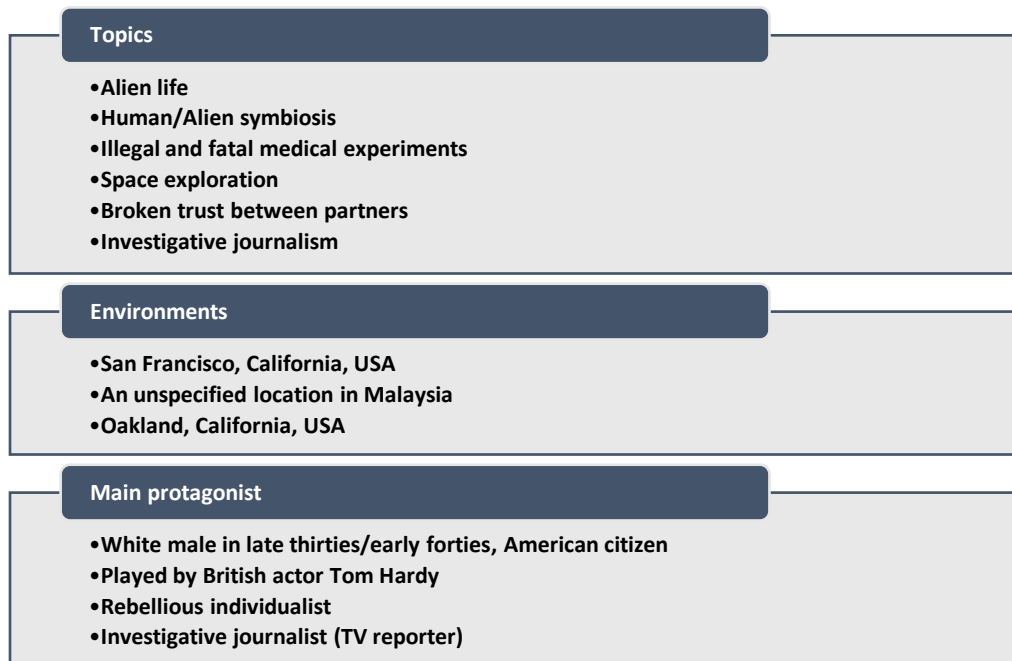
As outlined above, *Venom*'s main protagonist is Eddie Brock, an American investigative reporter working and living in San Francisco, California. It is a white male in his late thirties or early forties, a stubborn individualist with a natural talent for seeking sensational stories and uncovering shady business activities. Given the fact that Brock lives in San Francisco, near Silicon Valley, which is often regarded as the global centre for developing high technology and creating innovation, his reports tend to focus on technological giants and their questionable actions. The hero's journalistic career is endangered and disrupted in the moment he becomes interested in *Life Foundation*, a renowned technological and pharmaceutical company. As a result, Brock loses his job and, what is even more problematic, he is not able to find a new one anywhere else. The main protagonist's personal life falls apart as well – his fiancée Annie Weying (Michelle Williams) breaks up with him and leaves the apartment they share due to the previous events (Brock stole confidential documents from his girlfriend's computer to gain more information on *Life Foundation*, which means that her professional life is now in ruins, too). Brock's social contacts are reduced to a necessary minimum; he keeps monitoring the daily press and public events, albeit only thanks to free newspapers he does not have to pay for. As mentioned above, Eddie Brock is portrayed by the British actor Tom Hardy. He is currently quite popular, mostly thanks to appearing in multiple feature films directed by Christopher Nolan (e.g., the remarkable science-fiction blockbuster *Inception*, 2010, the war drama *Dunkirk*, 2017, or the film trilogy about the superhero Batman, 2005, 2008, 2012). Hardy's acting performances clearly manifest his ability to convincingly portray men with psychological issues and mental disorders. He has repeatedly succeeded at depicting fictitious

³ Todd McFarlane on the Origin of Venom & His Iconic Spider-Man Trifecta: #298, #299 & #300 // Part 4. Released on 13th March 2021. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3XdRTKtb7w>>.

or real persons with strong physical presence and brutal strength (for instance, in *Warrior*, 2011, directed by Gavin O'Connor). Hardy's so far single Oscar nomination is related to his role in *The Revenant* (2015, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu).

The movie *Venom* primarily works with content-related and formal elements of science-fiction stories. These components heavily influence the presented topics and environments. The first feature to mention is the fact that the main protagonist encounters an alien organism and later lets this entity to reside within his body through perfect symbiosis. Other science-fiction tropes can be identified at the beginning of the story, when the audiences see *Life Foundation's* disastrous cosmic mission and its serious consequences. The motif of encountering alien life forms is intertwined with *Life Foundation's* technological endeavours (the company's ambition to build spacecrafts) and illegal medical experiments (the enterprise's executive trying to merge human bodies and alien organisms). Various elements of action movies are present as well; the most notable action sequence is the moment when Eddie Brock, riding a motorcycle, escapes his enemies and battle drones. Another action sequence worth mentioning takes place at Brock's apartment; his home is invaded by a private army. Moreover, the film's third act is saturated by action – the main protagonist, along with his alter-ego, Venom, successfully prevents *Life Foundation's* founder, Carlton Drake (Riz Ahmed), from launching his experimental spacecraft that is supposed to find more alien entities and transport them to the Earth.

As mentioned above, the analysed movie's main storyline is primarily situated in San Francisco; however, the presented events are, quite understandably, fully fictional. Eddie Brock tends to visit various districts and urban areas that are remarkable for their uneven terrain. San Francisco is considered as an important centre of culture, art, technological development and banking, which is also evident from the film's setting. The visuals of the movie are diversified by the local Chinatown; at certain moments, the story is situated in the vicinity of the famous Golden Gate Bridge. The fictional pharmaceutical and research company *Life Foundation*, which Eddie Brock rightly suspects of unfair practices and unethical research procedures, is also located in the city. A rather non-essential part of the film takes place in an unspecified location in Malaysia, at the crash site of an experimental space shuttle (as a result, several alien creatures, including Venom, are able to reach the Earth). A Malaysian airport is also present, although only briefly (one of the aliens looks for a suitable host to get to the U.S.). The presence of Oakland, another city situated in California, can be mentioned as well. Eddie Brock, back then still a successful investigative journalist, visited Oakland to attend an unspecified public demonstration. However, despite numerous science-fiction elements, images of extra-terrestrial environments are reduced to an absolute minimum. The summary of the discussed issues is available below (see Picture 1).



Picture 1: Topics, environments and the main protagonist presented in *Venom* (2018)
 Source: Own processing.

2 The Eddie Brock Report: Images of Multimedia Journalism in *Venom*

While discussing the concept of “multimedia journalism”, we have to, quite paradoxically, look back and briefly return to the traditional outlines and ideas of journalistic profession. At first sight, the world of today is filled with knowledge, unlimited opportunities and novel, previously unimaginable ways of processing information. Journalism has every possible opportunity to preserve its capability of reflecting social events, political affairs or other useful (or, at least entertaining) pieces of information. However, we still have much to learn about multiplatform communication; we may know everything about its technological perks, and yet not enough about its social and cultural consequences. Our analysis of Eddie Brock’s work as a journalist is based on generally accepted theoretical frameworks outlining journalistic profession in the 21st century. Referring to John Dewey’s words, which were published more than a century ago, Adrienne Russell discusses the ethical aspects of contemporary journalism. The author claims that fulfilling the ‘watchdog’ role is not enough – journalism should also foster, inspire and maintain cultivated and well-informed public conversations. However, this necessity is overshadowed by the economic imperatives, i.e., by the principles of highly professional, commercially driven and profit-oriented journalistic production. Nevertheless, the journalistic sphere nowadays includes not only professional journalists and editors, but also data analysts, website creators, social media managers, even ‘ordinary’ citizens, who generate ideas and topics, witness key events or simply interpret published information and share it with their peers.⁴ Of course, these facts can be addressed from various points of view; optimistically, neutrally or sceptically. Those who favour “networked journalism” and its undeniable advantages, tend to underline the interactive nature of journalistic content, many different opportunities to acquire and verify information, faster learning and new types of visually

⁴ RUSSELL, A.: Networked Journalism. In WITSCHGE, T., ANDERSON, C. W., DOMINGO, D., HERMIDA, A. (eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Digital Journalism*. London : Sage Publications, 2016, p. 151-152.

attractive information processing.⁵ On the contrary, critics pessimistically declare the complete collapse of the once profitable models of the journalistic business, the undesirable shift in the ethical standards of journalism and the frequent reluctance of mainstream journalists to adopt technological innovations in order to face their sharp competition.⁶ We may say that the processes of media convergence and unfavourable economic indicators (declining sales, circulation and readership, less interest from advertisers as a direct consequence) result not only in existential problems affecting many different types of media organisations, but also in the need to reconsider and ‘rationalise’ various stages of journalistic production.⁷ And thus, media enterprises favour ‘multimedia’ journalists, who are able to professionally prepare and process information in written, auditive or audio-visual forms.

Multimedia journalists of the new millennium work with a wide spectrum of materials and use different types of data sets simultaneously. They often produce texts, video files, static or interactive visuals including hyperlinks, podcasts and other kinds of content meant for multiplatform distribution. It is not rare to see a journalist, who has to fulfil various roles or professional specialisations at the same time.⁸ This means that when compared to the past, today’s journalism is increasingly complex and time-consuming. Acquired information needs to be verified imminently; multimedia content must be published earlier than any competing journalistic products; the newest software and hardware tools have to be mastered as soon as possible, and so on. For this reason, we can argue that the overall quality of journalistic production may be declining, at least at first glance, but in reality, it is only a direct and logical consequence of the enormous workload journalists have to cope with and the growing demands associated with multiplatform publishing. The concept of “multiskilled journalism” is an umbrella term referring to general characteristics and competences of multimedia journalists. Tony Harcup claims that this process includes covering stories for a variety of platforms. Multiskilled journalism utilises a wide spectrum of different skills, such as “*writing and subbing a story, taking pictures, editing audio, uploading material online, and engaging members of the audience in a conversation*”.⁹ The traditional press, audio content and audio-visual formats merge within the online environment, giving journalism plenty of new ‘faces’.¹⁰ Moreover, multiplatform journalism needs to preserve and foster its ability to explain complex social problems.¹¹ As we have already mentioned that Eddie Brock, *Venom*’s main protagonist, is presented as an investigative reporter, we also need to define the term “investigative journalism”. This type of reporting “*sets out to discover something that somebody, somewhere, wishes to remain a secret, and that typically involves detailed and time-consuming work by an individual journalist or by a team of journalists inquiring into some kind of alleged wrongdoing*”. As noted by Tony Harcup, “*methods associated with investigative journalism*

⁵ See, for example: MINÁRIKOVÁ, J., BLAHÚT, D., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Hi-Tech and Eye-Catching Alike: Information in the Multiplatform Era. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 118-126.

⁶ RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: Multiplatformové novinárstvo v kontexte mediálnej kultúry. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky: Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2017, p. 126.

⁷ VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Redakcia, onlinová redakcia. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J. (eds.): *Slovník vybraných pojmov z mediálnych štúdií*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 174-179.

⁸ See also: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PREDMERSKÁ, A.: Digital Journalism: Rethinking Journalistic Practice in the Era of Digital Media. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 57-66.

⁹ HARCUP, T.: *Oxford Dictionary of Journalism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 184.

¹⁰ HEINRICH, A.: *Network Journalism: Journalistic Practice in Interactive Spheres*. New York : Routledge, 2011, p. 3.

¹¹ For more information, see: BIELIK, P., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Explanatory Journalism – A New Way How to Communicate in Digital Era. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 24-37.

typically include meticulous searching and cross-referencing of documents and databases in the public domain; use freedom of information laws to place more material in the public domain; receiving leaks of secret information; persuading people to talk either on or off the record; and, less typically, secret filming and /or recording, and using subterfuge to obtain evidence of wrongdoing”.¹² Samuel Brečka argues that investigative journalists uncover the truth and identify lies. Their motivations, ambitions, methods and results vary. Investigative journalism may not only uncover scandals, but also create them.¹³ However, many investigative journalists literally risk their lives, especially if they are interested in highly sensitive topics such as corrupt politicians, organised crime, arms deals or crimes against humanity.

The first act of the movie *Venom* introduces Eddie Brock as a highly assertive, self-confident and charismatic television reporter. The sequence primarily focuses on his hazardous and careless nature. Riding a motorcycle, Brock is on his way to work; however, the shots of him crossing the streets of San Francisco at high speed are merged with his previously aired investigative reports. The name of the programme is identified as well: “*I’m Eddie Brock, and this is The Brock Report.*” Carefully arranged excerpts of his reports clearly suggest that Brock favours ‘being there’ and ‘asking uncomfortable questions’: “*Eddie Brock, with boots on the ground, today, in the Mission District, chasing a lead into some... (...) Last time I was poking around, asking uncomfortable questions.*” The used language obviously outlines the character’s casual style of communication and speech patterns that necessarily include slang. The audiences are also informed that Eddie Brock often ‘investigates’ technological giants and their unacceptable actions: “*Everybody knows how our Silicon Valley overlords at Google and Facebook...*” However, the given sequence mostly places emphasis on Brock’s tendency to follow cases of social unrest or criticise public authorities and (local) politicians: “*Eddie Brock here, reporting today from downtown Oakland, where massive demonstrations have taken over the streets (...) Medical examiner has yet to determine cause of death, due to the condition of the body, but you don’t wind up at the bottom of a landfill due to natural causes, so it seems that the city doesn’t care about these people any more than the killer does.*” These assertions define Eddie Brock as a highly opinionated and fearless journalist, which definitely makes him more authentic in the eyes of his television viewers (strangely enough, Brock’s ratings, fans or audiences are not mentioned even once). The main conflict presented in the movie starts to unfold the moment Brock actually enters the building where his television network is located. However, no other journalists or employees are depicted; the main character immediately enters the office of his boss, Lewis Donate (Malcolm C. Murray), and finds out that he is supposed to conduct a promotional interview with Carlton Drake, a controversial young businessman. The following conversation states quite clearly that Brock heavily relies on his personal sympathies (or antipathies) and initially refuses to cover this exclusive story, claiming that Drake “*(...) is a crook*”. However, another negative aspect of contemporary journalism follows shortly, because Donate reminds Eddie Brock that this organisation gave him a chance after his failed career in New York (the affair is labelled as “*the Daily Globe incident*”, but no further details are provided). And, what is even more problematic, facing his employer’s pressure, Brock does not mention the fact that Annie Weying, his fiancée, is a lawyer and that she currently works for Carlton Drake’s organisation, which is a clear conflict of interest. While back at home, Brock breaks the law, uses his girlfriend’s laptop and obtains confidential information, which confirms that Drake is truly accused of medical misconducts and illegal experiments on human beings.

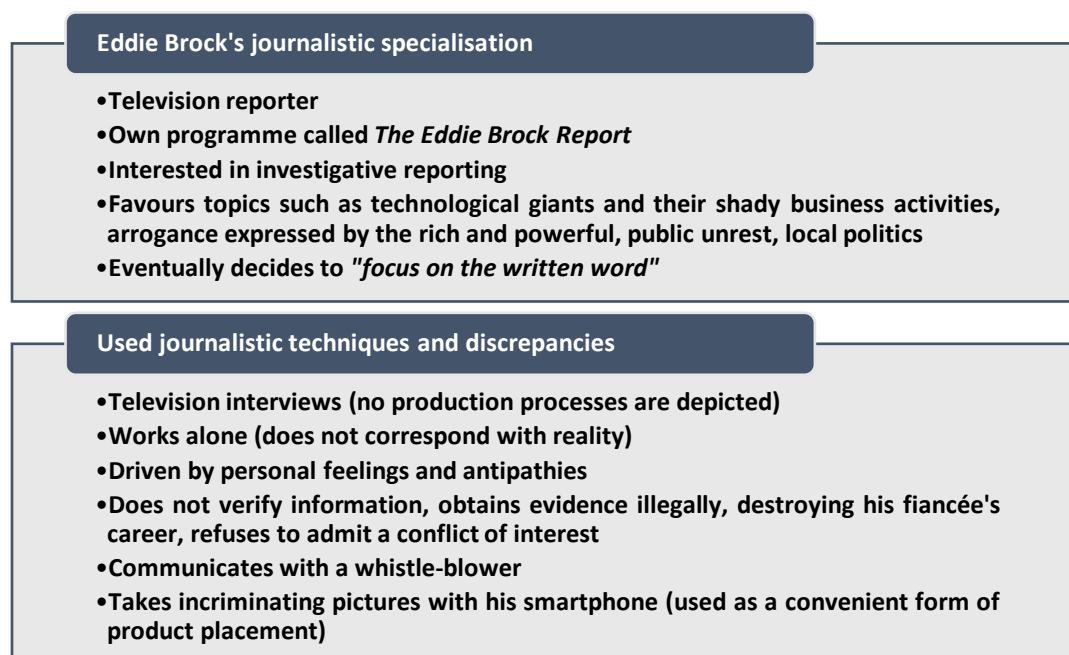
¹² HARCUP, T.: *Oxford Dictionary of Journalism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 143-144.

¹³ BREČKA, S.: Novinárska profesia. In BREČKA, S., ONDRÁŠIK, B., KEKLAK, R.: *Médiá a novinári na Slovensku 2010*. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 103-104.

The mentioned interview with Carlton Drake is the only opportunity to see Eddie Brock in his role of a television reporter. However, he is accompanied by a PR manager or producer, who reminds him repeatedly what kinds of questions he can and cannot ask. This depiction is thus far away from the idea of free and unbiased reporting. No other staff members are portrayed; on the other hand, the camera follows Eddie Brock in a manner that mimics the work of television cameramen. However, even though Brock is supposed to talk about Drake's scientific accomplishments and technological 'miracles' he has created, his initial speech is emphatic and passively aggressive: "*So I have to ask, how does that work, you know, exactly, the Life Foundation thing? How does it... How does it... How does it go about, testing pharmaceuticals?*" At this point, Brock is warned by the present PR manager and he is supposed to return to the interview's main topic and purpose. However, instead of doing that, he continues: "*I'm talking about the allegations (...) It says that your entire empire has been built on dead bodies (...) It's here, right? It says that you recruit the most vulnerable of us to volunteer for tests that more often than not end up killing people.*" The given confrontation uncovers both Eddie Brock's short-tempered nature and his lack of strategic thinking. In contrast, Drake remains calm and argues: "*Yeah, I'm aware of these rumours online. There's a lot of fake news out there these days.*" As expected, Brock's report is not aired. Moreover, he loses his job. When his boss demands an explanation and tries to persuade him to reveal his source, Brock cynically refuses to do so, referring to his intuition: "*I don't have a source per se. But I have a hunch.*" This moment uncovers other shortcomings of Brock's journalistic activities – he does not follow investigative procedures, does not verify information from multiple and mutually independent sources, does not respect legal confidentiality, and does not let anyone know that there is a conflict of interest. As a result, Brock loses his job, rightfully so, and his former boss comments on this speech by saying the following words: "*This isn't the Wild Wild West. We don't go off half-cocked based on a hunch. We do the work. We substantiate our accusations. We provide evidence.*"

While conducting the second part of the analysis, we have to remind ourselves that Eddie Brock is, and always has been, an antiheroic character. His worst life period that follows the discussed events is marked by different inconveniences and unpleasant moments. At first, his fiancée loses her job as well, even though she did not provide Brock with the confidential files on Drake's enterprise on purpose, but rather involuntarily. Their relationship thus ends. Moreover, Brock's conflict with *Life Foundation's* leader during the interview and the following absurd discussion with his own superior discredited his previous journalistic work and robbed him of any possibilities of career advancement. The main protagonist tries to find another job as a freelancer, as an intern, he even considers not using his own name anymore, but to no success. As outlined above, Brock does his best to stay in touch with his profession by reading free newspapers and watching television news at a local bar. Later, he is confronted by Carlton Drake's most trusted scientist, who is deeply concerned and upset due to the fact that *Life Foundation* tries to merge human bodies and alien organisms and, as a result, many people are dead already. Doctor Dora Skirth (Jenny Slate) meets Brock at his favourite grocery store. He acknowledges her presence by referring to his career in journalism, expressing his deep self-pity: "*You know, I used to be a reporter. I was... I was pretty successful, as well, you know? My job, it required you to... You know, to follow people that did not want to be followed and hide in plain sight. I mean... You have to know how to disappear. I was pretty good, but, you know, you... Whoever you are, you suck.*" Nevertheless, Doctor Skirth is willing to share sensitive internal information about the company she works for, becoming Brock's informant and, at the same time, a whistle-blower. The main character initially refuses to return to his occupation, but there is one and only thing that changes his opinion – the desire for revenge he feels when he thinks about Carlton Drake. Nevertheless, Brock's actions are, again, quite

questionable. Doctor Skirth allows him to enter *Life Foundation*'s premises and see the people affected by terminal medical experiments with alien organisms. Since there is no other way to obtain evidence, Brock takes pictures with his smartphone.¹⁴ However, he encounters one of the alien organisms and becomes Venom; the entity starts to live inside his body, influence his thoughts and initiate some of his actions. Even though discussing Venom's tendency to kill, destroy, eat people (or their body parts) and make cynical remarks about it is not the main objective of this paper, we have to note that after becoming Venom, Eddie Brock can no longer become a journalist with personal integrity. Nevertheless, he takes the incriminating photographs to his former boss's office and leaves them there with a note, writing "*do the right thing*". Thus, he does not assume personal responsibility for uncovering Carlton Drake's illegal experiments, but still recovers a part of his former reputation as an investigative journalist. Eddie Brock's story ends when he remarks that the television network that used to broadcast *The Eddie Brock Report* wants him back; however, he decides to "*focus on the written word*", meeting Cletus Kasady/Carnage (Woody Harrelson), a deranged serial killer, who will become Venom's next opponent in the following sequel movie. The results of our analysis are summarised in Picture 2.



Picture 2: Eddie Brock's career of a multimedia journalist

Source: Own processing.

Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned facts, we may conclude that Eddie Brock's 'civil' role as a journalist allows the filmmakers expand the social meanings represented and embodied by the character. As noted by Plencner, Kral'ovičová and Stropko, visual and narrative functions of feature films are not limited to their aesthetic frameworks. Any movie narrative – even *Venom*'s storyline that is largely driven by science-fiction tropes – thus has to comprise

¹⁴ Remark by the authors: Quite understandably, the film's production company, *Sony Pictures/Columbia*, used a device manufactured by its parent conglomerate, a high-end smartphone able to create top quality photographs.

elements of everyday life and ‘ordinary’ struggles the audiences are able to relate to. These aspects might be defined as “social meanings” and filmmakers use them to emphasise the authenticity of their motion pictures.¹⁵ Regarding the film in question, its narrative implies various social meanings – primarily, confronting one’s own dark side (Eddie Brock stops resisting Venom and enjoys his new powers, including the ability to harm, destroy or kill effortlessly). Moreover, we may identify irrational or supernatural forces, which represent the human unconscious (Venom is an alien organism and it is not clear how its symbiosis with a human being actually works). Even though the motif of longing for love is present, since Eddie Brock spends most of the movie by trying to apologise to his former girlfriend Annie and eventually win her back, it is neither dominant, nor too significant. The main protagonist’s desire for justice, driven by his career in journalism, is quickly replaced by the desire for revenge (Eddie Brock/Venom violently eliminates Carlton Drake/Riot). At the end of the story, Brock and Venom act as one and talk about themselves in the first-person plural (“*We are Venom*”). The character of Eddie Brock/Venom is, in his nature, antiheroic; he does not struggle between the good and evil, but rather between the lesser evil and greater evil. The moment when Eddie Brock decides to steal his girlfriend’s confidential files and publicly confront Carlton Drake may be defined as ‘the revolt of Prometheus’. He ignores the instructions of his boss, bases his accusations on unethical practices of obtaining information, and uses methods that have little in common with the true essence of investigative journalism.

At first, Eddie Brock is portrayed like a ‘rock star’ journalist, a frontrunner, who is able to shock, entertain and engage his viewers. He tends to criticise public authorities in relation to their actions (or their lack thereof), technological giants interested in personal data shared online, moments of social unrest and ecological issues. Therefore, Brock crosses the blurred line separating professional journalists and civil activists. According to Megan Knight and Clare Cook, today’s journalism is a mixture of registered professionals regulated by clearly defined ethical and legislative norms, activists following certain social or political goals, and accidental witnesses able to share their unique and authentic stories or pictures. All these groups express different beliefs related to their roles and ideals. One way or another, people associated with journalistic profession need to strengthen their personal brands and reputations more than ever before.¹⁶ Eddie Brock is employed by a nameless television network, which makes him a professional television reporter. However, he is not able to confront, publicly expose and eliminate Carlton Drake in his television programme, *The Eddie Brock Report*. Instead, he fulfils this objective after going rogue, as an unemployed man contacted by one of Drake’s senior researchers, Doctor Dora Skirth, who eventually becomes a whistle-blower. It is necessary to mention that Brock is not able to protect Doctor Skirth, his source; after allowing Brock to infiltrate *Life Foundation* and acquire the evidence he needs, Skirth faces Drake alone and, as a result, she dies.

The popular science-fiction and action movie *Venom* portrays a plethora of social problems that are relevant today and will be relevant in the future (illegal medical experiments, ecologic questions and the current inability to regulate international pharmaceutical companies and globally operating technological giants). Its setting uses the specific and visually attractive images of San Francisco, the ‘technology capital’ of the world. Eddie Brock’s dynamic reports may show little about how investigative journalism actually works, but they still tell us much

¹⁵ PLENCNER A., KRALOVIČOVÁ D., STROPKO M.: Hero Transformations in Contemporary Mainstream Film. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 82-83.

¹⁶ KNIGHT, M., COOK, C.: *Social Media for Journalists: Principles and Practice*. London : Sage Publications, 2013, p. 5.

about how to present investigative topics in the era of multiplatform journalism. Quite paradoxically, Brock plans to turn his rediscovered role of a popular journalist into becoming a reputable writer, i.e., to ‘return back to the roots’. On the one hand, we may argue that this particular portrayal of a professional journalist is distorted and largely influenced by the fact that the main character’s original occupation is just a convenient narrative background driving *Venom*’s primary storyline. On the other hand, it is necessary to remind that seeing journalists in blockbuster movies or episodic dramas about superheroes is not as rare as one would think. After all, both Clark Kent (Superman) and Lois Lane, his love interest, work as professional journalists (these characters belong to the *DC Extended Universe*). In case of characters created by *Marvel Comics*, we may mention Karen Page and Ben Urich (*Marvel’s Daredevil* on Netflix) or Christine Everhart (*Iron Man, Iron Man 2*). Even Peter Parker (better known as Spider-Man) works as a photographer, collaborating with the fictitious tabloid *Daily Bugle* and its hardly tolerable Editor-in-Chief, J. Jonah Jameson. In conclusion, *Venom* has no ambition to portray how investigative journalism truly works, but depicts some of its most serious consequences that can be encountered in real life as well (a journalist losing his job after confronting a rich and powerful person; a murdered whistle-blower; obtaining evidence via a high-end smartphone that can be owned by anyone, not only a journalist, etc.). However, we need to remind ourselves that multimedia journalism (especially its branches specialising in investigative topics) fulfils its true purpose only in case it informs competently and complexly, educates and challenges those parts of reality that need to be challenged. The key professional values of journalism – striving to provide objective facts and verifying information properly – need to be preserved, regardless of what kinds of multimedia platforms we use, which strategies we consider and how many simplified images of journalism there are in globalised cinema.

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NARRATIVIZATION AND NATURALIZATION OF THE LIFE WITH COVID-19 IN THE CZECH RADIO NEWS

Renáta Sedláková – Marek Lapčík

Abstract:

To what extent was the SARS-COV-2 pandemic media-constructed? This paper presents findings from an analysis of the pandemic topic's representation by the public service broadcaster Czech Radio. How changed the framing of the pandemic topic in the broadcast of the Czech Radio during 2020? News and journalism programs from the spring and autumn periods were analysed via triangulation of quantitative (content analysis) and qualitative methods (discourse and narrative analysis). The pandemic was covered intensively and its representation was a factual one based on expert statements in the spring. In the second half of the year, the pandemic topic was politicised and it became used as the contextual frame for representation of other events. While at the beginning the topic was represented through experts' statements and medical discourse, in the second half of the year it changed to the domain of politicians and representatives of various interest groups. These were the manifestation of the process of the naturalisation of life with Covid-19 which took place in the Czech radio broadcast.

Key words:

Czech Radio. Discourse Analysis. News Discourse. Pandemic SARS-COV-2. Public Service Media.

Introduction: SARS-COV-2 Pandemic in the Czech Republic

The first three cases of covid-19 were confirmed in the Czech Republic on 1st March 2020. On 12th March, a state of emergency was declared by the government and a number of restrictive measures were introduced. This first wave of the epidemic culminated in mid-April 2020, when a total of 4,750 infected Covid-19 diseases had been registered. After that, the number of patients began to decline, only to begin to rise again in August, and on 8th September, the number of newly detected cases exceeded 1,000 for the first time. In September, the Czech Republic was one of the worst affected countries in Europe in terms of the number of newly infected people per million inhabitants. On 5th October, a state of emergency was declared again.¹

According to findings of Hamilton and Safford² listening to media (e.g., Fox News or conservative talk radios) during the summer 2020 increased the false impression of the audience that the worst of the pandemic was already behind us. Was the situation in 2020 result of increased media attention? To what extent can the SARS-COV-2 pandemic be perceived as media-constructed? How did the public service medium – Czech Radio (ČRo) – inform the public about the pandemic in 2020? And did the representation of the pandemic contribute to moral panic? This case study shows how the representation of the topic of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic changed in the Czech Radio broadcast during the summer of 2020.³

¹ COVID-19: Přehled aktuální situace v ČR. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <https://onemocneni-aktualne.mzcr.cz/covid-19?utm_source=general&utm_medium=widget&utm_campaign=covid-19_2021>.

² HAMILTON, L. C., SAFFORD, T. G.: *The Worst Is Behind Us: News Media Choice and False Optimism in the Summer of 2020*. [online] [2021-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/47843991/The_worst_is_behind_us_News_media_choice_and_false_optimism_in_the_summer_of_2020>.

³ Remark by the authors: The text is based on an analysis for the Czech Radio Council. See: SEDLÁKOVÁ, R., LAPČÍK, M.: *Analýza reprezentace tématu pandemie SARS-COV-2 ve zpravodajství a publicistice ČRo Plus ČRo Radiožurnál*. [online]. [2021-03-26]. Available at: <<https://rada.rozhlas.cz/dve-nezavisle-odborne-analyzy-vysilani-cro-na-tema-agenda-covid-19-ve-8407754>>.

1 Theoretical Framework of the Analysis

The analysis is based on a media constructivist approach⁴ and followed a semiotic approach to the study of communication. In the process of event representation, its aspects and context that will be mentioned must be revised and selected. The process by which the initial event is transformed into a meaningful message is hereinafter referred to as the thematisation. It establishes the basic form of the narrative, by which the event is presented and described, but at the same time explained and emphasized. A published message is always only one of the possible ways of representing an event; it shows only a part of reality and only from a certain point of view, thus establishing a certain form of bias. The way in which an event is highlighted and related to what is already known, is framing.⁵ By framing the moderator limits the possible meaning of the event and suggests to the recipients how to interpret it.⁶ The interpretive frame used therefore change the communicated information towards the preferred meaning.⁷ In the 1970s, in the book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (2002, third edition), Cohen explained how the media contribute to the image of deviant behaviour by reporting on crime. Although journalists often choose relatively isolated events, their repeated media coverage gives the impression of a growing problem and thus attracts attention to the topic. Journalists identify the perpetrators of a selected event (person or group) to whom they attribute the status of folk devils and further represent them as deviant, dangerous and threatening social values. Other media is taking over the issue, which increases the intensity of its coverage and the interest of the public, which puts pressure on politicians to take appropriate action. Their steps are again publicized and the attention paid to the topic is growing. Such media representation can arouse a feeling of concern or threat in the recipients and arouse the mood of the public. Cohen emphasizes the need to distinguish between the specific way in which messages are mediated (i.e., the work of journalists) and the reactions of their recipients. To the arousal of moral panic contributes the use of journalistic techniques, which Cohen calls “over-reporting”.⁸

A key point of Cohen’s concept is the emphasis on the moral background of mediated cases, as the topic that become the core of moral panic reflects deeper social problems. Ben-Yehuda emphasized the role of moral values, and considered moral panic as a conflict between two parties and incompatible interests – political, religious or cultural.⁹ According to Hall, it is a tool for spreading the dominant ideology and practicing social control in a hegemonic society; it does not arise by chance, but supports one’s interests.¹⁰ Garland points out that the objects of moral panic are becoming the scapegoats of a given social order confirmation.¹¹ While

⁴ See: SCHULZ, W.: Masová média a realita. ‘Ptolemaiovské’ a ‘Kopernikovské’ pojetí. In JIRÁK, J., ŘÍCHOVÁ, B.: *Politická komunikace a média*. Prague : Karolinum, 2000, p. 24-40; LUHMANN, N.: *The Reality of the Mass Media*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2000; KOPYTOWSKÁ, M.: Mediating Identity, Ideology and Values in the Public Sphere: Towards a New Model of (Constructed) Social Reality. In *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 133-156.

⁵ ENTMAN, R.: Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. In *Journal of Communication*, 1993, Vol. 43, No. 3, p. 52; MCCOMBS, M.: *Agenda Setting. Nastolování agendy: Masová média a veřejné mínění*. Prague : Portál, 2009, p. 132-135.

⁶ HARTLEY, J.: *Understanding News*. London, New York : Routledge, 1982, p. 126.

⁷ HALL, S.: Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse. In GREY, A. et al. (eds.): *CCCS Selected Working Papers. Vol. 2*. Birmingham : University of Birmingham, 1973, p. 393.

⁸ See: COHEN, S.: *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. 3rd Edition. London : Routledge, 2002, p. 19-26.

⁹ BEN-YEHUDA, N.: The Sociology of Moral Panics: Toward a New Synthesis. In *The Sociological Quarterly*, 1986, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 499.

¹⁰ For more information, see: HALL, S. et al.: *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 1978.

¹¹ GARLAND, D.: On the Concept of Moral Panic. In *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2008, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 15.

the original panics arose as unintended consequences of the work of journalists, later the media became the ones who began to stimulate certain topics, McRobbie and Thornton believe.¹² Although the theory of moral panic has been revised¹³ several times since the 1970s, those who apply it today¹⁴ agree that panics are often artificially induced to divert attention from another current social problem. In the analytical part, we will focus on whether the theory of moral panic is a suitable tool to conceptualise the media representation of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic topic in the Czech Radio broadcast.

2 Study Methodology

The aim of this text is to describe the changes in the representation of the pandemic in broadcasting of ČRo during the spring and autumn 2020. The following questions led our research: What time was devoted to the topic of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic in the given programs in comparison with other topics? Which aspects and sub-topics of the pandemic were most often represented? What information sources and speakers were most cited in connection with the pandemic topic? The presented case study was conducted by a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The input step was guided by content analysis, which allows to process large data samples.¹⁵ This text primarily presents the findings of qualitative analysis performed by inductive data processing methods according to the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin, in order to derive more general findings from the examined data.¹⁶ We applied qualitative techniques (narrative analysis, semiotic analysis and discourse analysis)¹⁷ to analyse the construction of the examined messages, interview

¹² MCROBBIE, A., THORNTON, L. S.: Rethinking 'Moral Panic' for Multi-Mediated Social Worlds. In *British Journal of Sociology*, 1995, Vol. 46, No. 4, p. 559.

¹³ Remark by the authors: Following changes in the form of news and the media, Johansson introduced the concept of postmodern panic. Unlike moral panic, this has an episodic character and low impact on society, as it lost the potential to activate wider social groups around the topic. See: JOHANSSON, T.: Moral Panics Revisited. In *Young. Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 2000, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 26.

¹⁴ For more details, see: ALTHEIDE, D. L.: Moral Panic: from Sociological Concept to Public Discourse. In *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2009, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 79-99; COHEN, S.: Whose Side Are We on? The Undeclared Politics of Moral Panic Theory. In *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2011, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 237-243; SEDLÁKOVÁ, R.: Moral Panic over Migration in the Broadcasting of the Czech Radio. In *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 2017, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 235-260.

¹⁵ For more information, see: NEUENDORF, K. A.: *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. London : Sage, 2002.

¹⁶ See, for example: STRAUSS, A. L., CORBINOVÁ, J. M.: *Základy kvalitativního výzkumu. Postupy a techniky metody zakotvené teorie*. Boskovice : Albert, 1999.

¹⁷ Remark by the authors: Semiotic analysis seeks to understand the social use of characters in the context of a particular culture. By identifying the basic features of a message, it revealed the communicated meanings. It is often associated with structural analysis, which focuses on the compositional elements of the text that make up its narrative. We start from the concept of narrative based on the duality of the story (formed by interrelated events and their actors) and discourse (structuring the way the story is told, the selection of events, their order, legitimisation of the role of actors, etc.). For more information, see: CHATMAN, S.: *Příběh a diskurz*. Brno : Host, 2008; LABOV, W., WALETSKY, J.: Narrative Analysis. In HELM, J. (ed.): *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1967, p. 12-44. Narrative analysis assumes a causally constructed text from individual events that follow each other logically. The researcher's goal is to reconstruct the meaning of the text based on the characters used and their structure. See also: CHANDLER, D.: *Semiotics. The Basics*. London : Routledge, 2002; SEDLÁKOVÁ, R.: *Výzkum médií. Nejužívanější metody a techniky*. Prague : Grada, 2014. The revealed meaning always depended on what features the researcher was able to reveal and in what culture they emphasise them. It is necessary to interpret media messages with regard to their broader socio-cultural context and other (even non-media) texts. This is the goal of discourse analysis and critical discursive analysis, which emphasize the creation of social reality through language and social action (praxis). As van Dijk points out, a key effort in discourse analysis is to examine the reproduction and legitimacy of the widespread ideologies and discursive practices used by people in power to maintain the *status quo*. See: VAN DIJK, T. A.: Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. In *Discourse and Society*, 1993, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 249-283.

procedures and identified the narrative routines of the ČRo's discourse. In the analysis, we focused on: 1) the thematisation of individual events represented in connection with the pandemic topic and the identification of narratives used in the news discourse; 2) identification of propositions related to the topic of the pandemic and the associated ideological macroproposition of the discourse under study. The qualitative analysis was conducted from the perspective of the model reader¹⁸ on the Eco's principle of economics of interpretation¹⁹ revealing the key meaning of the message. This procedure has been established in media studies as the only possible, as the analysis cannot take into account the individual knowledge or preferences of audience members and other factors influencing their decoding (e.g., level of attention, etc.). Different types of programs broadcasted by ČRo Plus and ČRo Radiožurnál were included in the research sample to cover the wider range of the broadcast. The *Main News at 12 (Hlavní zprávy ve 12)* is 8 minutes of news followed by journalism's *Main News – Interviews, Comments (Hlavní zprávy – rozhovory, komentáře)*²⁰ focused usually on three selected events.²¹ The programs *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal (Dvacet minut Radiožurnálu)*²² and *Interview Plus (Interview plus)*²³ are based on the interview of a moderator (usually) with one guest, approximately 22 to 26 minutes length, broadcasted from Monday to Friday. The analysis included 41 parts of the *Main News* program, 35 parts of the *Main News – Interviews, Comments* program, 27 parts of the *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal* and 29 parts of *Interview Plus*.²⁴ Over 40 hours of broadcast recording were analysed in total.

The analysis included broadcasts during two periods of three weeks: 1) spring: 9th – 29th March 2020 and 2) autumn: 21st September – 11th October. The selected sample follows the development of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic in the Czech Republic. The first period covers the beginning of a pandemic accompanied by the declaration of a state of emergency on 12th March; the second one covers the onset of the second wave of the pandemic at the turn of September and October and the re-declaration of a state of emergency on 5th October. The possibility of comparison of these periods was complicated by the broadcasting of one-off programs (e.g., a government press conference or special broadcast focused on a pandemic or election²⁵ topic), which irregularly disrupted the broadcasting of the examined programs. However, our intention was to analyse more general broadcasting trends. The basic research

¹⁸ Remark by the authors: The model reader is an analytical construct. The model reader is focused on the communicated content and decodes the meanings of the above with knowledge of other aspects of the presented topic. See: ECO, U.: *Meze interpretace*. Prague : Karolinum, 2004, p. 61.

¹⁹ Remark by the authors: According to Eco, individual meanings are more likely to be generated by a certain text than others, and incorrect or unlikely interpretations can be identified. See, for example: ECO, U.: *Meze interpretace*. Prague : Karolinum, 2004, p. 58.

²⁰ *Hlavní zprávy – rozhovory, komentáře*. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/hlavni-zpravy-rozhovory-a-komentare-5997846>>.

²¹ Remark by the authors: To the combination of these two we refer to as midday news.

²² *Dvacet minut Radiožurnálu*. [online]. [2015-05-01]. Available at: <<https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/dvacet-minut-radiozurnalu-5997743/o-poradu>>.

²³ *Interview Plus*. [online]. [2015-05-05]. Available at: <<https://plus.rozhlas.cz/interview-plus-6504167/o-poradu>>.

²⁴ Remark by the authors: The *Main News* were broadcast every day, with the exception of 13th March, when a live broadcast of the government's press conference took place. *Main News – Interviews, Comments* was not broadcast on 12th to 16th March, 21st September and 4th October because of the special broadcast. *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal* was not broadcast on 12th March and 23rd September because of special broadcast and on 28th September due to a public holiday. On 23rd March, the broadcast was interrupted after 7 minutes by a live press conference, the same guest was on the show the next day. The *Interview Plus* was broadcast every weekday except on 28th September (public holiday).

²⁵ Remark by the authors: The regional and Senate elections took place on 2nd and 3rd October, what makes the comparability of the periods difficult.

unit was one contribution, i.e., a closed set of speeches by a moderator or reporter or a combination of the two relating to one event or one topic. The contribution could be news or journalism. The programs *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal* and *Interview Plus* were coded as one research unit, as it was always one interview with one guest. By dividing the programs into research units, we tried to affect the content and thematic structure of the programs in as much detail as possible. The findings are presented with reference to individual programs and the period under study. Because we used the purpose sampling, the acquired knowledge is valid for selected programs of the ČRo Radiožurnál and ČRo Plus in selected terms.²⁶ The large volume of researched data, combination of research methods and achieved data saturation in the analysis of the observed phenomenon strengthens the validity of the findings. With generic terms: pandemic, covid-19 and coronavirus, we refer to the complexity of the events that were the subject of the analysis. They were used as a ‘neutral designation’ of the studied phenomena, regardless of how they were used in the analysed programs.

3 Time and Space Devoted to the SARS-COV-2 Pandemic

In total 508 research units were coded; 241 in spring and 267 in autumn period. Not all reported on the subject of the pandemic topic (Table 1). Although fewer articles were broadcast on selected programs in the spring, 81% of them represented the pandemic as the main or secondary topic. In the autumn, their share dropped significantly to 42%.

Table 1: Presence of the pandemic topic in the research units (absolute/relative frequency)

Topic	1 st Period – Spring 2020			2 nd Period – Autumn 2020		
	Pandemic as Main or Secondary	Other (Mention on Pandemic)	Total 100%	Pandemic as Main or Secondary	Other (Mention on Pandemic)	Total 100%
Program						
Main News	138 (83%)	29 (12)	167	67 (38%)	115 (19)	182
Main News – Interviews, Comments	41 (91%)	4 (3)	45	31 (53%)	27 (2)	58
Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal	8 (57%)	6 (5)	14	6 (46%)	7 (5)	13
Interview Plus	9 (60%)	6 (2)	15	7 (50%)	7 (4)	14
Total	196 (81%)	45	241	111 (42%)	156	267

Source: Own processing.

In the spring 2020, the midday news and journalism programs covered the pandemic every day. The emphasis on the pandemic topic was evident from the order of contributions within the sessions. The majority (70%) of news and journalistic articles were shown at midday programs between the first four news; 25% of them were the openers. 63% contributions from midday programs reported on pandemic within domestic content; in the interviews the topic was communicated in a broader context with an abroad overlap. As Chart 1 shows, the share of these contributions exceeded 59% of the midday programs. This created a major disproportion in the thematic agenda of selected programs, as the time for all other topics was significantly reduced. In addition, the pandemic was often presented as a secondary topic in

²⁶ Remark by the authors: The findings cannot be extrapolated to the topic representation in other programs or in the next period of pandemic development.

other messages. Regardless of the actual development of the pandemic in autumn, its coverage in CRo broadcasting changed and 70% of the time were devoted to other topics. This is one of the key findings that we will deal with in more detail.

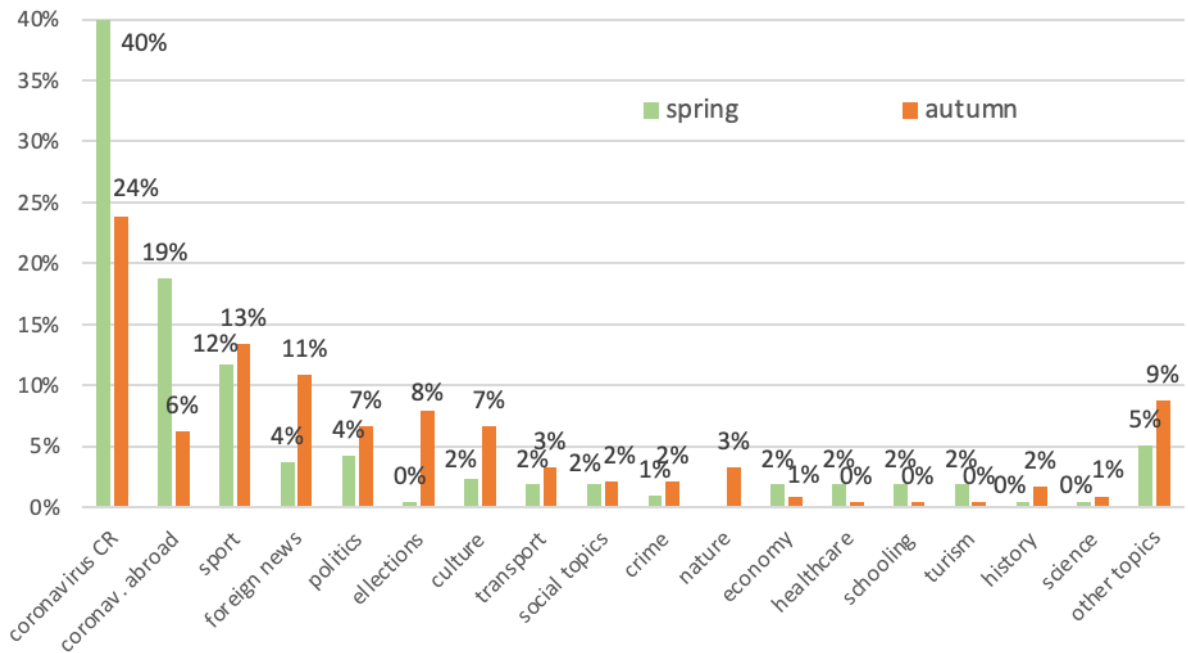


Chart 1: Main topic of contributions in the midday news programs (relative frequency)

Source: Own processing.

We analysed 307 contributions that addressed the pandemic as the main or secondary topic in detail. We focused on the most often represented aspects of the topic and how the thematic agenda differed in the spring and autumn in the quantitative analysis.

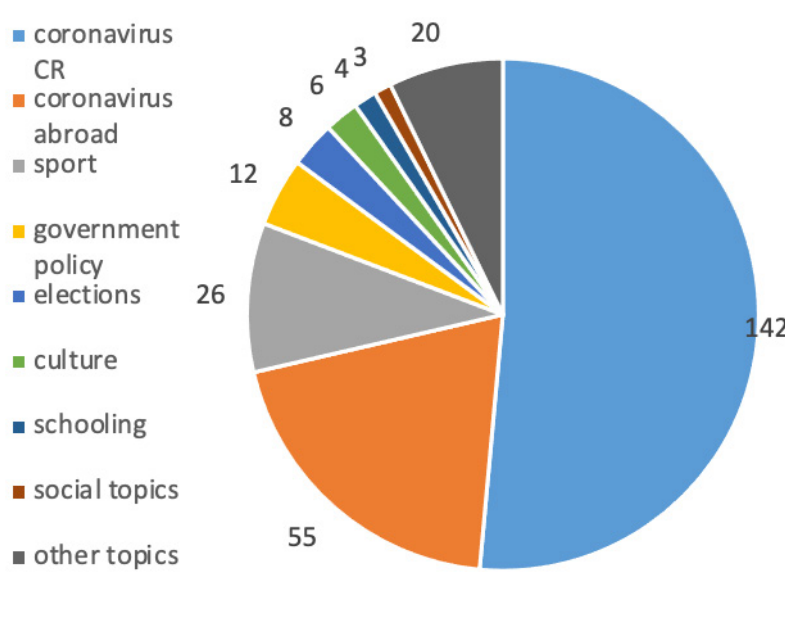


Chart 2: Topic of contributions on the pandemic in the midday news programs (N = 277; absolute frequency)

Source: Own processing.

The key information provided in connection with the pandemic was the data on its spread, the number of infected, sick, hospitalised and dead in the Czech Republic or abroad. Although the broadcast mentioned the situation in almost fifty countries around the world, mostly data from European countries (Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Great Britain, Spain, France) and the USA were mentioned. With a slight exaggeration, we could say that the mask had become a symbol of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. Respiratory protection devices were mentioned in 177 contributions at midday news and journalism programs. While the lack of respiratory protective equipment was mentioned in the spring, in the autumn there was increasing information about the resistance of part of the population to the use of respiratory protective equipment. The narrative of public distrust of the government and its measures were gaining ground. Information about the possible origin of the virus was broadcast marginally. The mention of China, which the new type of coronavirus probably spread was included in 23 news and 15 interviews. Only 11 articles reported on Covid-19 treatments and the vaccine invention and testing. The topic of vaccination was established in the broadcast after the 2nd analysed period.

In 61% research units, direct quotations from the speaker's statement were used. The journalists mostly referred to government representatives of the Czech Republic (and spokespeople of the relevant ministries) and regional policy (mayors and regional representatives), to other media and news agencies. The most frequently cited professional group were politicians (25% of contributions) followed by journalists. Furthermore, representatives of the manufacturing and business sectors, directors of companies, as well as self-employed people and general public. Representatives of trade unions and of fields affected by the development of 2020, restaurateurs, tourism entrepreneurs or performers in the arts were given the opportunity to express their experience in the broadcast. The topic of the pandemic was reflected in the composition of the guests invited to the interview programs. They acted as speakers with expert status in relation to current events. They did not necessarily have to be epidemiologists or doctors, but, for example, representatives of various interest groups and associations. Paradoxically, the statements of medical staff or directors of hospitals and social facilities were heard only 17 times in the whole sample. This is another key finding. Despite the fact that the represented event, the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, is a biological phenomenon, its representation in the broadcast of selected ČRo programs showed a fundamental political framing. The qualitative analysis shows this in more detail.

4 Narrativisation of the SARS-COV-2 Pandemic Topic

The analysed programs, despite mutual structural and genre differences, synergistically participated in the construction of the representation of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. In all of them, the same narrativisation procedures were used in both examined periods (different only in the level of a specific format – report, interview). However, the pandemic topic was represented differently in the spring and autumn period. The analysis revealed that broader spectrum of events was covered in autumn and the framing of the pandemic changed from the apolitical to political one. As a result of this the pandemic topic was naturalised in the broadcast of the ČRo in autumn 2020. We will show it in more detail.

4.1 The Differences in the Representation of the Pandemic Topics in Spring and Autumn

In the first examined period, the representation of the pandemic topic was constructed apolitically. At the beginning of 2020, covid-19 was unknown and the danger and specificity attributed to it, it required a high level of expert knowledge for media representation.

The analysed messages strongly emphasised the medical and epidemiological nature of the topic. Events from the field of politics (e.g., the shutdown of roads on 18th March) were factually grasped with this perspective and have been represented as actions to mitigate the risks, as an act of ‘fighting the pandemic’. For example, the declaration of a state of emergency from the 12th March was not represented as political acts but as a primarily anti-epidemic measure. In spring, there gradually was an almost total news coverage of the pandemic, which thus de facto became the only newsworthy topic. During the period, the representation of the theme in both programs became dominant and information about other events were framed by the context of the pandemic.²⁷ Example 1²⁸ shows the framing of a represented event by the pandemic; reported activity is an infringement *per se*, i.e., outside of the state of emergency.

EXAMPLE 1: 12th April 2020 – *Main News*: The park administration forwards the complaint to the police on suspicion of violating the conditions of the state of emergency and the ban on crossing state borders

PRES: “According to the park management, the riders set off from Horní Míšečky and reached Obří důl and returned. (...) According to the guards, their wild ride disturbed, among other things, the rare meadows as well as the nesting place of the peregrine falcon and the wintering ground of the black grouse. The park administration forwards the complaint to the police on suspicion of violating the conditions of the state of emergency and the ban on crossing the state border. (...)”

The dramaturgy of the selection of guests corresponded to the nature of the represented topic and included a number of experts in journalism part of the midday programs in spring. The interviews were typically conducted in a cooperative manner in the form of a fact-finding interview. Guests were left considerable space to formulate structured and comprehensively argued statements, and the moderator directed them to provide more detailed information through follow-up questions. This was also the case in some interviews with politicians,²⁹ whose interviews are customarily in a confrontational mode.

Although the course of the pandemic in the autumn of 2020 had more serious consequences (orders of magnitude higher numbers of infected, hospitalised and victims), the representation of the pandemic took on a different form in the ČRo broadcast. However, the differences found cannot be attributed only to the media agenda. Shifts across the discourse of political and public opinion also played a significant role.³⁰ Due to its long-term nature, the pandemic ceased to be the dominant referent of media discourse and there were more and more posts unrelated to the topic (e.g., none of the posts were devoted to the pandemic on 2nd October). The content of the programs reflected the gradual naturalisation of the topic. This can be illustrated by the media agenda of the midday *Main News* on 5th October, i.e., on the day when the state of emergency began again. One of the main reports of the program was the meeting of the Czech government on the preparation of the Danube – Odra – Elbe corridor. At the same time, elections to the regional councils and the Senate of the Czech Republic took place, i.e., events to which an above-standard level of media attention is regularly paid. Against the background of these two facts, the representation of the monitored topic in

²⁷ Remark by the authors: By pandemic were also framed foreign news, e.g., on 17th March interview with M. Slezák: *Former US Vice President Joe Biden Approaches Victory in the Primary Election*.

²⁸ Remark by the authors: The examples given from the programs are selected as those that best illustrate the phenomenon described. The names of moderators/editors/journalists or speakers are not mentioned intentionally. This article uses the following abbreviations to identify the different types of speakers: PRES = presenter; REP = reporter; ACT = actor/guest (any kind of speakers apart from the editorial staff).

²⁹ Remark by the authors: For example, on 19th March in *Main News – Interviews and Comments: Monday It Will Be 9 Working Days after the Children Stopped Going to School*.

³⁰ Remark by the authors: This was evident in the days when regional and the Senate elections took place.

autumn 2020 can be characterized as the information naturalisation of the pandemic. The coronavirus became a part of everyday life of the Czech society and the pandemic had become the context in which other events took place. The topic of the pandemic was increasingly used as a means of framing of other events.

The representation of the pandemic was transformed from a medical to a political phenomenon. Its representation through speakers with the status of experts weakened and the media discourse of the pandemic was politicised and economised. Anti-epidemic measures, the new declaration of a state of emergency and other related events were no longer represented as phenomena primarily associated with a pandemic, but as political acts. As part of the process of naturalisation of the pandemic, the topic and its epiphenomena became the subject of media-represented political discourse. The politicisation of the topic was also reflected in the spectrum of cited sources and invited guests.³¹ In the media representation of the pandemic, the share of actors of political discourse – representatives of political, professional or interest associations – gradually increased (see Example 2 – selection of guests, representatives of two parliamentary parties). The (political) economisation of discourse, i.e., the emphasised economic aspects, was also increasingly significant. In the autumn, however, the economic measures and the problems caused by them were primarily thematised as government actions³² and not as consequences of efforts to reduce the spread of the disease. The confrontational mode of interviews (which is evident at the level of stylistics of formulating questions or in the corrections of guest by moderators), which are usual for the show, returned.

EXAMPLE 2: 30th September 2020 – *Main News – Interviews, Comments*: The Czech Republic is one step away from the declaration of an emergency due to the coronavirus epidemic

PRES: “*In our parliamentary studio, Miloslav Janulík, Deputy Chairman of the Health Committee for the YES Movement and a member of the Constitutional Law Committee of the Chamber of Deputies is (...) And over the phone lines, we connected with another vice-chairman of the health committee from the Pirate Party, Petr Třešňák. Good afternoon to you too. (...)*”

4.2 Politisation of Pandemic Topic in the Interviews

In the *Interviews Plus* and *Twenty of RadioJournál* programs, the differences between the spring and autumn periods were not so significant.³³ The discourse of the pandemic did not have such a strong medical character, and the share of experts in the field of epidemiology, medicine and related sciences did not prevail. The vast majority of guests in both monitored periods were experts on some related topics (economists, sociologists, philosophers, etc.). The pandemic operated as an overarching frame for thematising other events in the interviews. An example is the discussion of a consignment of masks³⁴ from China, which became the starting point for thematising concerns about the growing Chinese influence in the world. The politicisation of the pandemic discourse took on an ideological dimension based on framing

³¹ Remark by the authors: Especially with the approaching election date.

³² Remark by the authors: For example, on 1st October in *Main News – Interviews, Comments*. PRES: “*The Minister of Health assured that the restrictions will not damage the economy, but you admit that they will be tangible in the economy, especially those unsubsidized theatres, which, as we know, have already been hit by almost six months. activities?*”

³³ Remark by the authors: Even the topic of regional and senate elections, which was reflected in other analysed programs, was marginal in *Interview Plus*.

³⁴ Remark by the authors: Another example of politicisation is the labelling of a mask. In the context of a pandemic situation, the terms ‘medical supplies’ or ‘protective equipment’ have different meaning and consequences. It was, for example, the topic of an interview with the Minister of the Interior Jan Hamáček on 24th September in *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournál*.

the subject of the pandemic through geopolitical allusions to China or Russia.³⁵ It was present in some interviews as early as the spring. A key point in the ideologisation of the pandemic (Examples 3, 4, 5)³⁶ discourse was the discussion on the supply of medical supplies from China. This was the dominant topic in an interview with the Chancellor of the President of the Republic V. Mynář on 25th March (Example 3), which had the form of conflict interview. On the contrary, Examples 4 and 5 illustrate the cooperative mode of interviewing by the moderator and his acceptance of generalising or unsubstantiated statements by guests. As such the interviews indicate the opinion of the moderator and should be seen as biased.

EXAMPLE 3: 25th March 2020 – *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournál*: View of the Castle on the current situation

PRES: “*One more thing, Chancellor, with permission, I am interested in the President’s speech, in his speech the President thanked China for help in a crisis situation, for being able to buy the necessary medical protective equipment there, why did not thank the European Union in the same speech? (...)”*

PRES: “*Denik N and weekly Respekt came with the information that China purchased all protective medical supplies in the Czech Republic during January and February. (...)”*

PRES: “*And what do you think about that, about the information that China has bought protective equipment here, and now we’re looking for it wherever we can. (...)”*

PRES: “*Chancellor, I wonder if there is such a role in, say, some political protection, good political relations, and so on. What will China want for that? (...)”*

EXAMPLE 4: 26th March 2020 – *Interview Plus*: Interview with Senator Pavel Fischer

ACT: “*(...) Today, there is no talk of the European Union helping the Chinese, today there is only talk of **China graciously selling us medical supplies**. You know, it seems to me as if someone came to you to set fire to your house, but then, as an arsonist, he sold you a fire extinguisher around the corner.*”

PRES: “*And we would thank.*”

ACT: “*And even more overpriced. And we would thank. Watch it. **This disease comes from China**, let’s read (...). What has China done since then?”*

PRES: “*Basically nothing.*”

ACT: “***She started checking people on the Internet, but did not ensure hygiene in public places.** This is (...)”*

PRES: “*Mr. Fischer, I repeat a question that has fallen a bit, I feel when I asked **who might intend to subject the Czechia to Chinese influence here**, for example, depending on the supply of medical aids or medicines and medicines.*”

ACT: “***Large financial groups. Mr President, who has a delegation with unclear content and unclear composition broadcast there. Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, who receives Communists in his office** (...) And we can continue. We have to be kind of –”*

PRES: “*Alert, as he said.*”

ACT: “*Alert because the Czech Social Democracy signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Chinese Communist Party 4 years ago. **How is the memorandum implemented? How has this undermined the ability of the actors who today are constitutional actors for social democracy and responsible for our republic?** (...)”*

EXAMPLE 5: 3rd March 2020 – *Interview Plus*: Interview with the philosopher Václav Nėmec

PRES: “*And that’s what I’m asking, not whether China or Russia, regimes that have problems with democracy, as you yourself said, that are trying to gain influence outside their territory in various ways, will continue to do so, because it is probably clear that yes, but rather whether people who have been subject to those disinformation e-mails in the light of the fact that now the main heroes today are medics, doctors, scientists, if they do not reconsider their approaches?”*

ACT: “*Well, of course we see that **China is already starting to warm up its soup, or rather uses the situation, which it itself caused to strengthen its influence** in the world and especially in Europe, so I think the Czech case is sufficiently illustrative. **This country, from which the disease actually originates and which has spread, among other things, thanks to the fact that there is such an authoritarian regime, now with great glory and***

³⁵ Remark by the authors: For example, on 18th March interview with political geographer Michael Romancov.

³⁶ Remark by the authors: Due to the scope of the text, only parts of interviews are given here. Elements of cooperative interview management are underlined. The extracts in which the representation of the pandemic (by the moderator or the guest) acquires ideological valence are bold.

pomp supplies us with respirators, masks and tests, which are not really very useful in this situation. And the delegation comes to the airport almost as if a state visit has arrived (...)

The politicisation of the topic in the autumn was manifested on the one hand by the differences in the selection of guests, whose competence to express themselves on the topic was derived from their professional position. At the same time, representatives of various professional associations were given space in the broadcast, whose positions were in conflict with the government's procedures (Example 6). This created different dualities of opinion government/epidemiologists/state on the one hand and citizens/employees/self-employed/interest groups on the other.

EXAMPLE 6: 25th September 2020 – *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournál*: Interview with a representative of restaurateurs Luboš Kastner

PRES: “So, what would be an acceptable compromise for you? (...) And will you try to negotiate with the government?”

ACT: “We are already in communication; we want to talk actively. We would welcome if the government were even more active towards us, (...) And it is difficult to operate really or do business at a time when decisions are changing from day to day and even our people, those 150,000 employees are not sure or not the outlook or what lies ahead, so we would welcome a far more active approach by both epidemiologists and the government. We are a big field.”

This duality of opinions could be understood as a binary opposition. The contributions on the pandemic topic were usually based on them. The elements of the binary oppositions used changed during the year. The opposition We versus Virus, which created a sense of a shared imaginary social unity, was present in the spring. In the autumn, the structure of the pandemic representation changed and the binary opposition used took on more variants. For example: government/epidemiologists/state/measures/restrictions versus citizens/interest or professional associations/employees/entrepreneurs/medical staff/families/teachers/self-employed, etc. The concretization of the dualities' parties varied depending on the currently represented topic and specific events. This variability of parties is common for non-pandemic media discourse. So, it is another sign of normalization of the pandemic topic in the ČRo discourse.

4.3 Representation of a Pandemic through the Lens of the Theory of Moral Panic

The question remains to be answered whether the representation of pandemic topic contributed to the arousal of moral panic. A number of statements were published in the Czech mainstream and alternative media in the past year, claiming that panic-causing media had a role to play in the current situation.³⁷ Even in the examined sample, contributions can be found that corresponded to the style that Cohen describes as over-reporting.³⁸ One of the key features of such journalism is publishing large numbers and exaggerating of the event scope.³⁹

³⁷ For more information see: BŘEŠŤAN, R.: *The Case of Coronavirus and the Failure of Czech Journalists. Media Can Be behind Empty Shelves*. Released on 28th February 2020. [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <<https://hlidacipes.org/kauza-koronavirus-a-selhani-ceskych-novinaru-za-prazdne-regaly-mohou-media/>>;

KUBALA, R.: *Media and Coronavirus: The More Fear, the Greater the Profits*. Released on 31st January 2020. [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <<https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/30703-media-a-koronavirus-cim-vice-strachu-tim-vetsi-zisky>>.

³⁸ Remark by the authors: Over-reporting is characterized by: 1) the use of specific language and emotional symptomatic signs (events are labelled as an incident, riot or problem); (2) misleading headlines differ in meaning from the content of the news; (3) stating large numbers and exaggerating; (4) publishing inaccurate and incomplete data from unverified and untrustworthy sources. See: COHEN, S.: *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. 3rd Edition. London : Routledge, 2002, p. 19.

³⁹ Remark by the authors: The publication of inaccurate or incomplete data from unverified and untrusted sources is another sign of over-reporting. Fact-checking was not the aim of this analysis, so we cannot comment on this point.

The sample included 71 contributions presenting statistical data on the number of infected, sick, hospitalised or deceased in the Czech Republic or abroad. If we compare it with the number of research days (42), listeners heard such numbers at least once a day, rather twice nevertheless that sample did not include all-day broadcast. Although the presentation of this data was justified by the situation, it is possible to question the method of construction of particular contributions, such as the choice of wording and stylistics. The alarming style of over-reporting is evident from Examples 7, 8, 9.

EXAMPLE 7: 17th September 2020 – *Main News*: More than 2,000 coronavirus infections in a single day in the Czech Republic

PRES: “More than 2,000 coronavirus infections in a single day in the Czech Republic. Tests on Wednesday confirmed a total of 2,139 new cases of Covid-19. This is the largest daily increase during the entire epidemic. At half past one, the Ministry of Health will publish further measures against the spread of coronavirus. (...)”

REP: “Most people infected with coronavirus have a mild course of the disease. In recent days, however, the number of hospitalised has been growing, while on Monday there were 333 people with Covid-19 in hospitals, on Tuesday it was already 388, i.e., 55 more in one day. A total of 482 patients died. (...)”

EXAMPLE 8: 27th March 2020 – *Main News – Interviews, Comments*: Italy still remains the country with the highest number of infected people in Europe and also the highest number of deaths

PRES: “Italy still remains the country with the most infected people in Europe and also the most deaths. Since the beginning of the spread of the infection, the number of positively tested patients has increase to 80,000. 10,300 people recovered, 8,250 died. Although in recent days Italian experts have expressed cautious hope that the epidemic is losing somewhat strength. The new statistics do not correspond to this. The situation in the worst affected region of Lombardy is not improving either. Yesterday's numbers infected, unfortunately, saw a sharp increase, with 2,500 infected in a single day. (...)”

EXAMPLE 9: 2nd April 2020 – *Interview Plus*: Interview with former Governor of the Czech National Bank Zdeněk Tůma

ACT: “(...) so there will be less money for everything, including health care, so I'm afraid that as a result of –”

PRES: “An attempt to rescue people infected with coronavirus would fail healthcare as such.”

ACT: “I will not say that it fails, but of course...”

PRES: “Or can it fail?”

ACT: “Unsuccessful healthcare, but we will simply have impaired care, as it is already manifesting at the moment, and I am not talking about this, the recession has not yet begun, just as the next years will be very difficult.”

(...)

PRES: “But I will remind Italy and Spain again, where they seem to have reacted slowly, the health system is overwhelmed now and we see what is happening, hundreds of people are dying –”

ACT: “I think –”

PRES: “And now the question is whether, for example, the Czech government, if it has taken the drastic measures that restrict, for example, the free movement of people or close borders, is not trying to prevent this, whether it is not successful in this when we watch the Czechia and Italy.”

ACT: “You know what, everyone who wants to scare points to Italy and Spain –”

PRES: “So that's pretty scary.”

(...)

ACT: “Exactly, because otherwise you will actually kill the economy, yeah, so, then we risk ending up with a broken economy and also with a broken society, because the idea of having unemployment between 10 – 20%, and now I don't want to say that no numbers, because we don't know how it will all turn out, but it is obvious that it will go up, so it will have a major impact on society. (...)”

Another feature of over-reporting is the use of metaphors. When representing the topic of a pandemic, the most common use was war discourse, i.e., the term war or struggle (Example 10), which evoked the need for securitization and adequate retaliation.

EXAMPLE 10: 20th March 2020 – *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal*

ACT: “(...) *Well, the second level, we clearly said yesterday as a government, that the fight we are currently having with coronavirus has 2 phases. The health and then, of course, the fight to prevent coronavirus from actually destroying our economy and our labour market, and that's where we're, next to the security level, actually launching the largest set of steps and safeguards to prevent coronavirus from damaging our economy and all jobs.*”

Metaphors were present mainly in journalistic programs; they did not get into the news part of the broadcast. More frequently, the consequences of a pandemic and a crisis situation were identified as a problem and the use of emotional symptomatic signs, such as the adjective ‘drastic’⁴⁰ measures or ‘dramatic’⁴¹ development of the infection. In some articles, the moderators and editors discussed the fear of a pandemic and its consequences (see Example 11).⁴²

EXAMPLE 11: 19th March 2020 – *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal*

PRES: “*Maybe if I move more generally to the disease, to the epidemic we're watching around us, Professor, how are you watching, with what anxiety are you watching now according to the new numbers we see as the disease is spreading in each in European countries, but also in countries outside Europe? (...)*”

PRES: “*(...) On the one hand, you said the absolutely closed cities in the Chinese province of Wuhan, then the measures that should be observed by the public, each of us, but such a quarantine, which is currently announced in the Czech Republic, it's actually enough to listen to you like that, I'm almost worried, right? (...)*”

PRES: “*And when did you start to worry, Professor? I ask because I read an interview with you that came out in *Diary N*, I guess, at the turn of January February, and there you were just, say, such a restrained optimist about the spread of this type of virus when you reconsidered, say, the approach to or did you start to worry more? (...)*”

Although we recorded the features that correspond to over-reporting in the research sample, Cohen's theory of moral panic cannot simply be applied to the representation of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic in the broadcasting of selected Czech Radio programs in 2020. The explanatory power of this concept lies in the marking and subsequent stigmatisation of the perpetrators of the action around which panic arises. However, in the case of the pandemic representation the ethical or moral core did not crystallise, nor was defined the folk devil to which the public and politicians would direct their outrage and corrective measures. We could speculate whether it was not China as the place of origin of the disease; it could also have been skiers who spread the virus from Italy to most European countries, but the analysis did not prove any of these. Although both were present in the broadcast, they did not receive much attention and were not repeatedly thematised. A hint of the folk devil label included a post on 22nd September on the *Main News – Interviews, Comments*. PRES: “*Yesterday, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš called on people to respect the obligation to wear face masks because of vulnerable seniors and the sick. As we have heard from Mr Cikrt, according to him, the biggest problem of the Czech Republic is the disobedient citizens. Accordingly, the Confederation of Trade and Tourism pointed out that some customers in shops deliberately do not comply with anti-epidemic measures and therefore asked the Minister of the Interior Jan Hamáček from the CSSD for police assistance (...)*” If the behaviour of opponents of

⁴⁰ Remark by the authors: For example, on 13th March in *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal*, MOD: “*There is a lot of debate that China, (...), was able to tame the coronavirus pandemic or stop it at the moment, but it was due to very drastic measures, (...).*”

⁴¹ Remark by the authors: For example, on 20th March in *Main News – Interviews, Comments*. REP: “*(...) that means the coronavirus will certainly spread in those refugee camps and not only there, (...), so there the spread is expected to be very dramatic, (...)*”

⁴² Remark by the authors: For example, on 20th March in *Twenty Minutes of RadioJournal*: “*Minister, who are you worried about in the current crisis over the new coronavirus pandemic, who are you most worried about?”*

government measures against the spread of coronavirus were systematically thematised as problematic, irresponsible, selfish, antisocial or illegal, it could serve as a core of moral panic. However, the statement from this contribution remained isolated. The reporting on the spread of coronavirus and Covid-19 in the broadcasting of selected programs by ČRo Radiožurnál and ČRo Plus cannot therefore be described as arousing moral panic. Johansson's concept of postmodern panic is also not suitable for grasping the representation of the pandemic topic, as it usually takes place only in media discourse, has only a short-term character and a limited social impact.

Conclusion

Given the intensive coverage of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic in the Czech Radio broadcast, especially in the spring of 2020, the question may arise as to what extent the representation was the result of the media attention. The situation in spring 2020 was completely new for the history of the Czech Republic, not only in terms of medicine, but also with regard to the accompanying measures (e.g., closure of areas). The news-oriented stations, ČRo Plus and ČRo Radiožurnál, served the public in both monitored periods of 2020 as a continuous source of information on the unprecedented situation. Therefore, the degree of attention paid to the topic cannot be interpreted as an over-representation. In general, the representation of the pandemic topic can be characterised as factual, comprehensible and complex. The pandemic was highly covered and other events were framed within its context.

The analyses revealed two forms of representation of the pandemic topic in the sample. The line distinguishing these two representations is not based on the differences of the examined programs, but diachronously. The pandemic was represented differently in the spring and autumn monitored periods. During the spring, the situation forced a high level of media coverage and the topic of the pandemic was completely dominant in the broadcasting of selected programs. Media attention and the resonance of a fundamentally new phenomenon established a mutually reinforcing spiral between political and public discourse, which resulted in a significant dominance of the representation of the topic under study. While initially the pandemic topic showed an expert and medical-epidemic character, in the autumn it became politicised and the discourse on the topic of the pandemic was increasingly shaped by the actors of political discourse. The topic of a pandemic has thus become a more general framework for representing other events that have been presented in its context. It was the manifestation of the process of the naturalisation of life with Covid-19 which took place in the Czech radio broadcast.

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DEBUNKING: THE METHOD OF UNCOVERING HOAXES AND FAKE NEWS

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Abstract:

Demands on the current journalists working especially in the online environment are still growing. Their task is no longer only to provide verified information, but also to draw attention to possible disinformation of various kinds. This method of detecting misstatements is called debunking. The authors of the paper made a research on 5 of 10 of the most read online Slovak portals: *TVNoviny.sk*, *hnonline.sk*, *DennikN.sk*, *Dnes24.sk* and *Startitup.sk*. They followed how do the authors of debunking texts alert their readers to widespread lies. They evaluated their empirical findings and compared them with the findings published in the theoretical part of the article - with the opinions of psychologists on the optimal construction of journalistic texts, in those their authors try to warn the readers to untruths those were spread usually on social networks.

Key words:

Debunking. Disinformation. Hoax. Misinformation. Objectivity. Online Journalism. Visualisation.

Introduction: Theoretical Reflection on Disinformation

Disinformation has existed as long as humanity itself but it must be said that no medium has provided such opportunities for producing and spreading fake news as the digital space and digital media – Internet. That is why nowadays journalists have an additional duty. They not only try to bring quality verified information, but they also seek widespread misinformation and refute it (debunking) – define what is true, what is false and use arguments for proving it. The world has been fighting Covid-19 for more than a year now. We are all fighting. The doctors are trying to save human lives at the expense of their comfort and health, scientists are trying to come up with new medicines that would help to prevent or be able to better tolerate the course of the disease, entrepreneurs & trades & restaurants & cultural life are all fighting, ordinary people who have lost the classic comfort of life and many of them, as a result of a pandemic, have lost their jobs, small children who had to or still have to spend all the time in isolation, students, teachers are fighting, etc. And the journalists are no exception, of course. Their activity in the field of health and diseases is very important, because misinformation and hoaxes can and in many cases directly influence and endanger the health of individuals and, as we can see during a coronavirus pandemic, also the lives of the whole society.

There are various kinds of untruths. Among the most common belong: disinformation, misinformation, fake news, hoaxes, deepfakes and many others.¹ According to Cambridge Dictionary, “disinformation” is “*false information spread in order to deceive people*”.² Disinformation is always purposeful. It does not have to consist of false information, it often consists of true facts but taken out of context or mixed with half-truths, that is why it is so believable and so dangerous. On the other hand, “misinformation” is defined as a “*wrong*

¹ For more information, see also: KVETANOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Debunking as a Method of Uncovering Disinformation and Fake News (Working Title)*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://www.intechopen.com/online-first/debunking-as-a-method-of-uncovering-disinformation-and-fake-news>>; KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A: Koronahoaxy. In KVETANOVÁ, Z., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2020: On the Edge*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2020, p. 46-55.

² *Disinformation*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/disinformation>>.

information, or the fact that people are misinformed".³ It is a false information but usually disseminated unintentionally – by a person who does not know they are spreading untruths. Nowadays journalists often have to fight fake news and hoaxes. The term “fake news” “*refers to false reports or misinformation shared in the form of articles, images, or videos which are disguised as ‘real news’ and aim to manipulate people’s opinions (...) The creation of misinformation is usually motivated by personal, political, or economic agendas*”.⁴ They are very often published on social media and they look credible, like real news, so they are spread very fast. According to Trend Micro, “hoaxes” “*are e-mails typically arriving in chain letter fashion that often describe impossible events, highly damaging malware or urban legends. Their intent is to frighten and mislead recipients and get them to forward to friends*”.⁵ Hoaxes focus on emotional topics, making it easier for the reader to get the attention. They often use interesting and attractive headlines, the names of celebrities, inauthentic quotes or opinions of anonymous experts that no one has ever heard about. Of course, the Internet makes it simpler for the creators of hoaxes and any kinds of untruths to spread them all around, to draw information from the context and thus scare the public, to defame specific people or institutions, etc. That is the reason why contemporary journalists try so hard to find out the untruths and alert them to the public. The method is called debunking.

S. Lewandowsky, J. Cook and co-authors wrote a handy manual *The Debunking Handbook 2020*, where they claim that effective debunking requires to be done properly (see Picture 1). First of all, you need to mention the core **fact**. Claiming that “*this is hoax/fake news/false information*” is not enough. The journalist should be able to explain clearly and simply what happened, or why is it a false information. Then the journalist should **warn about the myth**. But they should do it just once, not to repeat the hoax/disinformation more times because while repeating the information usually appears to be truer. Later should the debunker **explain fallacy**. It is very useful to explain why was the information false. If possible, the authors recommend to explain “*why the misinformation was considered correct in the first place, and why it is now clear is incorrect and why the alternative is correct*”.⁶ And as the last step is important to state the truth fact again.⁷ It will be the last information readers/recipients will remember from the media product.

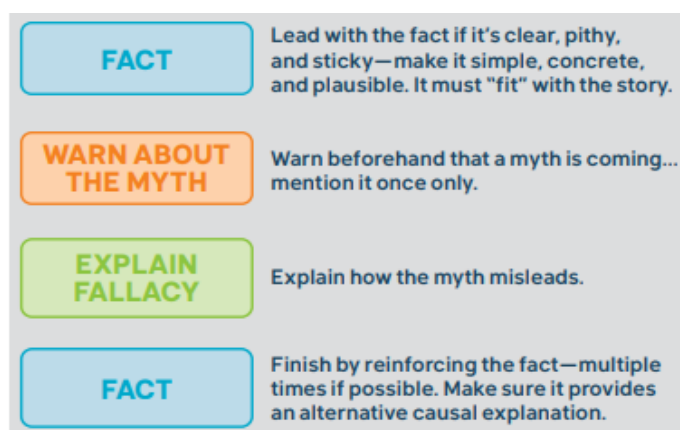
³ *Misinformation*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/misinformation>>.

⁴ *What Is Fake News? Definition, Types, and How to Detect Them*. [online]. [2021-03-22]. Available at: <<https://www.ionos.com/digitalguide/online-marketing/social-media/what-is-fake-news/>>.

⁵ *Hoax*. [online]. [2021-03-24]. Available at: <<https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/definition/hoax>>.

⁶ LEWANDOWSKY, S. et al.: *The Debunking Handbook 2020*. [online]. [2021-03-18]. Available at: <<https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/DebunkingHandbook2020.pdf>>.

⁷ *Ibidem*.



Picture 1: How to debunk properly

Source: LEWANDOWSKY, S., COOK, J. et al.: *The Debunking Handbook 2020*. [online]. [2021-03-18]. Available at: <<https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/DebunkingHandbook2020.pdf>>.

1 Research Methodology

In the present study, we focus on defining the current state of Slovak debunking on selected most widely read online media. With this scientific contribution we expand already realized research *Debunking as a Method of Uncovering Disinformation and Fake News*. In the first part of the research, we followed first five of the most read Slovakian online media portals: Aktuality.sk, Pluska.sk, Topky.sk, Čas.sk and Sme.sk.⁸ In the second part of the research, we monitor another five websites – TVNoviny.sk, hnonline.sk, Denník N, Dnes.24.sk, Startitup.sk (to get an idea of the ten the most read portals in Slovakia and of the way how do they debunk the false information. So, the research material was created of five (6th to 10th) most read online portals in Slovakia.⁹ That is the reason why we use the same methodology – qualitative content analysis – and so we focus on these analytical categories:

- Authorship of the text – from news agencies, original;
- Character of the headline – informs/does not inform about the disinformation;
- Character of the subheading – informs/does not inform about the disinformation;
- The nature of the opening image – evokes/does not evoke disinformation;
- Placement of arguments refuting the disinformation (first or second half of the text);
- Placement of the most relevant information (first or second half of the text);
- Indication of the context of disseminated disinformation (yes/no);
- Warning about disinformation (yes/no);
- Maintaining the objectivity of the text;
- Using the story and visualizations as tools to illustrate published facts;
- Intelligibility of the text;
- Accompanying visual and audiovisual material.

We perform the analysis using an encryption key composed of two numerical categories. Category 1 indicates that the text follows the given rule of debunking, while category 2 concerns journalistic speech that does not correspond to the expected creation rules. Within

⁸ KVETANOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Debunking as a Method of Uncovering Disinformation and Fake News (Working Title)*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://intechopen.com/online-first/debunking-as-a-method-of-uncovering-disinformation-and-fake-news>>.

⁹ *IAB Monitor Online*. [online]. [2020-07-18]. Available at: <<https://monitor.iabslovakia.sk/>>.

a certain research area, we subsequently create the median, when generalizing the facts from the analyzed coding units.

- Type of information in the subheading: 1 – it is not mentioned that it is disinformation; 2 – it is mentioned that it is disinformation;
- Introductory image material: 1 – does not evoke disinformation, 2 – evokes disinformation;
- Refutation of disinformation: 1 – in the second half of the text; 2 – in the first half of the text;
- Location of the most important fact within the correct information – point with respect to key information: 1 – beginning of the text (headline, subheading, first paragraph); 2 – rest of the text (second part of the text);
- Using the story as a tool to explain: 1 – yes; 2 – no;
- Disinformation context: an explanation of what was introduced, or why: 1 – yes; 2 – no;
- Warning of misleading information if it appears in the text: 1 – yes, 2 – no;
- Data visualization: 1 – yes; 2 – no;
- Emphasis on the event itself, not on the entity that disseminates it: 1 – event; 2 – subject;
- Presence of positivity in the text, which presupposes the rejection of defamation of the other party's opinion, ridicule, etc.: 1 – yes (preservation of objectivity, i.e., both parties were given space); 2 – no.

However, we also focus our attention on analytical categories, which cannot be explicitly included in the encryption key. These are as follows:

- Stylistic level and comprehensibility of the text;
- Other accompanying visual/audiovisual material included – videos, photo galleries, photos, etc.;
- Description of the sequence of information in the text (in paragraphs), while the publication of truthful information must be in chronological order to create a universal formula for the implementation of debunking in the Slovak media space;
- Data concerning the number of mentioned disinformation in the text and the amount of sources used (with the aim of creating a comprehensive picture of the problem addressed).¹⁰

2 Analysis

TVNoviny.sk is a news website of the Markíza television station. All of the news is taken from the TASR news agency (except for one). Most subtitles (1) do not suggest that the text uses the debunking method, or that it denies selected conspiracy theories, for example: “*Can marijuana eliminate the spread of coronavirus in the body? Researchers have tried to give an answer,*” or another one “*People with symptoms of COVID-19 who are on self-medication are not advised to take Ibuprofen.*” The headlines are mostly statements or questions answered by selected authorities. The headline is followed by subheadings (1) usually having one sentence. If no hoax is mentioned in the headline, the subheading again focuses on the authorities or a description of the situation, such as: “*A team of researchers from Canada searched for the answer,*” or “*Doubts have spread among Slovaks in the last week.*” The use of a preview photo also does not evoke that the article could refute the disinformation. With regard to the nature of subheadings, there is a fundamental denial of falsehood (1)

¹⁰ I KVETANOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Debunking as a Method of Uncovering Disinformation and Fake News (Working Title)*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://intechopen.com/online-first/debunking-as-a-method-of-uncovering-disinformation-and-fake-news>>.

in the second half of the text. It conveys the fact that the authors usually write the articles as a report on scientific discoveries. They inform about spreading of hoax on a given topic in the end of the article, where disinformation is refuted. As the disinformation is mentioned in the second half of the articles, a key fact is also found in the second part of the text (2). The authors also use the gradual explanation of the phenomena related to the treatment and spread of coronavirus. For example, in the article *“White or pink pill? Slovak pharmacists have a clear answer”* the author places the event between two extreme groups of individuals, but does not interpret it as a conflict with disinformation, but rather as a common misunderstanding. Within the context (1) category, we can see the argumentation is based on using sources which are for example authorities, professional journals, institutions and many others. In addition, in one article, the author explains how they revealed the origin of a disinformation video spreading the myth that planes "sprinkle" us with various harmful substances. In this case we come across a text that contains a lot of disinformation, which we do not consider to be a viable solution, as it can seem confusing and chaotic. However, authors generally manage to present true facts in a meaningful way, often in the form of recommendations to readers and the general public in the context of appropriate behavior during a pandemic to protect themselves from infection. TV Noviny always warns of fake news (1), for example below the video they say: *“This video is misleading.”* Regarding displaying the event (1) and maintaining the positivity of the speech (1), there is nothing to complain about in the articles, because they are written objectively. The authors do not use the story to illustrate the phenomenon (2), nor do they use any visualizations (2) or accompanying videos or photo galleries (2). The articles on TVnoviny.sk are relatively brief and short and do not even contain crossheadings. These are only used to separate the disinformation part, which also serves as a warning that a conspiracy follows. Because the texts are concise, they are easy to read and clear. Sometimes they contain technical terms that would need to be explained so that the average reader can understand them. Disinformation occurs on average 2.6 times in articles, which is a relatively low number, even though the verified source is 3.8 times in the text. If we were to unify the patterns of organization of information in this medium, it would be as follows: *neutral headline – arguments – disinformation – information about disseminators – refutation – key information.*

The serious news website hnonline.sk also publishes a number of more detailed articles refuting the spread of false information. Unlike other websites, authorial articles (3) predominate on hnonline.sk, two articles are taken from the TASR press agency. In two headlines, a ‘hoax’ is directly mentioned (we perceive positively that the term is used by the editors and authors at least in the correct context), in one a ‘hoax’ (2). The other two headlines are cleverly designed to engage proponents and opponents of disinformation: *“Did Bill Gates say that the Covid-19 vaccine could kill hundreds of thousands of people? That’s the truth”* and *“People are destroying 5G transmitters. They think they are spreading the coronavirus.”* Headlines are followed by clearly conceived subheadings of various length (from one to two sentences), in which the editors refute the hoax (1). The main preview photograph (usually the only accompanying image material) has only illustrative character, without a negative undertone (1). The negation of the information usually occurs in the introduction of the text (2), while the key fact is situated in the second half of the journalistic speech (2). Journalists process arguments, the sources and the context of the information at a solid level (1). However, we evaluate negatively the fact that they do not warn their readers about disinformation in advance (2). The presented information is neutral (1), the authors do not try to point out the disseminators of disinformation, they only explain and substantiate it. As in most cases we analyzed, the HNonline editors do not use the story (2) or the relevant visualization (2) to present the information. Overall, it can be stated that the texts are designed

logically, without unnecessary or duplicate information, but not in accordance with the rules of effective debunking. When dividing the text into smaller parts (either in the form of crossheadings or by using paragraphs), the authors work logically, the information is clear, grouped into individual thematic blocks. In addition, we expected a higher frequency of hyperlinks in the texts. Quotations appear frequently in the researched materials as supporting arguments to increase the authenticity and credibility of the text, which is due to the fact that the texts are supplemented by a number of sources (on average 4). The two articles also include attached videos taken from the Facebook profile of the Police of the Slovak Republic, where they call on the public to cooperate and report the perpetrator. The usual structure of the texts is as follows: *disinformation – refutation of disinformation – information about disseminators – argumentation – key information*.

Denník N is a news website that deals to a large extent with journalism and analytical texts. All articles are written by the authors of the medium. Denník N also points out in its headlines that the text contains disinformation, but the authors use the word ‘conspiracy’ much more also with a negative undertone (2). The headlines are engaging, but not tabloid, but they rather state the main idea of the article. Subheadings develop the headline, but they have more of a descriptive role, informing what the article is going to be about and also mentioning the conspiracy (2). The introductory preview image (1) is neutral and illustrative and does not affect the reader’s emotions. Disinformation is only refuted at the end of the article (1), but key information (2) turns up in the second half of the text, which does not encourage debunking’s persuasion. The authors follow the context and its explanation in each article. Besides the presence of arguments that deny the disinformation, journalists of Denník N explain why people trust the disinformation more than verified reports. They also write what can be done about it and what the solution could be. We consider this step to be positive, because through experts, they also clarify the functioning of the human psyche in the field of spreading disinformation. The statements of the authors of Denník N are based on the statements of professional institutions, Slovak experts, but they also cite specialists from external sources or journalists and they are also based on foreign journal studies. It should be noted that the authors of Denník N work extremely systematically, they deal with the topics of disinformation, also in connection with the coronavirus regularly, so they can synthesize the knowledge into their own conclusions. In addition, it should be mentioned that creators often refer to their own articles published on the Denník N website, which can have a positive effect, as they deal with certain topics on a regular basis. On the other hand, it can give the impression of institutionalization to those readers who are more inclined to disinformation. The median in the category of disinformation warnings reaches number 2, although in some articles we find attempts to follow false information, for example by a sentence that formed a separate paragraph: “*What do rumors about coronavirus look like in practice?*” or “*Researcher in his texts haunts or has spread many times refuted lies in the past.*” The disadvantage of the articles is dealing with the disseminator of disinformation not only with the disinformation particularly (2). They point to people who believe in disinformation, but also to the sources they spread. In fact, one article focuses largely on a certain disinformation site, and two texts denounce scientists who publish and disseminate disinformation. Of course, the selected subjects should count on negative articles about their person or work, but the given procedure is not suitable within the right method of debunking, as it may discourage followers of these pseudoscientists or disinformation websites. For example, in an article on the conspiracies of scientist Jude Mikovits, one part of the text is devoted to her failure, and also the disinformation and dangerous website *Bádateľ* is also portrayed negatively. Nevertheless, the authors managed to leave positivity in the texts (1), because those use statements of both sides/parties. What makes Denník N different from the previous websites

mentioned above is the use of stories in debunking (1). Journalists use real situations in which people find themselves due to or as a result of a pandemic, while the authors cite their experiences and make debunking more credible. The texts of Denník N lack visualizations (2), the table of the supplementary survey can be found exclusively in one article. The creators of the debunkings do not use a lot of accompanying photographic material, mostly examples of disinformation on social networks and they also devote space to excerpts from related articles on the given topic. Despite the length of the texts, which presupposes a high quality of analysis, the articles are written in an intelligibly neutral language. The division of texts into smaller paragraphs, composed of one or two sentences, helps to better understanding. The authors supplement the text with numerous sources, which is up to 6.8 sources per article. This is related to the relatively frequent mentioning and interpretation of disinformation in the text, which occurs on average 7.2 times. The usual structure of the texts is as follows: *disinformation – story – information about disseminators – key information – disinformation – arguments – refutation.*

The Dnes24.sk platform is a regional website that focuses on revealing disinformation within its various sections. Four of the articles are TASR agency reports, the other is based on cooperation with the Slovak Police. The structure of journalistic articles is similar to those ones of the above-mentioned media. In each of the headlines, the term ‘HOAX’ is mentioned, highlighted in capital letters (2). Within the framework of subheading (2), the editors always clearly refute the established statement and confirm that it is untrue. Three of the attached cover photos (2) include facts about disinformation (two times marked as HOAX, one time marked as FALSE). The remaining two articles are supplemented by illustrative pictures without a negative undertone. The journalists of Dnes24 refute the disinformation mainly in the first half of the text (2), as well as they include key information here (1). They argue in particular with quotes and paraphrases of experts or credible public institutions, which puts fake news in a meaningful context (1). However, Dnes24’s readers are not warned of impending disinformation in advance (2). In terms of maintaining an objective approach, editors seek not to ridicule or degrade the opposing party (1). However, to tell untruths they also do not use stories (2) or clear visualizations illustrating published facts (2). Articles end with a citation or paraphrase of a competent person, which gives the text greater credibility, e.g., “‘Arbidol is certainly not a new drug that would be manufactured in August 2019 in response to the occurrence of COVID-19,’ he said.” Subsequently, the editors include information about the respondent (virologist Ján Haviernik from the Research Institute of Veterinary Medicine in Brno) and complete the citation: “For this reason, I perceive the attached video from Facebook as disinformation.” The language of the articles is comprehensible due to the fact that these are mostly reports taken over press agencies. The editorial changes of agency reports, which consist in reformulating the headline, subheadings and crossheadings are more interesting and beneficial. For example, in the case of the article focused on the Russian drug invented for the Covid-19 virus, the caption from 12th May 2020 on the Dnes24.sk portal says: “HOAX: No, Russia has not developed a cure for a new coronavirus,” while on Aktuality.sk (published this information on 9th May 2020): “Russia has not yet developed a cure for a new coronavirus. They spread a hoax on the web.” Subheading is also slightly modified, in the case of Dnes24.sk: “Arbidol is actually one of the most popular freely available drugs in Russia. However, its antiviral effect is often questioned.” While on Aktuality.sk we can read: “The Russian drug was supposed to be effective in treating the manifestations of coronaviruses, of which there are several species. It should not have been the Covid 19 virus, which caused the global pandemic.” As we have mentioned several times, the crossheadings also differ – Dnes24.sk: “Beware of nonsense”, “Against the flu” and “Effective medicine?”, while on Aktuality.sk they are written

differently: “Cure against the manifestations of influenza”, “It is not coronavirus as coronavirus” and “Misleading Content”. It is also interesting that while the Aktuality.sk portal uses in the whole text only one ‘uncolored’ illustrative image (with a human hand, a box of medicines and a few tablets in their palm), Dnes24.sk added, in addition to the cover photo (an image of a Russian medicine with a big red frame and inscription FALSE) 31-picture gallery (containing illustrative shots of not directly related events, people and activities – such as cleaning public transport, temperature measurement, shopping in drapes, etc.). Disinformation is mentioned on average 7.4 times in the analyzed articles from the Dnes24.sk website and the journalists use on average 5.2 sources. Structure of information organized in the articles as follows: *disinformation – refutation of disinformation – description of disinformation, information about disseminators – argumentation – key information*. The Startitup.sk website is a startup community portal. Thematically, while focusing on young people, it specializes primarily on business, environmental issues, technology, gastronomy. Within news, it also covers the issue of debunking, resp. detection of widespread disinformation. Three of the analyzed texts are taken from news agencies (2x TASR, 1x SITA), two are written in house. We perceive negatively that even though the article (about the proclaimed Russian drug on Covid-19) is signed by a specific author, in contrast to the information published on other websites (taken from TASR and FPA) it does not bring anything new without any editorial changes. In the case of agency reports, the editors of other websites proceed in the same way but they reformulate the headlines, subheadings add crossheadings as well as accompanying pictures, while the rest of the texts remain the same as the original press release. The structure of the articles is relatively stable. The articles begin with a headline in which the ‘hoax’ (2) is directly mentioned, followed by subheadings, consisting mostly of 2 – 3 sentences in the bullets used on very clear presentation of the most important information from the text. In most cases, the subheading also includes a clear indication that the presented fact has a disinformation character using false, disinformation, deception and similar synonymous names (2). The subheadings are followed by an illustrative photograph having a different character (1), twice directly mentioning the hoax, or false and they use illustrations without a negative undertone three times. While the negation of disinformation is situated mostly in the first half of the text (2), in the same sections, the creators also present key information (1). The editorial staff appropriately places disinformation in the context (1) – it attaches a sufficient number of credible sources, uses citations of experts to increase credibility and strives to maintain objectivity or positivity (1). Again, however, Startitup’s articles do not include a warning of disinformation before readers read it (2). The editors do not use the form of a story to the present of falsehood (2). Compared to other media, Startitup strives for more abundant integration of visualizations (supplementing textual materials with visual appendices), but there is still a lack of clear infographics, tables, etc. (2). The texts on the Startitup.sk portal are relatively long in comparison with most other monitored websites, but visually clear. The linguistic expression of the creators is relatively comprehensible, but it should be noted that in several cases it is cumbersome and there are many linguistic shortcomings (e.g., the use of non-literary words or Czechisms), typos and errors of inattention. We assume that this is the result of pressure on the work of a journalist and lack of time to read the final texts. We also positively evaluate the effort to supplement the articles with several at least illustrative pictures, not only the main preview photo. Disinformation is mentioned by the authors on average 6.8 times, while in arguing the untrue journalists use on average 6.4 sources. In simple terms, we can define the sequence of information as follows: *disinformation – information – argumentation – key information*.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on not only the above findings, but also on findings from the first one published discursive analysis of the remaining five mentioned web portals,¹¹ we can state that the implementation of debunking within the Slovak media environment does not meet with theoretical demands. The main reason why is that the origin of the debunkings is from press agencies. Only small editing of the headlines, subtitles and crossheadlines and audiovisual material is made comparing articles with their press agencies originals. We strongly recommend building debunking departments despite it being time consuming and also cost money as well as training the journalists in correctly implementing debunking into their journalistic praxis. We also identified the most widespread problem which is composition of headlines and subheadings. Journalists in Slovakia apply the following process of order of information: disinformation – a key fact – argumentation – refutation of disinformation (opposite from literature). Editors want to draw attention by identifying disinformation at the beginning of the article; it is not effective during debunking and in line with the worldview backfire effect. The chance of an article being opened by conspiracy believers decreases with the information pointing out a hoax in the headline (based on true arguments), subheading or cover photo. It is good to choose a neutral headline establishing key facts followed by subheading. We consider it effective to stop mentioning where the disinformation was disseminated and how big was its impact on social media as well as not polarize society by blaming people from ‘the other camp’. To sum up, it is also important to use soft language.

The journalists also mention disinformation constantly (5.24 times per an article) which is not a proper way to point out disinformation and truth. Informing about disinformation should be in the form of a short statement before disinformation is stated. If there is a need to mention disinformation in debunking an article, journalists should focus more on informing with the help of a story connected with the topic. We evaluate negatively the lack of stories as well as no visualizations (infographics) which could help to explain complicated topics. There are many useful applications for processing data, like quadrigram.com, datamatic.com or datavisu.al. The positive effect of analyzed articles is placing key information into the beginning of the articles which is an efficient technique of persuasion. Also, authors base their articles upon various relevant sources and authorities (on average 4.46 times) which helps the articles to become more trustworthy, even if they do not hyperlink them which is something they can improve. We do not recommend authors to connect debunkings with other articles released by their own media house as people believe in conspiracies and deny information published by certain media. Analyzed articles are also objective as they do not attack the opposite party which means that texts keep positivity so readers from the opposite side are not discouraged. The linguistics of analyzed articles was very clear and comprehensible despite their scientific character. On the other hand, sometimes it is important to explain in more detail medical terms. Even though the articles are appropriately divided into paragraphs, authors should add more audiovisual material. It is important to pay attention to clear structure which can help better understand the topic.

If we were to look at the level of debunking in the Slovak media environment (based on analysis of articles on coronavirus debunking), according to the average values of the median of individual analytical categories, we could state that the Slovak online media adhere to the work with the introductory cover photo (1), appropriately state the context (1), put emphasis

¹¹ KVETANOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Debunking as a Method of Uncovering Disinformation and Fake News (Working Title)*. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://intechopen.com/online-first/debunking-as-a-method-of-uncovering-disinformation-and-fake-news>>.

on the event and not on the subject (1) and maintain positivity (1). The median therefore reaches 1.5. The headline, subheading, refutation of disinformation, warnings about fake news, work with the story and visualization received the median number 2.¹² In the end of the paper, we would like to point out that journalists should also explain the reasons why someone is spreading a lie and what the consequences may be of this act. It is also a good idea for the authors to clarify exactly how the disinformation arose, as it is often a matter of modifying the truth and real facts or manipulating photographs, recordings, audiovisual content and also a subjective selection of information from the context.

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¹² Ibidem.

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A PAINTING EXHIBITION AS A PERSONAL MULTIMODAL DIARY: EXAMPLE OF THE FACEBOOK PAGE “GUY DE MONTLAUR”

Marina Zagidullina

Abstract:

Technological facilitations of current communication exchange are considered as a basement of emerging media forms. For example, Facebook allows users to publish multimodal content and to organize it in long-lasting projects. In the “Guy de Montlaur” Facebook-page example, one can see how the classic format of a painting exhibition can be combined with a “personal diary”. Three aspects of such a form will be analyzed: (1) regularity (as a basement of periodicity); (2) principles of the choice of paintings (art-historian aspect); (3) principles of comment (art-critical aspect). In this example, the mechanisms of multilayered communication can be identified. The research approach can be fruitfully applied to other emerging forms and formats of user communication.

Key words:

Abstract Expressionism. Art-Criticism. Art-History. Explanatory Strategy. Multimodality. Participatory Culture. Privacy/Publicity Boundaries. User-Generated Content.

Introduction

User-generated content (UGC) has become a popular object of research since the 2000s and reached a pick of popularity during the pandemic period. Millions of people had to develop ‘home + online’ activity due to quarantines, social distancing, limitations and restrictions of mobility. In the communication field, ‘the explosion’ of UGC before the coronavirus pandemic was also explained by the facilitation of technical devices and the openness of social platforms.¹ During the pandemic, researchers have focused on various forms of UGC or “prosumption” trying to clarify forms, motifs, intensiveness, reasons, psycho-therapeutic effects of users’ activity during lockdowns.² In this article, the author carries out a case-study on the crossroad of several disciplines: user-generated content which is adapted to specific social platforms (limited by their technical conditions, in the example of Facebook); new digital forms of art-consumption and distribution (online-exhibition as a personal diary) and epistemological potential of such forms for the art-history and art-criticism fields.

Facebook as a social network has always been an object of interest to researchers because of its global popularity. Even during the early days of Facebook, researchers offered a few systematic reviews of its functions and organization through social theories³ which are related to the E. Goffman’s understanding of concepts on everyday life.⁴ The researchers, basing themselves

¹ See, for example: TU, Z. et al.: UGC-VQA: Benchmarking Blind Video Quality Assessment for User Generated Content. In *IEEE Transactions on Image Processing*, 2021, Vol. 30, p. 4449-4464.

² Remark by the author: A few of investigations were published. See, for example, special issue of the journal *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (2021, Vol. 43, No. 1-2. Special Issue: Leisure in the Time of Covid-19. Guest Editors: Brett Lashua, Corey W. Johnson, and Diana C. Parry. See some other works: AMORIM, J. P., TEIXEIRA, L.: Art in the Digital during and after COVID: Aura and Apparatus of Online Exhibitions. In *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2020, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 1-8; TUNNIKMAH, N.: *Impact of Covid 19 on the World of Fine Arts: Between Online Exhibitions, Virtual Exhibitions in Cyberspace Appreciation*. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3800618>.

³ See, for example: ZHAO, X. et al.: The Many Faces of Facebook: Experiencing Social Media as Performance, Exhibition, and Personal Archive. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13)*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2013, p. 1-10.

⁴ For more information, see: GOFFMAN, E.: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York : Anchor, 1959.

on B. Hogan's metaphor,⁵ showed that Facebook users followed three major strategies: performance, exhibition and personal archive (such as a diary). Developing Hogan's approach to UGC in Facebook, Zhao and co-authors consider users' activity in social networks as *mixed strategy* when they tend to combine all three strategies; the users build a performance which ultimately will be part of an 'exhibition' (temporal line, timeline of the user's life) while playing the role of a diary (or "a personal memory place").⁶ It is interesting to compare this 'three-components' strategy with the professional organization of exhibitions as online-events – such as museums' exhibitions on Facebook pages. In this latter case, the metaphor of 'an exhibition' as a user communication strategy (with the purpose of *exhibiting*) their private life in the public space) becomes literally meaningful (i.e., how to manage an art exhibition under Facebook-pages conditions). Professional curators successfully use Facebook pages as a space for a relatively new form of 'online-exhibitions'; but most of the time, the Museum's Facebook page just have links to their own sites and to other resources where the exhibition is virtually represented.⁷ Many analytics emphasize the fact that too often, museums do not pay sufficient attention to the *interaction* with their publics through the social media; their use of Facebook page is mostly 'one-channeled'.⁸

The Facebook page is organized as a 'flow', that is why its construction is not appropriate as an exhibition format (which is the simultaneous appearance of a number of paintings in a particular space – where the aura of this art can be created and consumed. For example, one of the top-10 European museums which are successfully represented in social media is the van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.⁹ But even here, one will find a flow of random pictures with 'occasional' comments of curators rather than a conceptual posting of some consistent projects

⁵ See: HOGAN, B.: The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online. In *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 2010, Vol. 30, No. 6, p. 377-386.

⁶ ZHAO, X. et al.: The Many Faces of Facebook: Experiencing Social Media as Performance, Exhibition, and Personal Archive. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13)*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2013, p. 8-9.

⁷ Remark by the author: There are a few works about 'professional Facebook-exhibitions'. See, for example: SPILIOPOULOU, A.-Y. et al.: Cultural Institutions in the Digital Age: British Museum's Use of Facebook Insights. In *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 2014, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 286-303; BADELL, J.-I.: Museums and Social Media: Catalonia as a Case Study. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 2015, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 244-263; BOOTH, P. et al.: Museum Leaders' Perspectives on Social Media. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 2020, Vol. 35, No. 4, p. 373-391. See also an article about Facebook pages of museums during the pandemic: MAS, J. M., ARILLA, R., GOMEZ, A.: Facebook as a Promotional Tool for Spanish Museums 2016 – 2020 and COVID Influence. In *Journal of Promotion Management*, 2021, Vol. 24, p. 8-25. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10496491.2021.1888179?journalCode=wjpm20>>. See other works about online curatorship: BAIÃO, J. et al.: *Editorial the Exhibition: Histories, Practices and Politics*. Lisbon : Instituto de História da Art, 2019; ECKERSALL, P., FERDMAN, B. (eds.): *Curating Dramaturgies: How Dramaturgy and Curatorial Practices are Intersecting in the Contemporary Arts*. New York : Routledge, 2021; GORIUNOVA, O.: *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet*. New York : Routledge, 2011; LOVEJOY, M.: *Digital Currents: Art in Electronic Age*. New York : Routledge, 2004; MORGNER, C.: The Art Fair as Network. In *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 2014, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 33-46, and others.

⁸ See: LOTINA, L.: Reviewing Museum Participation in Online Channels in Latvia. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 280-292; ZAFIROPOULOS, K. VRANA, V., ANTONIADIS, K.: Use of Twitter and Facebook by Top European Museums. In *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing (JTHSM)*, 2015, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 16-24. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3747178>>; SRINIVASAN, R. et al.: Perspective: Digital Museums and Diverse Cultural Knowledge: Moving Past the Traditional Catalogue. In *The Information Society*, 2009, Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 265-278; RUSSO, A. et al.: Participatory Communication with Social Media. In *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 2008, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 21-31.

⁹ See: *Van Gogh's Museum on Facebook*. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/VanGoghMuseum/>>.

(which can be considered as an analogue of an exhibition). This ‘sporadic’ approach is very common in museums’ online-practices.¹⁰ Thus, Facebook pages have not been used as ‘art-spaces’, museums have mostly developed their ‘spaces’ for ‘fans-community’: everyday posts organize sporadic communications switching from one topic to another, without a strategy nor a conceptual approach.

1 Users’ Creative Initiatives: Constructing an Art-Space on a Facebook Page

L. Shick and K. Damkjær quoted in their polemic article G. Deleuze and F. Guattari: “*Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times.*”¹¹ This quotation illustrates the important idea of the researchers: professional museum teams need to be creative and active when using social network tools and opportunities.¹² The Guattarian ‘abstract machine’ works exactly as it is described in the abovementioned sentence: it must initiate a ‘change’ or deterritorialization.¹³ This philosophic approach corresponds to Latour’s ideas of the actor-network theory: an actor is any subject (human or nonhuman) that *changes* the network, adds something new to its ‘life’ (existence). This is why user-generated content can be a source of new projects for professionals (in our case – curators of museum exhibitions). In this article, a case of the Facebook page “Guy de Montlaur” is explored. Guy de Montlaur (1918 – 1977) was a French abstract expressionist painter, he was also a WWII war veteran who landed in Normandy on D-Day, in 1944. He is not well-known¹⁴ as an artist and his works are not stored in a physical space where they would be available to the public (as, for example, a museum or a personal hall in a museum or an art-gallery). This fact allows the author of this article to consider the activity on this Facebook-page as an analogue of the ‘building’ of such space. The project “Rétrospective Guy de Montlaur (1918 – 1977)” was launched during the pandemic. The author of the project is George de Montlaur, a son of Guy de Montlaur). One can see in this project the process of ‘deterritorialization’ of the paintings: in both technical and epistemological ways.

2 How Is “Rétrospective” Organized: The Search of “New Land” of Abstract Expressionism

“Rétrospective...” is an everyday, or more often every other day, post of one (or, very rarely – two or three) paintings by Guy de Montlaur with some short commentaries. At first sight, it seems to follow the general tactics of professional museum teams (regular publication of one or two paintings with short commentaries). But in the case of the Guy de Montlaur page, the paintings are always conceptually explained by the page author. A user can see several tactic

¹⁰ See also: SCHICK, L., DAMKJÆR, K.: Can You Be Friends with an Art Museum? Rethinking the Art Museum through Facebook. In ALJAS, A. et al. (eds.): *Transforming Culture in the Digital Age: Proceedings of the International Conference in Tartu*. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2010, p. 36-42.

¹¹ DELEUZE, G., GUATTARI, F.: *A Thousand Plateaus*. 12th Edition. London : Minnesota UP, 2007, p. 161.

¹² SCHICK, L., DAMKJÆR, K.: Can You Be Friends with an Art Museum? Rethinking the Art Museum through Facebook. In ALJAS, A. et al. (eds.): *Transforming Culture in the Digital Age: Proceedings of the International Conference in Tartu*. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2010, p. 40-41.

¹³ See, for example, how ‘deterritorialization’ works in case of the Bauhaus concept: WEBER, N. F.: *IBauhaus: The iPhone as the Embodiment of Bauhaus Ideals and Design*. New York : Knopf, 2020.

¹⁴ See some general information at: *Guy de Montlaur*. [online]. [2021-07-08]. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_de_Montlaur>.

ways to choose the particular paintings (chronological and thematic). The particular paintings are chosen and displayed chronologically. These combinations are organized as specific ‘virtual halls’ of paintings. Explanations which users can find before each painting show the dynamics of the author attitude to his own project: from the ‘timeline’ to the ‘art-historian approach’. Here, one can find three major principles of the ‘virtual exhibition’ organization: transformation of the space into the time of posting (a spectator can visit the whole exhibition only if they follow all the posts day by day). This ‘walk’ around the paintings as a simultaneous process cannot be easily organized on the Facebook page due to technical reasons (the spectator has to scroll many pages and wait for the content appearance). Periodicity here functions as a self-stimulus for the author: he needs to regularly pick a new painting and search the information which relates to it and can explain the painter’s message. The Facebook page technically supports this ‘diary-like’ style of posting and ‘provokes’ links between dates and the content of the posts (see Figure 1). In the following example, the date of the post (19th January) links to the commemoration day (25th – 26th January 1955, the night of Nerval’s suicide) and to the painting’s date of creation (February 1955).



Figure 1: A fragment of the public Facebook page “Guy de Montlaur” (published with the permission of George de Montlaur)

Source: DE MONTLAUR, G.: *Rétrospective*. [online]. [2021-01-19]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/Montlaur>>.

Periodicity (regularity) is tightly connected with the choice of the author: which painting should he choose for the next post. One can consider this choice as an art-historical principle (the way to generalize the different paintings, to combine them into well described and definitive

groups). The art-historian approach is important for understanding the artist's unique style which has evolved from his early paintings to the later ones: cubism, geometric abstractionism, abstract expressionism. This art-historian approach reflects de Montlaur's creative search style (his artistic 'gesture', a way to express his artistic ideas). The periodicity of posts makes this search visible: from one painting to another the artistic gestures change, and the spectator can "feel" his evolution. This art-historian approach appears only 4 months later after the first use of the 'umbrella-like' title "Rétrospective". Initially, the 'diary' of the project brought sporadic information. But since January 2021, the Facebook page "Guy de Montlaur" has gradually changed: an art-historian approach to the paintings dominates, and some comments appear.¹⁵ These comments also deserve draw attention: after making notes on the style of the artist's works the author goes in-depth on an attempt to decipher paintings' messages, and finally reaches the level of art-critic interpretation of the paintings (the third principle of the virtual exhibition). It is the way to find a 'new land' (as G. Deleuze and F. Guattari metaphorically called the process of deterritorialization, which is the source of the 'remediation' of facts, their 'renovation', 'refreshment') in abstract expressionism understanding.¹⁶

This is a daunting task because the style of the posts is very specific and variative; however, even in professional descriptions of abstract expressionism art-historians tend to generalize its features as a 'united segment' of art. For example, on the official page of the Tate Museum, it is said that there are only two types of abstract expressionism – 'action painters' (who 'attack the canvases' with brush strokes) and 'the colour field painters' (who cover canvases with a single colour).¹⁷ However, these two groups can be divided into smaller parts: in Willem de Kooning's paintings the gesture is always related to a particular figure, and other "action painters" can express their artistic feelings in non-figurative style. "Rétrospective" helps the author of the page "Guy de Montlaur" build an epistemological pattern of the artist's works interpretation. Starting from some parallels with poems, he then searches the figurative parallels trying to decode these paintings. The gesture ('an action') of the artist is based on his skills and masterpiece level.¹⁸ 'Through' this gesture a spectator not only can feel the intention of the artist (his 'modus') but he can also see the real world represented in a unique manner. "Rétrospective" helps discover the style of de Montlaur's abstract expressionism and helps understand how the messages contained in the paintings are transmitted to the spectators. The author of the page manages art-criticism using a multimodal approach (combining his comments, poems-references, paintings, as it is shown in Figure 2). The textual part of the interpretation reflects the discovery of the painter's style: "*The painter-soldier, inspired by the musical work (in this case Bach's cantata), reproduces on the canvas the scene of war, his war. He paints the hand-to-hand combat of the forces of the good – the blue forms – against those of the black evil, in the middle of the Vermilion flames.*"¹⁹

¹⁵ Remark by the author: Initially, the author published only titles and dates.

¹⁶ See: DELEUZE, G., GUATTARI, F.: *A Thousand Plateaus*. 12th Edition. London : Minnesota UP, 2007.

¹⁷ See: *Abstract Expressionism*. [online]. [2021-01-19]. Available at: <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-expressionism#:~:text=Abstract%20expressionism%20is%20the%20term,and%20the%20impression%20of%20spontaneity>>.

¹⁸ Remark by the author: In an interesting investigation of perception of abstract expressionism, Leslie Snapper with co-authors discussed an experiment during which people without a specific art-background and knowledge were asked to define if the painting belongs to the professional artist or it is made by children or animals. The results show that the participants made their right choice at a rate above chance. The researchers conclude that people understand abstract expressionism better than they think they do. See: SNAPPER, L. et al.: Your Kid Could Not Have Done That: Even Untutored Observers Can Discern Intentionality and Structure in Abstract Expressionist Art. In *Cognition*, 2015, Vol. 137, p. 154-165.

¹⁹ DE MONTLAUR, G.: *Rétrospective*. [online]. [2021-04-08]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/Montlaur>>.

As time passes and the number of posts increase, the interpretation of the paintings lengthens and gradually becomes deeper and more detailed. It requires from the author to get additional information about the sources of inspiration of the paintings. For example, the post from 28th April 2021 is devoted to the painting “La nuit d’Aurelia”. The author gives the interpretation of the painting as a professional art-critic and art-historian: 1) all paintings by Guy de Montlaur which refer to Gerard de Nerval, are mentioned, and the plot of this “prose poem” is described. The exact quotation from the text of “Aurelia” is included in the interpretation; it helps the user to see the shapes of the poem’s heroes on the canvas (see Figure 3).

The image shows a Facebook post by Guy de Montlaur dated 8 апреля. The post contains the following text:

« Es war ein wunderlicher krieg », 65 x 81, huile, Paris, décembre 1973.

Le titre donné au tableau est le début de la 5e strophe de la cantate BWV n°4 de Jean-Sebastien Bach « Christ Lag in Todes Banden » (Le Christ gisait dans les liens de la mort). Le musicien y célèbre la victoire de la vie sur la mort au cours d'une guerre étrange.

Le peintre-soldat, inspiré par l'œuvre musicale, reproduit sur la toile la scène de guerre, sa guerre, il peint le combat au corps à corps des forces du bien – formes bleues – contre celles du mal – noires – au milieu des flammes vermillon.

Le texte complet (écrit par Martin Luther) de la 5e strophe de la cantate est le suivant :

Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg,
Da Tod und Leben rungen,
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,
Es hat den Tod verschlungen.
Die Schrift hat verkündigt das,
Wie ein Tod den andern fraß,
Ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden.
Halleluja!

Ce fut une étrange guerre
Qui opposa la mort à la vie,
La vie a remporté la victoire,
Elle a anéanti la mort.
L'écriture a annoncé
Comment une mort supprima l'autre,
La mort est devenue une dérision.
Alléluia !

Pour écouter :
<https://soundcloud.com/ma.../j-s-bach-bwv-4-5-es-war-ein>

Pour plus d'information sur le peintre Montlaur, cf. le site "montlaur.net" ainsi que les pages Facebook et Wikipedia "Guy de Montlaur".

Показать перевод

At the bottom of the post is a painting with abstract, expressive brushstrokes in shades of red, orange, blue, and black.

Annotations on the right side of the image point to specific parts of the post:

- Title of the painting as a key
- The interpretation of the painting
- The poem with the line of the title
- The link to the audio-file (Bach)
- The hyperlink to the site of Guy de Montlaur (an extension of information)

Figure 2: A fragment of the public Facebook page “Guy de Montlaur”, an example of multimodal interpretation of the painting’s meaning (published with the permission of George de Montlaur)

Source: DE MONTLAUR, G.: *Rétrospective*. [online]. [2021-04-08]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/Montlaur>>.

L'abstraction permet au peintre-lecteur de transmettre sa perception d'« Aurélia » au spectateur du tableau « La nuit d'Aurélia ». Là, il maîtrise parfaitement l'art de reproduire le flou des formes et des couleurs. L'hallucination-folie envahit tout le tableau, on perçoit des formes humaines en premier plan « Les contours de leurs figures variaient comme la flamme d'une lampe, et à tout moment quelque chose de l'une passait dans l'autre ; le sourire, la voix, la teinte des cheveux, la taille, les gestes familiers, s'échangeaient comme si elles eussent vécu de la même vie, et chacune était ainsi un composé de toutes, pareille à ces types que les premiers humains imitent de plusieurs modèles pour réaliser une beauté complète. » (Aurélia, Coll. Le livre de poche, p.27). En arrière-plan, une étoile géante – Aurélia métamorphosée ? – aux bras protecteurs. Un ciel nuit-noire.

Pour plus d'information sur le peintre Montlaur, cf. le site "montlaur.net" ainsi que les pages Facebook et Wikipedia "Guy de Montlaur".

Показать перевод



The key-phrase from the literary text (Nerval, “Aurelia”)

Figures around the lamp; light in the night, shadows

Figure 3: A fragment of the public Facebook page “Guy de Montlaur”, an example of interpretation of the painting’s meaning through the ‘title-key’ (published with the permission of George de Montlaur)

Source: DE MONTLAUR, G.: *Rétrospective*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/Montlaur>>.

Conclusion

The analysis of this personal diary (which was started on 1st September 2020 and is still going on) as an example of user-generated content demonstrates a high epistemological potential of the method which the author gradually develops from one post to the next. The question of the meaningfulness of abstract expressionism is important in art history (and the typology of abstract expressionism styles is not developed enough, even decades after the peak of this artistic movement). One can find a lot of critical notes about ‘overvaluation’ of abstract expressionism (see, for example, the set of negative opinions in Michelle Kamhi’s works, who sarcastically asks what can abstract expressionism “contribute to the humanistic search for wisdom”).²⁰ On the example of the Facebook page “Guy de Montlaur” we can see how this art can be interpreted as a result of a long-lasting project. The interpretative tools and the approach of the author of this diary has significantly evolved during months of regular posting, and his interpretations led to an expert epistemological level (thus, it can be considered as ‘a humanistic

²⁰ KAMHI, M. M.: Art History Gone Amuck. In *Academic Questions*, 2020, Vol. 33, p. 389.

search for wisdom'). The technical possibilities of the platform have allowed the form and the format of this diary which is based on regularity and combination of the different elements (pictures of paintings, 'museum' information about them, such as size, material characteristics, etc.), interpretation of their meaning mostly through the title which very often leads to cultural artifacts, such as poems, books, thinkers, etc. One can metaphorically call this style of art-criticism 'diving into the sense'. The intense search of the meaning key helps understand the uniqueness of de Montlaur's artistic style and contribute to the art-history of abstract expressionism.

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MEGATRENDS
AND MEDIA

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN CROATIA

Alta Pavin Banović – Hrvoje Mesić

Abstract:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, distance education was organized in all educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia. Students participate in distance learning with the help of information technology. Teachers have noticed the importance of teaching media literacy which, ultimately, becomes a creative expression of students in creating their own media content. Students develop communication skills using media, social networks, virtual libraries and communication platforms. Communication technologies and communication practice have become key tools for students' personal success in the teaching process. During distance learning, thanks to the good IT equipment of students with the support of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, the quality of verbal and nonverbal communication did not decrease. The article explores the specifics of online communication in distance learning on the example of a selected student population: ways and quality of communication, lack of nonverbal communication and suggestions for improving nonverbal communication in distance learning, which leads to the conclusion that it contributes to better information transfer, more successful communication between teachers and students and in the online environment.

Key words:

Digital Platforms. Distance Learning. Information and Communication Technologies. Verbal and Nonverbal Communication.

Introduction

The beginning of distance learning is considered to be 1953, when the University of House began to use television transmission as a medium in teaching. University of Phoenix has been using the Internet as a medium for distance learning since 1989.¹ The Ministry of Science and Education in the Republic of Croatia, in cooperation with CARNET, started in 2015 a pilot program “*e-Schools: Complete informatization of school teaching processes to create digitally mature schools for the 21st century.*”² The planned duration of the program was from 2015 to 2022, with the aim of introducing information and communication technology (ICT) into the educational process in order to form digitally mature schools.³ The extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated the process of introducing ICT into the teaching process as well as more intensive teaching of media use during distance learning. From March to June 2020, students and teachers joined an accelerated course on learning and use of ICT in order to implement the planned curriculum by the end of the 2019/2020 school year. The successful inclusion of the entire educational system in distance learning in the Republic of Croatia was influenced by the previously introduced unique electronic identity (AAI @ EduHr)⁴ given to teachers and students. The successful cooperation of the Ministry of Science and Education with the Croatian Academic and Research Network (CARNET), the University Computing Center (SRCE), the Agency for Education (AZOO), the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education (ASOO) and the Agency for Mobility and EU programs (AMPEU) with the aim of establishing successful communication between teachers, students and parents during distance learning.

¹ ŠVRGA, I.: *Mjerenje opterećenja informacijsko-komunikacijskih sustava u uvjetima intenzivnog izvođenja nastave na daljinu*. Zagreb : Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet prometnih znanosti, 2020, p. 8.

² *e-Škole*. [online]. [2021-03-09]. Available at: <<https://pilot.e-skole.hr/hr/e-skole/opis-projekta/>>.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ For more information, see: *Carnet*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <<https://www.carnet.hr/>>.

During the process of distance learning, interdisciplinary topics become more and more present in the teaching contents. According to the European Reference Center, all the contents of interdisciplinary topics can be included in the teaching contents according to their guidelines, which more intensively develop the competencies of students necessary for life in the 21st century.⁵ In the Republic of Croatia, seven interdisciplinary topics with elaborated curricula were published in the Official Gazette in 2019. The cross-curricular topic *the use of information and communication technology*, due to the distance learning process that makes use of smartphones, tablets, personal and laptop computers with various digital and communication tools and platforms on the Internet, reached its peak in the teaching process in 2020. The Ministry of Science and Education has provided tablets and Internet cards for all students who do not have the necessary devices in their household to participate in distance learning.⁶ The goal of the teaching process during distance learning is to encourage students' independence in creating their own media content as well as their interpretation in order for teachers to evaluate their students and check the adoption of teaching content. In his work *Media Literacy*, Potter points out that media literacy is a process and “*a set of perspectives that we actively apply in the use of media to interpret the meaning of the messages we receive*”.⁷ British theorist Len Masterman in his work *Teaching the Media* focuses on media education rather than the term media literacy because learning about the media never stops.⁸ During the distance teaching, the teachers used various digital tools in order to convey the teaching contents to the students in a simple and understandable way. They designed presentations, posters, etc. to achieve learning outcomes. Therefore, both students and teachers are subject to teaching media literacy, as well as to the use of information and communication technologies.

The Ministry of Science and Education has recommended primary and secondary schools to use the Microsoft Office 365 digital platform for distance learning. MO Yammer and MO Teams applications are recommended for mutual communication between students and teachers for sharing teaching content within the virtual classroom, eg. group, because they are easy to use and can be used on multiple types of devices.⁹ Yammer was launched in 2008 by David O. Sacks and Adam Pisoni, and was taken over by Microsoft in 2012 and is now one of the Microsoft Office 365 school suite applications.¹⁰ The Croatian Academic and Research Network (CARNET) has developed the Loomen digital platform,¹¹ which has been used in distance learning for the organization of virtual classrooms, e-courses for sharing teaching materials, knowledge testing and evaluation. Minister of Science and Education Blaženka Divjak emphasized the importance of feedback to all students with the results of completed tasks and progress through evaluation as learning and evaluation for learning.¹² Professional associate librarians have also contributed to the quality of distance learning by creating virtual libraries on primary and secondary school websites. Teaching content, information, e-books,

⁵ *Nastava na daljinu*. [online]. [2021-03-08]. Available at: <<https://www.carnet.hr/usluga/udaljenoucenje/>>.

⁶ *Nastava na daljinu – Česta pitanja i odgovori*. [online]. [2021-03-08]. Available at: <<https://skolazazivot.hr/nastava-na-daljinu-cesta-pitanja-i-odgovori/>>.

⁷ POTTER, J. W.: *Medijska pismenost*. Beograd : Clio, Forin, 2011, p. 47.

⁸ See: MASTERMAN, L.: *Teaching the Media*. London : Routledge, 1985.

⁹ VALČIĆ, J.: *Yammer društvena mreža*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <<https://e-aboratorij.carnet.hr/yammer/>>.

¹⁰ For more information, see: *Yammer. Povezivanje i suradnja u svim dijelovima tvrtke ili ustanove*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <<https://www.microsoft.com/hr-hr/microsoft-365/yammer/yammer-overview>>.

¹¹ See also: *Loomen*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <<https://loomen.carnet.hr/>>.

¹² *Obraćanje ravnateljima – 14. ožujka 2020. (Dan broja Pi)*. [online]. [2021-03-08]. Available at: <<https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/Obrazovanje/Raspored//Transkript%20obracanja%20ministrice%20Divjak%20ravnateljima%20-%2014.03.2020..pdf>>.

e-textbooks, e-manuals, electronic reference sources, links to various websites such as eLektira, etc. were published. Also, they, in an online environment, marked anniversaries, memorial days, set up virtual exhibitions, catalogs of recommended books to read in their spare time, they encouraged media literacy in a variety of ways. Virtual libraries are united on the website of the Croatian Network of School Librarians called *Virtual in One Place*.¹³

1 Information and Communication Technologies in Distance Teaching

The experience of teaching is enabled by the development of technology that has enabled the copying of teaching as performed in the classroom into a virtual space. At the beginning of the new millennium, technology was not yet sufficiently developed for two-way communication between teachers and students. Several technologies have been developed that enabled one-way transmission of teaching content. However, the students were dissatisfied with that kind of teaching because in it they did not have the opportunity to directly ask questions, comment and communicate with teachers and colleagues during the lectures. Their ability to communicate was limited to subsequent sharing and exchange of materials.¹⁴ Teachers were also dissatisfied because they could not receive feedback from students during the lectures and did not have the means to make immediate checks on their knowledge and make examinations. Authors Petr, Vrana and Aparac-Jelušić, without diminishing the value of distance education in its beginnings, emphasize the advantages of new technologies that will continue to develop.¹⁵ The development of information and communication technologies has enabled an increase in the quality of distance teaching and two-way communication between teachers and students.

Due to the emergency situation in March 2019, caused by the coronavirus pandemic which hit the entire world, a step forward was made from the traditional way of teaching in the classroom to distance learning. Information-communication technologies made possible teaching at a distance in real time. Digital tools were used to hold videoconferencing classes at a distance, for meetings of teachers and students, class teachers and parents, to hold Teachers' Councils, professional development at school, county, inter-county and state levels. The biggest challenges were quality two-way communication between teachers and students, transfer of teaching content and checking the adoption of content. Therefore, students became involved in teaching processes through independent research, writing papers, making presentations, posters, brochures, leaflets, videos, participating in problem-based research or project teaching. Communication with students during distance learning took place in both synchronous teaching model (real time) and asynchronous teaching model.

1.1 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Communication is an integral and inseparable characteristic in the life of a person who is a social being and meets other people with whom they enter into a relationship.¹⁶ It is common to observe communication through spoken words and sentences, as verbal communication

¹³ For more information, see: *Virtualne na jednom mjestu*. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <http://www.knjiznicari.hr/UDK02/index.php/Virtualne_na_jednom_mjestu!>.

¹⁴ PETR, K., VRANA, R., APARAC-JELUŠIĆ, T.: *Obrazovanje na daljinu: Mogući model u području knjižnične i informacijske znanosti Hrvatske*. In *Edupoint*, 2002, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 2. [online]. [2021-03-08]. Available at: <<http://edupoint.carnet.hr/casopis/broj-02/clanak-03/index.html>>.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 5.

accompanied by non-verbal communication, ie. whole body communication that confirms or does not confirm spoken words and sentences. The meanings of nonverbal communication were first studied by the ancient speakers Quintilian and Cicero¹⁷ who observed the importance of observing, interpreting, and analyzing bodily movements that occur during communication and give additional meanings to spoken words. The beginnings of the scientific study and research of nonverbal communication date back to Charles Darwin, who, in his book *Expressing Emotions in Man and Animals* from 1872, in addition to theoretical insights, also describes the persons' faces during communication.¹⁸ Author Burić Moskaljov states that a more serious study of non-verbal communication among people began in the 1960s with the book *Body Language* by Julis Fast, published in 1970.¹⁹ It is important to study non-verbal communication because it has been *"the only way of communication for a long time. Language originated later, and in the beginning people communicated exclusively with nonverbal cues. Besides, while words are under our conscious control, nonverbal cues are not"*.²⁰ Authors Knapp and Hall emphasize that it is almost impossible to observe verbal communication from nonverbal communication separately because one reveals the other and gives it the right interpretation of the message transmission.²¹

To distinguish nonverbal signs is extremely important because then communication becomes simpler, more understandable, and verbal messages become more pronounced.²² Authors Pavelin Lešić, Knapp and Hall emphasize the importance of nonverbal communication during verbal expression and call *"posturomyogestive manifestations"*²³ all visible parts of communication such as posture, facial expressions, hand movements, head and whole body that confirm spoken words: *"Theory and research related to nonverbal communication focuses on three primary units: the environmental structures and conditions in which communication takes place, the physical characteristics of the individuals who communicate, and the different behaviors that these individuals manifest."*²⁴

1.2 Nonverbal Communication during Distance Learning

Classroom communication between teacher and student is often frontal by teachers when interpreting new teaching content, and nonverbal by students who, with their body stances, affirm active participation and understanding. Author Neill points to two indicators of the importance of nonverbal communication in the classroom. One is the presence of a larger number of students and the second is the possibility of different interpretations of nonverbal messages that should be conveyed in a neutral way: *"The general ability to read nonverbal signs seems to be accompanied by special abilities to decode visual (especially facial expressions), voice and combined contradictory) signs."*²⁵ Therefore, during distance learning

¹⁷ PAVELIN LEŠIĆ, B.: *Vizualna obilježja govorenoga jezika*. Zagreb : Filozofski fakultet, 2013, p. 23.

¹⁸ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 308.

¹⁹ BURIĆ MOSKALJOV, M.: *Poruke bez riječi, umijeće neverbalnog komuniciranja*. Zagreb : TIM Press, 2014, p. 14.

²⁰ RIJAVEC, M., MILJKOVIĆ, D.: *Neverbalna komunikacija: jezik koji svi govorimo*. Zagreb : IEP, VERN, 2002, p. 3.

²¹ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 5.

²² RIJAVEC, M., MILJKOVIĆ, D.: *Neverbalna komunikacija: jezik koji svi govorimo*. Zagreb : IEP, VERN, 2002, p. 3.

²³ PAVELIN LEŠIĆ, B.: *Vizualna obilježja govorenoga jezika*. Zagreb : Filozofski fakultet, 2013, p. 27.

²⁴ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 7.

²⁵ NEILL, S.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u razredu*. Zagreb : Educa, 1994, p. 34.

teachers and students become aware of the importance of proper communication resp. the importance of metacommunication and interpretationcommunications.²⁶

It is important to read body language that should always be viewed in the context of the spoken word because *“you can find out what people think and feel (...) enough information to better understand yourself and others, to raise your communication skills to a higher level, to ensure better mutual understanding and you contribute to success both privately and in business. With such skill, you will more easily avoid misunderstandings and conflicts and ensure the affection and trust of the people around you”*²⁷ and recognizes the four messages we convey through the body and express cooperation, dominance, timidity and aggression. Nonverbal messages can be recognized in facial expressions, smile, look, voice, i.e., those elements of communication that were absent or insufficiently present during distance learning. Facial expressions remain hidden behind hygienic masks that must be worn according to epidemiological measures present in classrooms around the world. However, nonverbal communication continues with the eyes, because the dilation and narrowing of the pupils send a certain message to the interlocutor, a message of agreement or disagreement, acceptance or non-acceptance, active listening and the like.²⁸ A nonverbal communication we can also see in dilated pupils, directing the gaze and raising the eyebrows, in widening the eyes, in the upward and sideways gaze as well as in the sideways gaze with rapid blinking, but also in the flight of gaze and the powerful gaze and/or staring.²⁹ With his gaze, the student wearing a mask sends a nonverbal message to the teacher in the form of an interest in the teaching content, and the teacher receives feedback at the same time. A smile on the face of students and teachers, which is absent in distance learning, could significantly contribute to better teaching because *“due to the law of cause and effect, a smile is almost always returned with a smile and arouses positive feelings in both people. Studies show that most meetings will run smoothly, last longer, be more successful and significantly improve relationships if you regularly smile and laugh”*.³⁰ In professional relationships between teachers and students, a smile that shows accessibility and openness, more detailed interpretations and repetitions of already processed teaching content, etc. is necessary.³¹ Thus, by visual contact as a form of non-verbal communication, the student confirms active participation in the distance learning process or in the classroom when he has a mask on his face because it confirms the *“openness of the communication channel”*³² with the teacher. But, nevertheless, face masks and turned off video cameras during a videoconferencing class are barriers between students and teachers that make communication difficult.

The tone and speed of spoken words, information and messages belong to the nonverbal communication of the so-called paralinguistic signs that change the meaning of the message depending on the pitch and intensity of the voice at the time of utterance of certain information.³³ The author Pavelin Lešić emphasizes the importance of acoustics and visual

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 65.

²⁷ BURIC MOSKALJOV, M.: *Poruke bez riječi, umijeće neverbalnog komuniciranja*. Zagreb : TIM Press, 2014, p. 17.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 70.

²⁹ See: PEASE, A., PEASE, B.: *Velika škola govora tijela*. Zagreb : Mozaik knjiga, 2015, p. 164-176.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 88.

³¹ RIJAVEC, M., MILJKOVIĆ, D.: *Neverbalna komunikacija: jezik koji svi govorimo*. Zagreb : IEP, VERN, 2002, p. 33-34.

³² KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 351.

³³ RIJAVEC, M., MILJKOVIĆ, D.: *Neverbalna komunikacija: jezik koji svi govorimo*. Zagreb : IEP, VERN, 2002, p. 43.

image in verbal communication arising from movement, and sound is one of the movements in language along with rhythm, intonation, tempo, pauses and silence accompanied by the image of the speaker and listener, such as posture, hand movements, facial expressions, movements, which have already been discussed: *“Spoken face-to-face communication is a multifaceted activity: it is composed not only of words, but of a number of other components of communication (auditory, visual, tactile) which in close and coordinated connection with uttered in the form of a global statement, they form a speech-language act in a given communication situation. By speaking, we affect people, we thus achieve speech acts, and rhythm, intonation, movement, mimicry arenon-lexical speech-language means by which we can most directly act on the interlocutor as a partner of interaction.”*³⁴ Therefore, it is extremely important for mutual interaction in communication between teachers and students during distance learning to strive to encourage and reward what we call reinforcers. Reinforcers can be *“verbal or nonverbal. Verbal reinforcers include acknowledgment and agreement, praise, support, and compliments; nonverbal reinforcements include positive or encouraging use of smiles, nodding, looking at another person, touching, physical closeness, some gestures”*.³⁵

2 Methodology and Object of Research

The aim of our research was to determine the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication between teachers and students during classes. at a distance recommended by epidemiologists from around the world for the Covid-19 pandemic. The specifics of distance learning and the implementation of teaching content with subject and interdisciplinary outcomes contributed to the use of various digital platforms and information and communication technology. Achieved results and final grades at the end of the school year 2019/2020 are indicators how teachers and students have adapted to the new circumstances of the distance learning process. Research sample – in filling out the questionnaire in March 2021, a total of 217 first and fourth grade students from the Medical School Osijek in Croatia participated. Research method - the research was conducted by surveying. The questionnaire in the Google form was accessed by respondents in their classroom smartphones in March 2021. Out of a total of 19 questions, 9 were multiple-choice, one question with 9 Likert scale particles, 2 with gradations, and 7 questions were single-answer. The results are presented in which the students confirmed the use of information technology for the execution of their teaching work and the use of information and communication technologies during distance learning in school years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

3 Results

During distance learning and in active participation in the teaching process, 51 students use a personal computer (23.6%), 107 respondents a laptop (49.5%), 53 respondents a smartphone (24.5%) and 5 respondents a tablet (2.3%).

³⁴ PAVELIN LEŠIĆ, B.: *Vizualna obilježja govorenoga jezika*. Zagreb : Filozofski fakultet, 2013, p. 22.

³⁵ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 75.

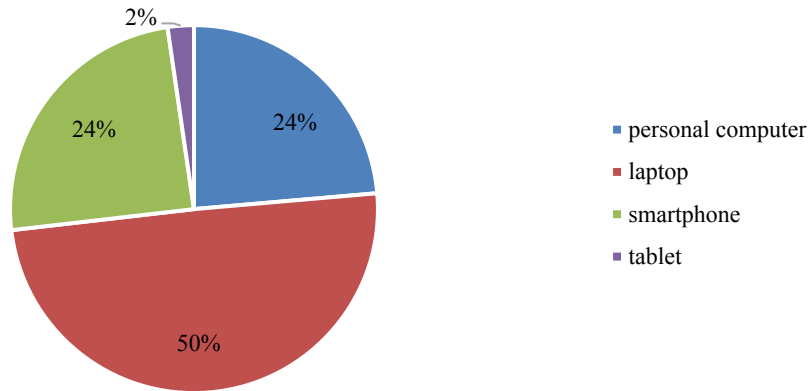


Chart 1: Use of the device in communication during distance learning
Source: Own processing, 2021.

The largest percentage of students use the digital tool Yammer (207 respondents, 95.85%) and Teams (4 respondents, 1.85%) on the digital platform Microsoft Office 365, and e-mail (5 respondents, 2.30%) for exchange of teaching materials and communication with teachers.

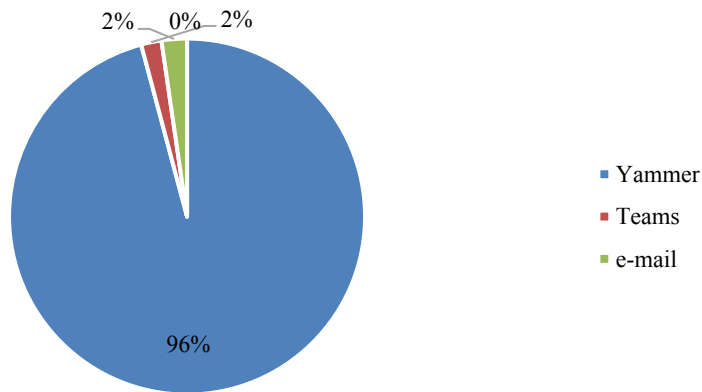


Chart 2: Using a digital distance learning platform
Source: Own processing, 2021.

Students had the opportunity to select between several digital tools they use to create homework, among which they most often use: PowerPoint (196 respondents, 90.7%), Canva (54 respondents, 25%), Prezi (12 respondents, 5.6%), YouTube (37 respondents, 17.1%), to create a smart map Toggle, Mindmaps, Mindmasters, Miro (5 respondents, 2.31%), then Word (49 respondents, 22.68%), Geogebra (1 respondent, 0.46%) and Wordwall (1 respondent, 0.46%).

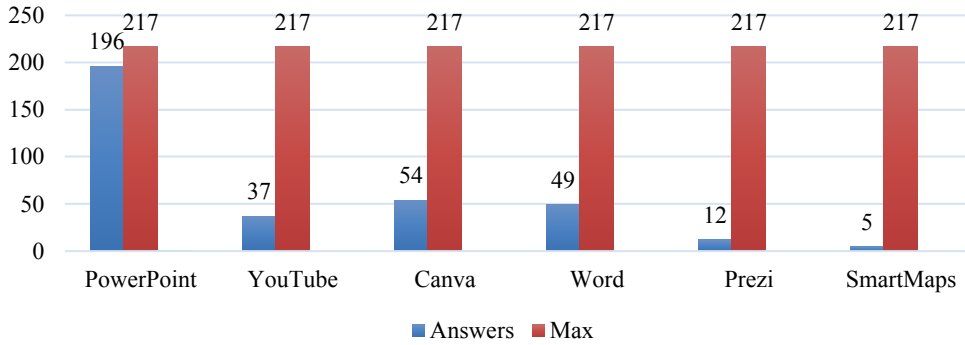


Chart 3: Digital tools for doing homework

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Following the instructions of teachers, students worked independently on their school work in the form of presentations (206 respondents, 95.4%), mind maps (206 respondents, 95.4%), posters and posters (130 respondents, 60.2%), compositions and papers (131 respondents, 60.6%), research seminar papers (126 respondents, 58.3%), photo collage (54 respondents, 25%), poems and stories (31 respondents, 14.4%), comics (30 respondents, 13.9%), videos (23 respondents, 10.6%), leaflet and brochure (20 respondents, 9.3%), project teaching (19 respondents, 8.8%), postcards, greeting cards, invitations (12 respondents, 5.6%), infographics and graphics (5 respondents, 2.3%) and other (5 respondents, 2.3%).

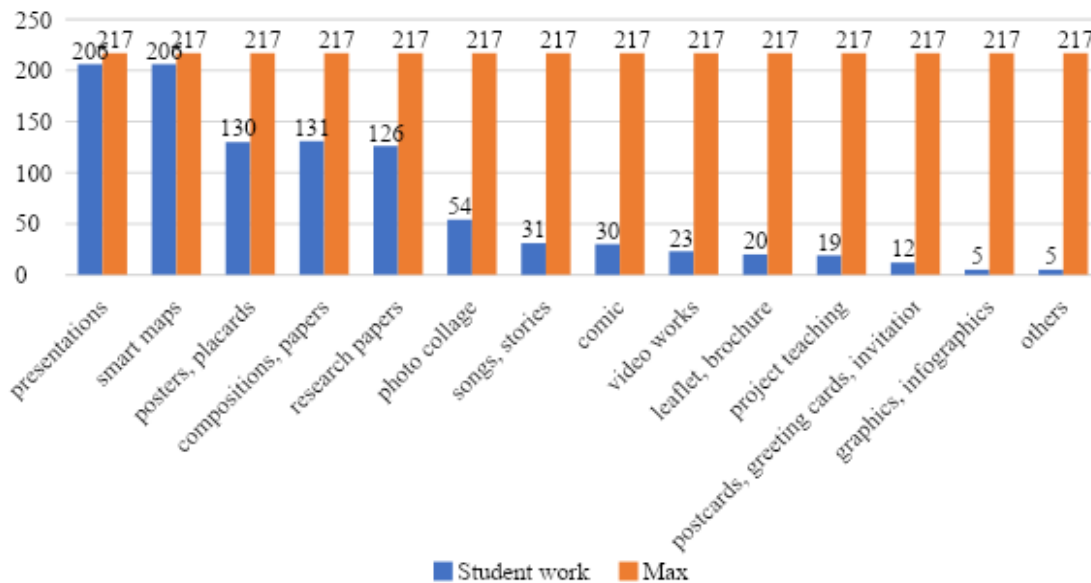


Chart 4: Forms and types of student work during distance learning

Source: Own processing, 2021.

During distance learning, students and teachers most often communicated by video call (133 respondents, 61.6%), e-mail (169 respondents, 78.24%), social networks (73 respondents, 33.8%), by phone call or cell phone call (26 respondents, 12%). The social networks that students most often use in communication with teachers, class teachers, the principal, professional associates, pedagogue, psychologist and librarian are Yammer (149 respondents, 68.7%), Viber (101 respondents, 46.5%), Facebook, Messenger (47 respondents, 21.7%) and WhatsApp (41 respondents, 18.9%).

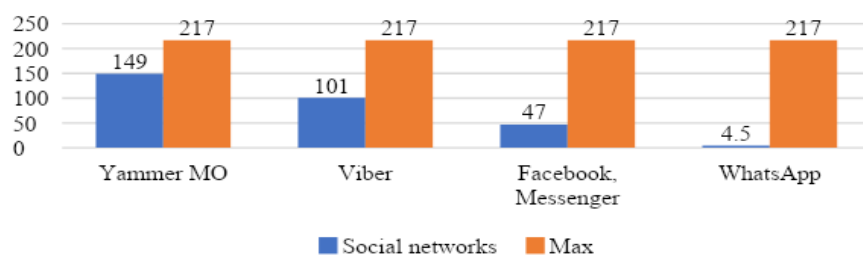


Chart 5: Social networks for communication

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Video communication for distance teaching with teachers, class teachers, principal, pedagogue, psychologist, librarian was most often realized using Zoom.us (207 respondents, 97.6%), MO Teams (102 respondents, 48.1%), Google Meet (99 respondents, 46.7%), and other tools were used by 2 respondents (1%).

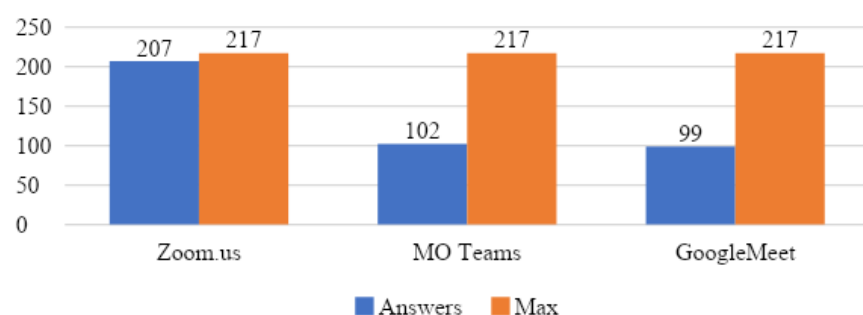


Chart 6: Video communication

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Of traditional sources for the preparation of their works, students used textbooks and manuals (208 respondents, 95.9%), notes in a notebook (187 respondents, 86.2%), professional literature (32 respondents, 14.7%), literature from the library (24 respondents, 11.1%), other (8 respondents, 3.5%).



Chart 7: Traditional sources

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Students most often used digital sources in the creation of their works. In the largest number they have used the links provided by teachers (178 respondents, 82%), various online sources and sites (171 respondents, 78.8%), e-reference sources (55 respondents, 25.3%), e-books, e-manuals, e-textbooks (49 respondents, 22.6%) and e-professional sources (35 respondents, 16.1%).

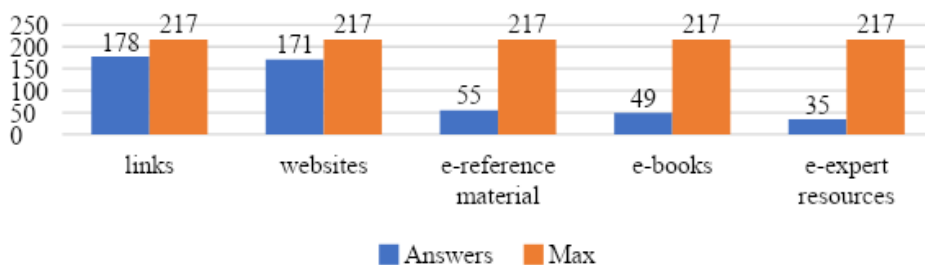


Chart 8: Digital sources

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The web sites that students used to create their works are: eLektire (125 respondents, 57.6%), digital platform Školskeknjige (82 respondents, 37.8%), Toni Milun (68 respondents, 31.3%), School for Life (56 respondents, 25.8%), IzziProfilKlett (35 respondents, 16.1%), eSchool of Chemistry (25 respondents, 11.5%), eSchool of Physics (17 respondents, 7.8%), eBiology (12 respondents, 5.5%) and Nikola Tesla (12 respondents, 5.5%), MozaBook Alfa (8 respondents, 3.7%), Wikipedia (11 respondents, 5.1%), Hrčak (9 respondents, 4.14%) and other (7 respondents, 3.22%).

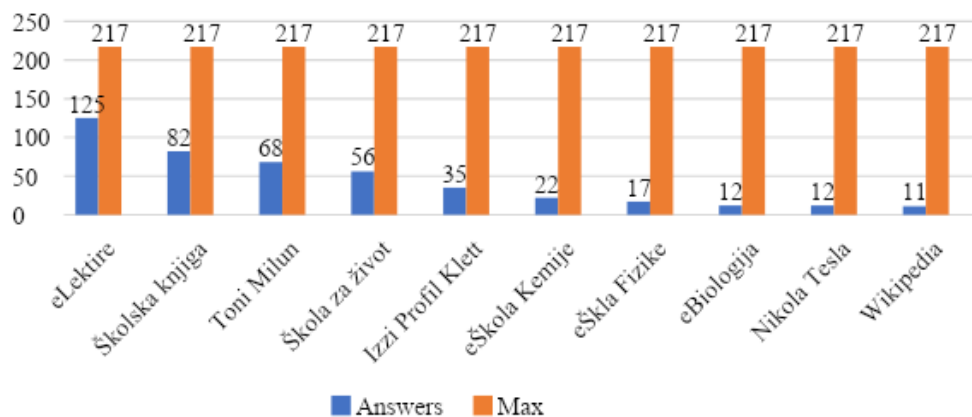


Chart 9: Websites

Source: Own processing, 2021.

For the use of different sources, students received instructions from their subject teachers (177 respondents, 81.6%), librarians (10 respondents, 4.6%) and friends (59 respondents, 27.2%). Students rated communication with their teachers during distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a grade of excellent (44 respondents, 20.3%), very good (83 respondents, 38.2%), good (77 respondents, 35.5%), sufficient (11 respondents, 5.1%) and insufficient (2 respondents, 0.9%).

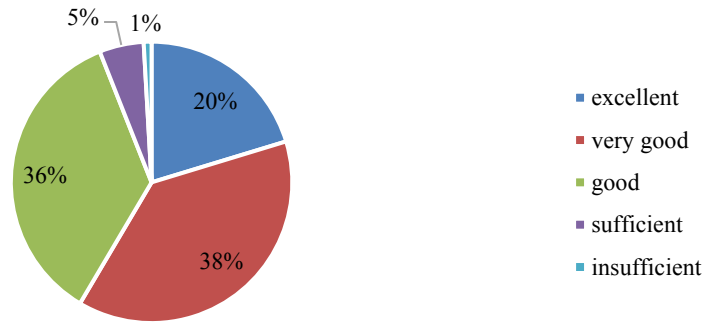


Chart 10: Communication assessment

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Students rated satisfaction with their results and concluded grades during distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a grade of excellent (81 respondents, 37%), very good (89 respondents, 41%), good (33 respondents, 15%); 11 respondents (5%) are sufficient and 3 students (2%) are dissatisfied.

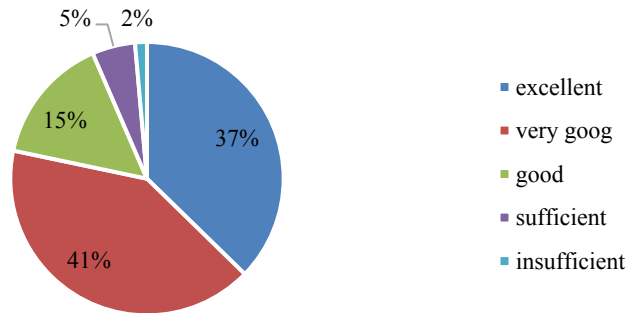


Chart 11: Satisfaction with the achieved grades

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The feedback about the successfully made work the students received from their teachers by e-mail (133 respondents, 61.3%), a confirmation to MO Yammer and Teams and others (71 respondents, 32.7%), message on the social network (13 respondents, 6%). Students most often sent their works to teachers for review using e-mail (138 respondents, 63.6%) and using digital platforms MO Yammer and Teams and others (79 respondents, 36.4%). Students stated that the easiest way to communicate with teachers was the video class (112 respondents, 51.6%), written communication (77 respondents, 35.5%), and oral communication (28 respondents, 12.9%).

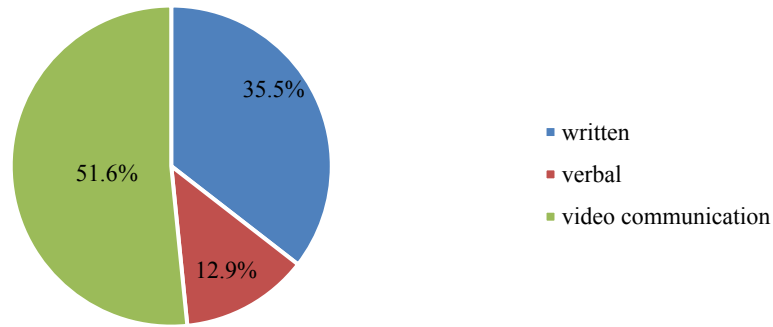


Chart 12: Way of communicating with teachers during distance learning

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The largest percentage of students answered that it is easier and faster to understand the teaching content when they see the lecturer (144 respondents, 66.4%) on their screen, 46 respondents do not know (21.2%) and 27 respondents do not facilitate (12.4%).

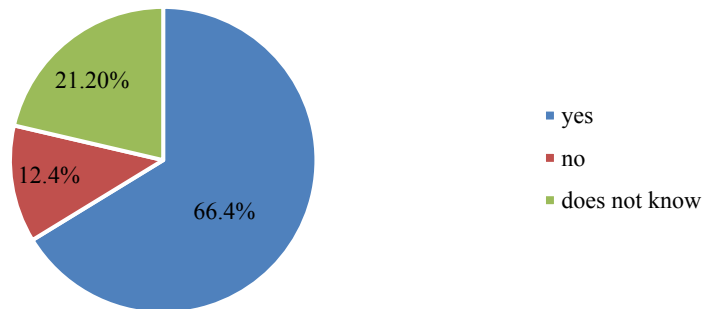


Chart 13: Students understand the teaching content easier and faster when they see the teacher on their screen

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The students concluded that the teacher communicates with them more easily during the video lesson because they see students on the cameras on their devices (90 students, 41.7%), 73 students (33.8%) do not know, and 53 students (24.5%) do not agree.

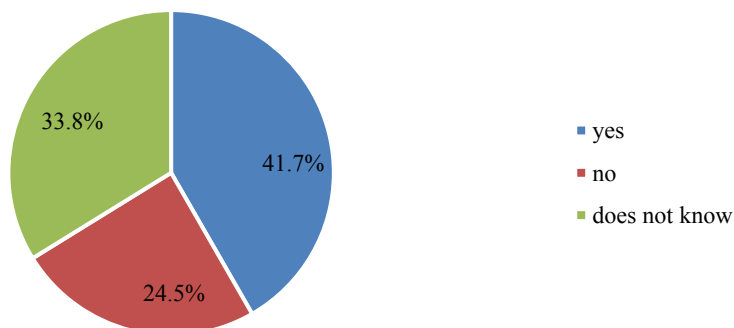


Chart 14: The teacher understands the answers in the video Lesson easier and faster when students turn on the camera

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Students and teachers in the classroom during classes are required to wear face masks according to epidemiological measures to protect themselves from Covid-19. Students assessed how much non-verbal communication between teachers makes it easier for them to understand the teaching content.

Table 1: Nonverbal teacher communication makes it easier for the student to understand the teaching content

Forms of Nonverbal Communication	It Does Not Make It Any Easier	It Does Not Make It Easier	It Neither Makes It Easy Nor Makes It Easier	Facilitates	Facilitates Completely
Body Language	8 (3.68%)	19 (8.75%)	70 (32.25%)	71 (32.71%)	18 (8.29%)
Hand Language	7 (3.22%)	21 (9.67%)	54 (24.88%)	90 (41.47%)	18 (8.29%)
Speech with the Eyes	10 (4.60%)	25 (11.52%)	64 (29.49%)	76 (35.02%)	13(6%)
Nodding	5 (2.30%)	16 (7.37%)	46 (21.19%)	85 (39.17%)	4 (1.84%)
Movements on the Forehead	18 (8.29%)	50 (23.04%)	74 (34.10%)	46 (21.19%)	10 (4.60%)
Scratching Eyebrows, Forehead	51 (23.50%)	59 (27.18%)	74 (34.10%)	17 (7.83%)	3 (1.38%)
Hair Pulling	63 (29.03%)	67 (30.87%)	63 (29.03%)	10 (4.60%)	4 (1.84%)
Voice Tone	14 (6.45%)	18 (8.29%)	54 (24.88%)	78 (35.94%)	35 (16.12%)
Intensity and Rhythm of Voice	9 (4.14%)	16 (7.37%)	38 (17.51%)	87 (40.09%)	47 (21.65%)

Source: Own processing, 2021.

4 Discussion

The research conducted at the Medical School Osijek was compared with similar researches conducted at the Metković High School in Croatia, in schools in Slovenia, faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a high school in Greece. During the distance learning classes, the high school students of the Medical School Osijek had the necessary IT equipment, which they actively used. Teachers and students used the Microsoft Office 365 digital platform for schools to share teaching and student materials. They also communicated via social media, email and video conferencing tools to hold classes in real time. Students used various digital tools to create their works in the form of presentations, posters, compositions, infographics and other forms of works. Therefore, the teachers educated them according to the outcomes of the cross-curricular topic *use of information and communication technology on* how to use certain digital tools. Also, the necessity of education in media literacy was identified for students to learn to use and distinguish relevant and useful information and to apply it in the creation of independent papers. According to the recommendations of teachers and professional associates of librarians, students used various sources from websites, readings, textbooks and manuals in electronic form to master their teaching content. The students with their achieved results and concluded grades rated the distance learning with excellent and very good (78%), which is an indicator of the realized and conducted distance learning. Also, students rated communication with their teachers as excellent (20.3%), very good (38.2%) and good (35.5%) during distance learning which is an indicator of quality mutual communication. In the research, students stated that they better understand the teaching content when teaching is held in real time and when they see their teacher on small screens with whom they can communicate without difficulty (66.4%). In the research, students answered that 51.6% communicate more easily with teachers during video lessons and 35.5% through written communication, and only 12.9% orally.

A survey conducted at Metković High School shows that students rated distance learning with an excellent 11.9%, a very good 35.6% and a good 34.7% grade.³⁶ Students in Slovenia in 54% recognized the quality of using video presentations during distance learning, also as a better way of answering 38%.³⁷ High school students from the Osijek Medical School answered questions about the importance of nonverbal communication in the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonverbal communication was absent from distance learning because students solved their tasks at home and communicated in writing with teachers. However, part of the students in the school participated in classes where nonverbal communication was also lacking as everyone in the class wore face masks according to epidemiological instructions. The research showed that students noticed the importance of nonverbal communication, which confirms the fact that it facilitates their participation in class when they follow body language 41%, hand speech 49.76%, eye speech 41.02%, nodding 41.01%, intensity and rhythm teacher's voice 61.74%, and the tone of voice 52.06%, while it does not facilitate their movements on the forehead 63.43%, scratching eyebrows and forehead 84.78% and pulling hair 88.93%.

In high school in Greece, Stamatis and Kostoula conducted research on the meaning of nonverbal communication between teachers during classes when teachers confirmed that they look their students in the eyes, pay attention to the color of their voice, often grimace and lean towards their students and smile at them.³⁸ Rijavec and Miljković wrote about the importance of nonverbal communication, citing researches that showed that a person has eight different positions of eyebrows and forehead and ten positions of the lower part of the face, so that combinations of movements of different facial muscles create 7,000 different expressions.³⁹ Six basic emotions present can be identified relatively accurately on the face: surprise, fear, anger, disgust, happiness, and sadness which can in some ways help in understanding teacher-student communication during distance learning.⁴⁰ It is the non-verbal expressions that we can read on the face of teachers and students that can facilitate the communication and mutual understanding that is necessary during the teaching, transmission and adoption of teaching content.

Nonverbal communication is extremely important in the process of transmitting messages, believe the authors Pease and Pease, who cite research that confirms five times stronger influence of nonverbal messages than verbal ones with special emphasis on smiles, and in the 19th century in France the first researches were recorded. and electrostimulation measured the smile.⁴¹ Namely, *“Brannigan and Humphries (1972) identified nine smiles (representing different shapes and intensities) many of which appear in different situations. Ekman and Friesen, using an anatomically coded system, discovered more than 100 different human*

³⁶ LOVRIĆ, R., BJELIŠ, N.: Stavovi učenika o nastavi na daljinu. In *Varaždinski učitelj: Digitalni stručni časopis za odgoj i obrazovanje*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 29. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <<https://hrcak.srce.hr/246213>>.

³⁷ KRESNIK KOČEV, A.: Distance Learning – Ensuring and Monitoring the Active Participation of Educational Participants. In OREL, M., BRALA-MUDROVČIĆ, J., MILETIĆ, J. (eds.): *EDUvision 2020. Challenges and New Opportunities of Distance Learning*. Ljubljana : EDUvision, 2020, p. 806. [online]. [2021-03-28]. Available at: <http://www.eduvision.si/Content/Docs/The_Book_of_Papers_EDUvision_2020.pdf>.

³⁸ STAMATIS, P. J., KOSTOULA, V. E.: Nonverbal Immediacy in Teaching Process: A Case Study in Secondary Education. In *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2021, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 22. [online]. [2021-03-29]. Available at: <<https://www.ej-edu.org/index.php/ejedu/article/view/25/13>>.

³⁹ RIJAVEC, M., MILJKOVIĆ, D.: *Neverbalna komunikacija: Jezik koji svi govorimo*. Zagreb : IEP, VERN, 2002, p. 32.

⁴⁰ KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 10.

⁴¹ PEASE, A., PEASE, B.: *Velika škola govora tijela*. Zagreb : Mozaik knjiga, 2015, p. 69.

smiles".⁴² A survey was conducted of students of the Department of English at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo who evaluated the quality of distance learning. Students had 54.5% of the necessary IT equipment during distance learning, and 4% did not have it at all. For successful participation in the teaching process, the digital platform Microsoft Office 365 was used in 97.7%, especially the applications Yammer and Teams, and e-mail 2.30% for regular exchange of teaching materials and communication with teachers. The most used platforms for distance learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina are BISER 91.1%, Zoom 85.6%, Skype 84.4%, Moodle 51.1%, Google classroom 21.2%, and for communication between teachers and students e-mail 98.9%, Skype 50.5%, Viber 13.2%, Cisco Webex Meeting 34.1%. In the production of homework, students in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as high school students in Croatia, also used PowerPoint 89%, followed by Word 81.3% and PDF 75.8%, YouTube 48.4% and various sources on websites 44%.⁴³

Conclusion

Organizing distance learning was a demanding step both for the Ministry of Science and Education in the Republic of Croatia and for the entire education system. All students had the necessary IT equipment to be well involved in distance learning. During the implementation of the curriculum reform of the School for Life, teachers were well educated, and the indicator of success is the distance learning with planned outcomes and student evaluation. Digital platforms and digital tools, information and communication technologies and social networks have been used by teachers and students in the exchange of teaching content, homework, research seminars and projects. Distance learning is supported by videoconferencing tools for the purpose of quality transmission and detailed interpretation of individual teaching contents and knowledge testing. The value of not only verbal but also nonverbal communication between teachers and students was noticed, which made it easier to hold a video lesson in real time. Students and teachers turned on their cameras on small screens and communicated with each other not only verbally but also nonverbally. In nonverbal communication, the face is the only part of the body that could be seen on small screens which facilitated mutual understanding with the teacher. Nonverbal messages that a student or teacher sends with their face can be read on the forehead, eyebrows, eyes, nose, lips, cheeks, chin, jaw, complexion, intensity, and voice color. Thus, during head and face communication we send various non-verbal messages by which the current communication is established and confirmed. It is concluded, with the confirmation of the conducted research, that nonverbal communication in the teaching process contributes to better transmission of information, and thus more successful communication between teachers and students in the online environment.

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⁴² KNAPP, M. L., HALL, J. A.: *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap, 2010, p. 308.

⁴³ OKIČIĆ, M. et al.: Stavovi studenata Odsjeka za anglistiku Filozofskog fakulteta univerziteta u Sarajevu. O organizaciji i načinu izvođenja nastave na daljinu tokom pandemije virusa korona. In *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Sarajevu*, 2020, No. 23, p. 234. [online]. [2021-03-29]. Available at: <<https://www.ceeol.com/search/viewpdf?id=940809>>.

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REFLECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS IN THE BROADCASTING OF PUBLIC TELEVISION

Dušan Blahút – Matej Majerský

Abstract:

Radio and Television of Slovakia is the only public television in our country. The law obliges it to deal with several topics, including the topic of environmental studies and thus contribute to environmental responsibility. *RTVS* fulfils the wording of the law, but the quality of this fulfilment is questionable. We assumed that the professional public would welcome a higher quality of information on this topic. Therefore, as part of our contribution, we addressed experts to whom we sent a questionnaire with questions related to the work of *RTVS* in the field of information on the topics of the environment, environmental studies, ecology, etc. We also bring suggestions for improvement, respectively ideas with which television would be able to enrich its program on this topic and bring not only more topics, but also a higher quality of their processing.

Key words:

Environmental Studies. Program. Public Television. *Radio and Television of Slovakia*.

Introduction

The last, more than a year long period was significantly affected by the biggest global event - the COVID-19 virus pandemic. It has affected most of the population and changed long-established habits and stereotypes. In our contribution, we will reflect on the manner and quantity of communicated content with environmental topics on the circuits of our public television. As this pandemic period has altered and, in some cases, completely transformed the perception of media content, such as online teaching using computers and tablets, or body education in schools. For this reason, too, we focused on public television and its grasp of environmental issues in our broadcasts. It is also important that *“a major factor affecting almost all types of media today is digitalization, which has expanded the possibilities for broadcasting and receiving content to a level unparalleled in the current existence of the media”*.¹

The professional public focused on the environmental area was addressed in the form of a questionnaire and we ascertained the perception of the broadcasting of public service television in Slovakia in the context of enviro issues. Due to the situation, the survey was carried out using an online questionnaire, which we sent by e-mail, through the database of representatives of the *Centre for Environmental Activities Trenčín* and by sharing in the *Facebook* group *Slovak Conservation Assembly*. These channels were chosen based on relevance and credit. The situation in which we have recently found ourselves, in addition to several limitations, also gives opportunities to develop new skills and procedures in the creation of media content. At this point, we agree with J. Radošinská and her statement that *“working with multimedia platforms, increasing media interactivity, and increasing the use of the Internet are also reflected in changes in the perception of traditional electronic media. The implementation of the above attributes means a challenge for broadcasters and producers, to which they respond mainly by expanding the range of their services, but also the formats found in broadcasting”*.² The implementation of the above attributes means a challenge for broadcasters and producers, to which they respond mainly by expanding the scope of their services, but also the formats

¹ MINÁRIKOVÁ, J., BLAHÚT, D., VIŠNOVSKÝ, J.: Information in The Multiplatform Era. In *European Journal of Media, Art and Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 119.

² RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Mediálna zábava v 21. storočí: Sociálno-kultúrne aspekty a trendy*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 86.

presented in the broadcast. These aspects should also be translated into the elaboration and presentation of environmental topics and content in *RTVS* broadcasts. Greater interaction and involvement of the younger generation should be one of the main challenges for creators, who should also take on additional skills, but these can also bring possible negative connotations, as noted by E. Klinenberg, who argues that digital technologies have changed journalistic editorial work, but it is debatable how they have affected the quality of journalistic output. In relation to this issue, it states that when conglomerates entered the journalistic business, they imported their own management techniques into the newsrooms and developed new strategies to ensure increased productivity, efficiency, and profitability of the industry. Many journalists and media critics have pointed out that convergence is undermining journalism, by reducing the time spent gathering information, creating, and evaluating social events.³

Therefore, increased attention should be paid to this issue so as not to jeopardize the quality and relevance of the content. It is also caused by what we call cross-platform space. It allows the interconnection of all forms of media communication: text, audio and audio-visual, and the opportunity to bring all these means of expression to bear in various combinations and forms. Another factor influencing the hybridisation of journalistic practices was the circulation of media professionals in different newsrooms. Print journalists came to work on radio and television, and television and radio went back to other media, transferring stereotypes from the media production methods employed by the media in which they had previously worked. The reason for the hybridisation of journalistic practices is also the number of non-journalistic editors working in newsrooms.⁴ These new trends thus affect the resulting quality of the content offered, which they often lack. Objectivity is forgotten, falsehoods, misleading information, unsubstantiated information, or wider processing of the topic appear, or other relevant topics do not open. For example, when we talk about environmentalism, the topics are narrowed down to just limiting plastics or waste management, there are few topics about the loss of biodiversity and more.

1 Environmental Studies in the Context of the Media

The environment and its protection are a topical issue that affects not only the professional public, but every person on the planet. According to Loučanová and Trebuň, events such as growing climate change, deforestation, water shortages, acid rain, frequent calamities caused by windstorms and floods have resulted in increased attention of people who, thanks to the mass media, have created a growing awareness of these environmental problems.⁵ On the Internet we can find a large amount of content related to environmental studies, environmental protection, or tips for a sustainable way of life. However, we must keep in mind that creators do not have to be experts who really know what messages they are spreading through their content. Especially when helping the environment, we need to think about the narrow line between which solutions really help the planet and which are, on the contrary, unsustainable. Such online advice is particularly inspiring to young people looking for ways to lead their lives in a more sustainable way. However, they can easily run into unfair greenwashing practices or buy a product or service that is not ultimately beneficial to the environment. It is important to realize

³ KLINENBERG, E.: *Convergence: News Production in a Digital Age*. In DUFFY, B. E., TUROW, J. (eds.): *Key Readings in Media Today. Mass Communication in Contexts*. New York, London : Routledge, 2009, p. 156.

⁴ HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., PRAVDOVÁ, H., GAŽICOVÁ, A.: *The Pragmatism of Hybridisation Logic of Television News in Slovakia*. In *Communication Today*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 97.

⁵ LOUČANOVÁ, E., TREBUŇA, P.: *Eko-inovácie ako nástroj konkurencieschopnosti*. In *Transfer inovácií*, 2014, Vol. 29, p. 76.

that no solution for sustainable living is universally applicable to everyone. Especially when we take action to reduce the effects of climate change, we need to think as simply as possible and realize that each of our activities has an impact on the environment. One of the biggest factors in climate change is the production of energy from unsustainable sources. Energy is consumed in the production of everything - food, clothing, cars, electronics, etc. Greenhouse gas emissions generated during the transport or disposal (storage) of packaging materials are another major, but especially accompanying problem, which arises from excessive demand for things and today's consumption. Vojtilla and Široký claim that: "*Climate change is gaining in importance today. As these are no longer just expected forecasts, but their result can be directly observed at present. There are still inconsistencies in the press, but also in political statements. It often happens that politicians or the media, under the influence of lobbying energy and industrial companies, present half-truths, and modified facts, and thus the public is confronted with opinions.*"⁶

Nowadays, public discussion (also initiated by the media) often slips only on the issue of disposable plastic (also non-plastic) products, but there are a huge number of topics related to the environment. Climate change is associated not only with waste generation, but also with topics such as: public transport, pollution of rivers, water bodies and groundwater, food waste, fast fashion, shipping and air transport, deforestation, light smog, and many others, including the often overlooked, very important topic of biodiversity loss. However, there are also more positive themes that inspire people to behave responsibly: buying local food, sustainable tourism, bicycle transport, waste prevention and, if necessary, proper separation, urban adaptation measures, sustainable energy sources and so on. Many activists on the other side of the spectrum argue that the individual cannot do anything about climate change, and it is governments that need to act – for example, by stopping coal mines, breaking the preference for nuclear energy, or raising environmental taxes for large companies. However, the truth is that individuals are those who create demand for products that they often do not need and thus become part of an unsustainable cycle that has nothing to do with the idea of a circular economy. It was during the pandemic that we witnessed that one could indulge in a rather material form of pleasure, for example through online stores (clothing, electronics, food delivery) or media services that had the potential to reach a wide audience and present these topics during the pandemic.

2 Public Media and the View of the Professional Public on Broadcast Content with Environmental Themes

Especially in times of misinformation, public service television should be a relevant source of information provided by media experts. The obligation to provide information on environmental issues stems from the *RTVS Statute*, which states that *RTVS's* mission is to provide a service to the public through television and radio broadcasting based on the principles of democracy and humanism, while contributing to legal awareness, ethical awareness, and environmental responsibility.⁷ That is why we focused our research on the space, which was devoted to the topics of the environment and its protection. We addressed the professional environmental public in the form of a questionnaire and found out how they perceive the broadcasting of public service television in Slovakia. The online questionnaire was distributed

⁶ VOJTILLA, S., ŠIROKÝ, P.: *Globálne otepľovanie a Klimatická zmena*. Bratislava : O. Z. ZA MATKU ZEM and Slovenská klimatická koalícia, 2009, p. 5.

⁷ *Štatút Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska, from 5th December 2016*. [online]. [2021-07-07]. Available at: <http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1364909855_zakon_308-2000_ucinny_2013-01-01.pdf>.

by e-mailing through the database of representatives of the *Centre for Environmental Activities Trenčín* and by sharing in the Facebook group *Slovak Conservation Assembly*. The survey was conducted in March 2021 and involved 72 respondents (43 women and 29 men) who filled in open and closed questions. The most represented age group were people aged 46 – 55 years (27.8%), followed by people aged 36 – 45 years (25%). The third group was people aged 56 – 65 (20.8%), followed by people aged 26 – 35 and 66 – 75, with both groups representing 12%. Within the area of activity of the respondents, we summarized 5 categories – education, nature protection, activism and volunteering, science, and others. 23 respondents stated that they work in the field of education within schools, hobby groups or conservation clubs. The second most numerous groups include nature conservationists (protection of water, animals, wetlands, biodiversity, etc.), of which there were 20. The group is followed by activism and volunteering – 12, science – 9, and others – 12. Under the category other we included, for example, respondents active in politics or the third sector. To the closed question: “Do you consider the amount of environmental content broadcast on RTVS television circuits to be sufficient?” – more than 98% of respondents answered with the option “No”. Given that the questionnaire was filled in by the professional community, we can consider this fact to be quite serious. To the open-ended question: “What environmental shows do you know about RTVS circuits?” respondents could state current as well as past, we met with several answers. The most mentioned was the non-existent program *Eko d’alej...?* which was once hosted by Katarína Začková. It was a monothematic journalistic session, which dealt with the issue of environmental protection. It is now very partially replaced by the *Reporters* program, in which environmental issues occasionally appear. Reporters were just as often the most frequently cited answer. Other current shows included respondents from *Farmárska revue*, *Postav dom, zasad’ strom* and *Halali*. Other contents in which we can meet with environmental topics are scientific documents or series, broadcast mainly on *Dvojka*, are *Nature*, the *Beauties of Slovakia*, or *The Secret Life of Lakes*. Educational content for children and youth is represented by the dramaturgical program *Ekonauti*. They also mentioned the non-existent program *Separé*, the main topic of which was waste. The last show that the experts mentioned was a *Televíkend*, in which topics related to ecology occasionally appear. Some respondents stated that they encounter environmental topics in the news programs of the *Správy RTVS*, *Slovensko v obrazoch*, *Svet v obrazoch*. A half-open, multi-choice question provided respondents with the opportunity to choose which programs would include more environmental content in RTVS television. 71 respondents answered the question “What would you include to provide more enviro content within RTVS broadcasts?”.

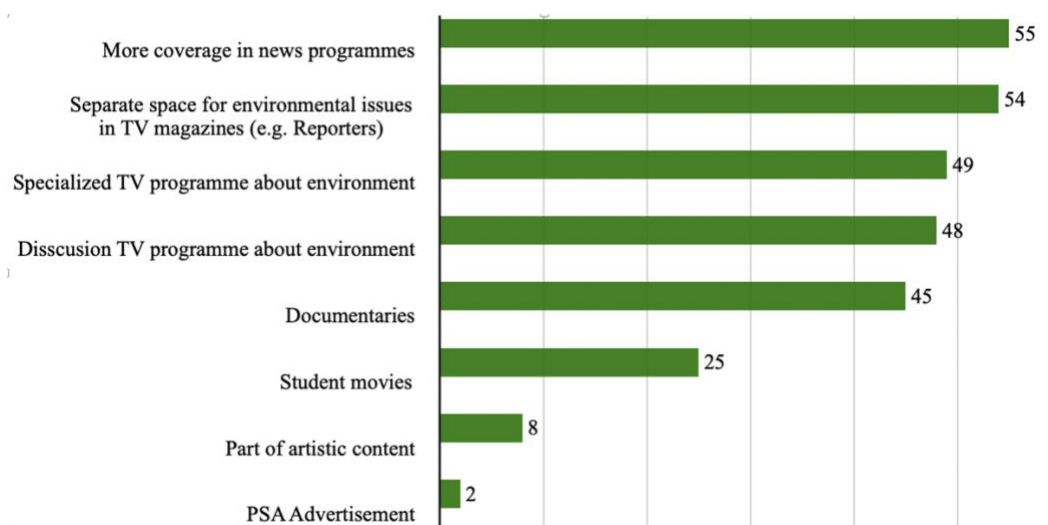


Chart 1: Results of marketing research
Source: Own processing.

As many as 55 respondents said that they would like environmental topics to be given more space in news programs. 54 of them would also welcome a separate regular space for environmental issues in programs such as Reporters. 49 respondents would receive their own monothematic session and 48 on the environmental topics. 45 respondents would include more environmental documents in the broadcast, while 25 respondents also mentioned student films. Only two respondents mentioned the PSA Advertisement/Announcement option, which consists in disseminating the notice free of charge in the public interest. The possibility of increasing the content about the environment within the artistic creation was chosen by 8 respondents. Alternatively, the answers were given: More environmental investigative and environmental studies in policy discussions.

In the following open-ended question: *“What steps would you recommend RTVS to improve environmental awareness in Slovakia?”* many respondents referred to their answers in the previous question. To a large extent, however, there were suggestions for the establishment of an independent investigative team or editorial office for environmental issues, as well as the need for a strong face (reporter or reporter), which will be the bearer of this topic on public television. One respondent's answer was: *“The issue should have a specialized editor. Just as some editors specialize in crime or the economy, we should have specialized environmental editors in public service television and radio news.”* Another common response was to express the need to create a separate monothematic session, with experts referring to the fact that groups such as gardeners, fishermen, hunters, foresters have their own session such as *Hurá do záhrady* or *Halali*. They think that these groups are closely connected, and their own environmental session could bring interesting content for them as well. According to the respondent, it would be the right step: *“Professionally prepare your own show, such a space is available to stable fishermen, hunters and farmers. In my view, environmental issues are also linked to these groups, and it is a great disproportion to the real and necessary environmental issues.”* They often mentioned a comparison with the Czech Republic, in which such a session exists under the name *Neděj se!*. Some respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with the management of RTVS, which they said should be replaced, and answered one question as follows: *“Interventions from above, they were not forced to leave RTVS because of their reports (which do not suit the various oligarchs, influential people and their business).”* The last question of the survey was a closed question: *“Do you agree with the statement that public service television should play a key role in raising environmental awareness, especially in the context of the climate crisis?”* All respondents answered this question and 69 of them agreed. So that is 95.8% of our sample. The degree of agreement with this statement is a clear signal that the professional environmental public thinks that public service television should be a provider of relevant information on environmental protection and the growing threats posed by climate change. This survey may in part appear unrepresentative due to the relatively low number of respondents. However, the fact that needs to be considered is that we tried to intervene as many Slovak environmental protection experts as possible, who declared their profession and area of activity at the beginning of the questionnaire in an open question. That is why we consider the result of that question, as well as the whole survey, to be a relevant reflection of the opinions of experts.

Conclusion

Public service television should play a key role in presenting environmental topics, becoming a leader in the field of education and presentation of topics and content. However, the survey clearly showed an insufficient amount of environmental content broadcast on public service

television (98% of respondents). The professional public clearly wants to ensure that these contents are incomparably more than the current situation. The solution would be to include a program in the broadcast that would primarily deal with enviro issues. The issue of time allocation or a firm anchorage in the broadcasting structure would also be important. This is crucial for older percipients and promotes time tracking habits. For the younger generation, the opposite is necessary, the possibility to watch the session when it has the taste and space, i.e., in the form of an online archive with a clear and intuitive search. In this case, however, it is essential that the young generation learn about such content at all, to which the promotion on the relevant channels needs to be adapted. The second key area is to increase the share of environmental content in news. Consider a permanent section in the main evening news program. Where the scope is limited, but quality processing could compensate for this handicap, respectively. It could just be a teaser for a larger report broadcast in another session, or published on the web, or an online RTVS channel. Television also lacks an environmental news editor. The survey showed that experts would appreciate such a practice, which is common in other topics, such as health or education. We believe that such a topic would resonate more and appear more often in the mainstream news, for example. As a result of the pandemic, the lives of entire communities have slowed down, which has also affected the climate situation. However, it was only a short-term effect, but for some this slowdown aroused interest in the topic of a responsible approach. Television was given the opportunity to attract the attention of viewers, without having to fight the competition - people stayed in their homes, movement was restricted, cinemas and theatres closed. However, regarding the environment, the RTVS program again remained in the background and remained within the mandatory limits set by law.

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SPREADING THE CULTURE OF FEAR IN CROATIAN ONLINE MEDIA: ANALYSIS OF THE CORONAVIRUS FIRST WAVE

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Abstract:

Culture of fear can be defined as a concept in society where fear is used to manipulate and alter people's behaviour in order to achieve certain goals. The role of fear in societies has been a research focus of many scholars whether it was a fear from natural disasters (earthquakes, floods), wars, epidemics, crimes, etc. As a mediator, especially today in 24-hours news cycle, the media have an important role in shaping reality and thus in shaping the perception of risks. Having in mind that when the risk is urgent use of media increases and public turns to news, it is essential to know that media can be beneficial for informing the public but can also exaggerate the risks. The aim of the paper is to analyse the approach that Croatian online media used in reporting during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic 2020 and whether they fostered the culture of fear – exaggerated the risk. Method used in the research is quantitative-qualitative content analysis on 912 articles published on Croatian online news portals Večernji.hr and 24sata.hr from 1st February to 31st March. The authors' intention is to identify the media reporting characteristics that foster culture of fear recognized in practices like extensive coverage, usage of large, intimidating numbers and terms which reflect preoccupation with risk (loaded language), depressing visuals and negative coverage tone as a form of manipulation and intimidation.

Key words:

Covid-19. Culture of Fear. Manipulation. Media Reporting. Online News Portals. Pandemic. Risk. Tabloids.

Introduction

Whether fear is viewed as a natural psychological phenomenon that becomes an instrument for ruling and mass discipline¹ or as socially conditioned occurrence, fear as a primary human emotion, necessary for survival, has snuck into society and became a main trigger for modern human's way of thinking and lifestyle.² In the age of modern media and fast ways of news sharing, it is impossible not to notice the occurrence of mass fear spreading, hysteria and collective phobias of entire communities, to be exact, entire cultures. On the other hand, fight for media attention has never been greater which sometimes means that "*media can reach for attraction tactics and various distractions using something that everyone has in common, regardless of gender, race or age – fear*".³ Various crises, political, economic, health, Sir Robert Fry refers as symptoms of new normal that is becoming an everyday currency of communications where it is almost universally accepted that media from mainstream to social, play a significant role.⁴ Specially in this digital environment of the 24-hour news cycle it is no surprise that the media play an important role in shaping our individual and collective understanding of crisis events but they also play an outsized role in shaping our fundamental misunderstanding of them.⁵ Having in mind the findings of previous studies which showed that during times of hot crises, traditional news organizations have historically contributed to public fear and panic by emphasizing risks and uncertainties;⁶ that media's emphasis on certain crimes

¹ DELUMEAU, J.: *Strah na Zapadu*. Novi Sad : Književna zajednica Novog Sada, 1987, p. 513.

² FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 161.

³ GLASSNER, B.: *The Culture of Fear*. New York City : Perseus Books Group, 2000, p. 67.

⁴ FRY, R.: Foreword. In COOPER, T., THOMAS, J.: *Nature or Nurture: A Crisis of Trust and Reason in Digital Age*. London : Albany Associates, 2019. Foreword without Pagination.

⁵ FINN, C. J., PALIS, J.: Introduction: The Medium, the Message, and Media Geography in the 21st Century. In *GeoJournal*, 2015, Vol. 80, No. 6, p. 781. [online]. [2021-06-04]. Available at: <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-015-9646-2>>.

⁶ KILGO, K. D., YOO, J., JOHNSON, T. J.: 'Spreading Ebola Panic: Newspaper and Social Media Coverage of the 2014 Ebola Health Crisis'. In *Health Communication*, 2019, Vol. 34, No. 8, p. 811.

or diseases can lead the public to acquire a heightened sense of danger in relation to them and can contribute to panic-like response;⁷ and that compared to other health-related issues contagious diseases receive heightened media attention;⁸ in this Covid-19 pandemic time that affects the population across the continents it is essential to examine did media play either positive role in dissemination of health information by promoting public health, preventive measures and needed information's or a negative role by exaggerating risks, sensationalizing health issues and causing unnecessary fear showed in research by Signorielli in 1993⁹. Health risk communication and media response in crises is deemed beneficial, particularly in the situations when the risk is urgent, and when there are no certainties. In those situations, most people gain their information through the media rather than through direct experience¹⁰ and use of media increases in general because public turns to news to learn about preventive measures, about the disease and how to treat it. Media consumption in first few months of the pandemic in Croatia, but also in other European countries was higher for more than 50 percent.¹¹ Considering these general observations our aim is to analyse the approach that Croatian online media used in reporting during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic 2020 and whether they exaggerated the risk concerning health issues. The authors intention is to expand existing scholarship by shifting attention on the difference in reporting on Covid -19 pandemic in regards to fostering the culture of fear in quality broadsheet online news portals and tabloid news online portals.

1 Covid-19 Crisis Development as a Fertile Ground for Culture of Fear

The Covid-19 pandemic was not the only uncertainty at the beginning of 2020 in Croatia. There were many other socio-political issues alongside with entanglement with health-related reporting that needed to be considered when analysing the ways that media approached this topic and represented media reality. Having in mind local political environment, Croatia took over the presidency of the Council of European Union for six-month period during which time the United Kingdom officially withdrew from the EU; elected new President Zoran Milanović and was getting prepared for parliamentary election year (scheduled for September) which meant the beginning of that time of the year when political parties programs, main political actors and careful consideration of every political move are supposed to take over the media focus. More broadly, 2020 was marked by several crisis: natural disasters like Australia mega fires, earthquakes in Turkey, Croatia and Caribbean Islands, floods in Indonesia, eruption of Taal volcano in the Philippines, etc.; crisis caused by technical failures like the explosion of an ammonium nitrate warehouse in Beirut, the crash of Kobe Bryant's helicopter and the gas explosion in Lagos processing plant (Nigeria), etc. Local, or not all this crisis certainly made fertile ground for dominant world crises initiated by the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, today generally known as the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the purposes of this paper, the most important events in the Covid-19 pandemic development will be chronologically presented, the ones that correspond to the research time frame (February and March 2020):

⁷ FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 51.

⁸ BERRY, R. T., WHARF-HIGGINS, J., NAYLOR, P. J.: SARS Wars: An Examination of the Quantity and Construction of Health Information in the News Media. In *Health Communication*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 43.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 44.

¹⁰ FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 52.

¹¹ GREEN, A.: *Keeping the Show on the Road, Audience Measurement in Times of Crisis*. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2020-05/keeping-the-show-on-the-road.pdf>>.

- December 2019 – first human cases of SARS-CoV-2 identified in Wuhan, China. WHO confirms existence of a new type of coronavirus.
- 30th January 2020 – WHO declared the new virus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern due to accelerated rate of virus spreading outside of Wuhan.
- 11th February 2020 – WHO named the new disease Covid-19 (SARS-COV-2).¹²
- 25th February 2020 – first Croatian case of coronavirus. Italy becomes a new centre of the epidemic. Croatia forms Civil Protection Headquarters (CPH).¹³
- Beginning of March 2020 – the WHO declares the rapidly spreading coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, acknowledging that the virus will likely spread to all countries on the globe.¹⁴ Croatian government announces implementation of restrictive measures in order to preserve the economy. People start to ‘panic shop’ for groceries, stores record doubling amounts of sales.¹⁵
- Mid-March 2020 – schools and universities go online. CPH introduces new strict preventive measures: limited number of people in stores, shortened work times, 2-meter distance, mandatory protective gear (masks and/or gloves). International borders are closed in Croatia and in the rest of the Europe. Most stores and public events are closed and called off. Clinical Hospital Dubrava in Zagreb becomes accommodation centre for critically ill Covid-19 patients.¹⁶
- End of March 2020 – Croatia records their 113th coronavirus case after three days period of incidence being 18 infected people.¹⁷ CPH introduces new measures: strict prohibition of masses staying in public places for prolonged periods of time, suspension of intercity travelling and lock down measures.
- On 21st March, a 5.3 magnitude earthquake hit Zagreb. First coronavirus death case was confirmed as well as the spread in all Croatian counties.

This summary points out the key moments in Covid-19 crisis development in Croatia. When it comes to media reporting on diseases and epidemics it is believed that accurate, precise and complete information in the news can be a great help in fighting the epidemic, no matter how many people are infected in the world.¹⁸ But sometimes reporting can be double-edged sword if media exaggerate risk, foster fear or we can say fail in its responsible role of mediating reality.

¹² *Kronologija – Aktivnosti Vijeća u vezi s bolešću COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/hr/policies/coronavirus/timeline/>>.

¹³ *Situacija s bolesti uzrokovanom novim koronavirusom COVID-19 (SARS-COV-2)*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://zdravlje.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/2020%20CORONAVIRUS/Situacija%20s%20novim%20koronavirusom%2025.2.2020-za-web.pdf>>.

¹⁴ *WHO Announces COVID-19 Outbreak a Pandemic*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic>>.

¹⁵ *Kronologija koronakrize u Hrvatskoj: U samo nekoliko mjeseci udrzimala je gospodarstvo*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/kronologija-koronakrize-u-hrvatskoj-uvertira-u-recesiju-1406370>>.

¹⁶ STARČIĆ, B.: *Uz SAD i EU, sve više država zatvara granice. Hrvatska mijenja pravila uvoza strateških artikala*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/uzivo-u-hrvatskoj-je-49-zarazenih-bolnica-dubrava-postaje-respiratorni-centar-za-koronavirus-stizu-li-i-stroje-mjere-zastite-foto-20200316>>.

¹⁷ LUZAR, L. *Kronologija korone u Hrvatskoj: Ovako je, u 25 dana, rastao broj zaraženih*. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.telegram.hr/zivot/kronologija-korone-u-hrvatskoj-ovako-je-u-25-dana-rastao-broj-zarazenih/>>.

¹⁸ ATWELL, K. J.: National and International Reporting of Avian Influenza. In *Avian Diseases*, 2003, Vol. 47, Special Issue, p. 401.

2 Theoretical Framework

Variety of studies investigated media reporting on different pandemics like H1N1 Flu by Gadekar, Krishnatray and Ang¹⁹ or Ebola outbreak like Finn and Palis²⁰ and more recent about Covid-19 pandemic researched by Jevtović and Bajić.²¹ Regardless of the pandemic type (Ebola, West Nile virus, SARS, Covid -19, H1N1 influenza) scholars used different approaches to analyse the ways media coverage these diseases. Some research works tends to concentrate on the ways that media frame stories like Mutua and Ong'ong'a,²² other like Klemm, Das and Hartmann²³ and Dudo, Dahlstrom and Brossard²⁴ on the quality of health risk communication or the emphasis is given to prevailing concepts used to describe media coverage like in studies of Ungar²⁵ and Berry, Wharf-Higgins and Naylor.²⁶ Although the approaches may differ, the mentioned studies conceptualized and considered the component of fear, the media connection to fear encouragement and the consequences of such reporting in different ways.

As Berry et al. point out, the media have the power to sway public perception of health issues by choosing what to publish and the context in which to present information and doing that they can influence an individual's tendency to overestimate the risk of some health issues while underestimating the risk of others.²⁷ Having in mind that the news media are ultimately driven by what sells the best, and many times the accuracy gets in the second plan when competing with the speed or dramatic elements of the event like every other news, the so called fear-based news programming follow the same aims. First, to grab public attention and second to persuade that there will be a solution for identified fear in the news story.²⁸ The problem occurs when health risk issues appear larger and more dangerous than they really are. When there are major discrepancies between actual causes of death and the amount of news coverage that can lead to so called *health hype* (a phenomenon described by Signorielli in 1993 when health news exaggerates and entertains in order to better sell the content).²⁹ Research work of Klemm, Das and Hartmann showed that for creating artificial hype and hysteria around the H1N1 influenza

¹⁹ See: GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY, P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 49-66.

²⁰ See: FINN, C. J., PALIS, J.: Introduction: The Medium, the Message, and Media Geography in the 21st Century. In *GeoJournal*, 2015, Vol. 80, No. 6, p. 781-790. [online]. [2021-06-04]. Available at: <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-015-9646-2>>.

²¹ See: JEVTIĆ, Z., BAJIĆ, P.: Slika o koronavirusu u dnevnoj štampi Srbije. In *Sociološki pregled*, 2020, Vol. 54, No. 3, p. 534-559.

²² MUTUA, S. N., ONG'ONG'A, D.: Online News Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic: Probing the Initial Phases of the Disease Outbreak in International Media. In *European Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Education*, 2020, Vol. 1, No. 2. No pagination.

²³ See: KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 1-20.

²⁴ See: DUDO, A. D., DAHLSTROM, M. F., BROSSARD, D.: Reporting a Potential Pandemic: A Risk-Related Assessment of Avian Influenza Coverage in U.S. Newspapers. In *Science Communication*, 2007, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 429-454.

²⁵ See: UNGAR, S.: Global Bird Flu Communication: Hot Crisis and Media Reassurance. In *Science Communication*, 2008, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 472-497.

²⁶ See: BERRY, R. T., WHARF-HIGGINS, J., NAYLOR, P. J.: SARS Wars: An Examination of the Quantity and Construction of Health Information in the News Media. In *Health Communication*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 35-44.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 35.

²⁸ SERANI, D.: *If It Bleeds, It Leads: Understanding Fear-Based Media*. [online]. [2021-03-15]. Available at: <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/two-takes-depression/201106/if-it-bleeds-it-leads-understanding-fear-based-media>>.

²⁹ BERRY, R. T., WHARF-HIGGINS, J., NAYLOR, P. J.: SARS Wars: An Examination of the Quantity and Construction of Health Information in the News Media. In *Health Communication*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 36.

in 2009 the media were also accused for contributing to unwarranted public fear.³⁰ Fear can be created also with inaccurate, inadequate and negatively-framed risk-related information³¹ and when it comes to health issues like Furedi noticed in the UK example of MMR immunization, even an unsubstantiated claim about a health risk is liable to be taken seriously by an apprehensive public.³² More recent scholarship on pandemics has found that rather than public interest driving media coverage, hysteria in the media leads to public concern. Namely, Finn and Palis study of Ebola outbreak and its spread in Africa 2014 showed that the media reporting had very little to do with the facts on the ground.³³ These studies primarily draw examples from quality broadsheet newspapers while research pertaining to the media reporting of Covid-19 that has started to emerge also include tabloid media for whom Furedi pointed out that they contribute to panic-like response even more.³⁴ One such study has noted that serious media in the initial period of Covid-19 reporting tried to mobilize the attention of citizens and ask serious questions, while most tabloids trivialized the danger in the manner of another spectacle.³⁵

One of the useful ways how examine the presence of the culture of fear is the language that is used to explain certain phenomenon or event since, as Furedi states: “*The contemporary language reflects the tendency to transform problems and adverse events into questions of human survival.*” What mostly reflects our unprecedented preoccupation with risk is the situation when the outbreak of a disease is immediately transformed into an epidemic.³⁶ Numerous studies examined special terms that indicate fear. For instance, Altheide’s research of a decade of news coverage in major American media outlets from the 1980s into the 1990s revealed that the word “fear” appeared more often than it did several years ago, particularly in headlines, where its use has more than doubled.³⁷ Health – related terms were examined by Furedi, like the word “plague” which has acquired everyday usage in the UK press (increase from 45 in 1990 to 2,298 in 2000), or “risk” that are mentioned in just about any routine event (the usage increased almost nine-fold from 1994 to 2000).³⁸ Recent research concerning representation of SARS mirrored that it was discussed in British newspaper as “the next plague” with connotations being mysterious and deadly.³⁹

Majority of studies that examined the ways media report about diseases and pandemics, including Covid-19, starting from above mentioned scholars, vary greatly in their operationalization of fear in media coverage. Some studies focus on risk perception, like Kaspersen et al. In conceptual framework of the social amplification of risk the authors noted that when there is no direct personal experience of risk, information can reach individuals through either the news media or personal networks and public response is influenced by the

³⁰ KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 1.

³¹ GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY, P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 52.

³² FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 12.

³³ FINN, C. J., PALIS, J.: Introduction: The Medium, the Message, and Media Geography in the 21st Century. In *GeoJournal*, 2015, Vol. 80, No. 6, p. 782. [online]. [2021-06-04]. Available at: <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-015-9646-2>>.

³⁴ FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 11.

³⁵ JEVTIČIĆ, Z., BAJIĆ, P.: Slika o koronavirusu u dnevnoj štampi Srbije. In *Sociološki pregled*, 2020, Vol. 54, No. 3, p. 534.

³⁶ FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 13.

³⁷ ALTHEIDE, L. D.: Fear in the News: A Discourse of Control. In *The Sociological Quarterly*, 1999, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 475.

³⁸ FUREDI, F.: *Culture of Fear: Revised Edition*. London : Continuum, 2005, p. 10.

³⁹ BERRY, R. T., WHARF-HIGGINS, J., NAYLOR, P. J.: SARS Wars: An Examination of the Quantity and Construction of Health Information in the News Media. In *Health Communication*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 42.

volume, dramatization, and symbolic connotations of the information.⁴⁰ Using these grounds Berry, Wharf-Higgins and Naylor⁴¹ analysed news reports on health topics in Canadian media in order to examine how the message is constructed. Results showed that health topics were more often discussed in terms of risk, by credible sources using strong language. Studies like ones from Fung, Namkoong and Brossard or Gadekar, Krishnatray and Ang concentrate more on the feeling of fear. First study examined the newspaper coverage of Avian Flu in Hong Kong and U.S. and authors showed that the feelings of fright are evoked when people perceive the consequences of risk exposure to be fatal, involving large numbers of people and leading to severe damages. They used three types of information in news messages that can be related to the dread dimension: (a) presentation of worst-case scenarios, (b) presence of loaded words, and (c) risk magnitude information related to human infection = death.⁴² For indicators of fear and panic Gadekar, Krishnatray and Ang took the number of fatalities because of the disease, number of infections, direct warning to public, discussion of susceptibility/contagiousness and severity of outbreak. Although this study researched media frames special attention was given to qualitative risk information which authors referred as the use of language including repeated use of certain adjectives such as ‘larger threat’ and dangerous disease.⁴³ Other studies also used similar methodology for examining the level of dramatization or sensationalism of health-related issues in media. Klemm, Das and Hartmann specified three indicators of dramatized media coverage for H1N1 influenza in 2009:

- The volume of media coverage.
- The media content presented, particularly an overemphasis of threat while neglecting measures of self-protection.
- The tone of coverage.⁴⁴

Results showed that media attention was immense, that news content stressed threat over precautionary measures, while the pattern of coverage tonality remained nebulous due to conflicting findings. Authors revealed a critical gap in existing knowledge about the tone of media coverage on H1N1⁴⁵ what can be a useful insight for research concerning Covid-19 pandemic and potential dramatization of public health risks by the media. Specially because emotion-laden language and the use of worst-case scenarios can be defined as sensationalist or dramatic⁴⁶ as well as can volume, speed, breathlessness together with oftentimes absurdity of the content play a dramatic role in shaping (mis)conceptions of the threat.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ KASPERSON, R. E. et al.: The Social Amplification of Risk a Conceptual Framework. In *Risk Analysis*, 1988, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 184.

⁴¹ BERRY, R. T., WHARF-HIGGINS, J., NAYLOR, P. J.: SARS Wars: An Examination of the Quantity and Construction of Health Information in the News Media. In *Health Communication*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 35.

⁴² FUNG, T. K. F., NAMKOONG, K., BROSSARD, D.: Media, Social Proximity, and Risk: A Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Avian Flu in Hong Kong and in the United States. In *Journal of Health Communication*, 2011, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 891.

⁴³ GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 52.

⁴⁴ KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ DUDO, A. D., DAHLSTROM, M. F., BROSSARD, D.: Reporting a Potential Pandemic: A Risk-Related Assessment of Avian Influenza Coverage in U.S. Newspapers. In *Science Communication*, 2007, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 438.

⁴⁷ FINN, C. J., PALIS, J.: Introduction: The Medium, the Message, and Media Geography in the 21st Century. In *GeoJournal*, 2015, Vol. 80, No. 6, p. 783. [online]. [2021-06-04]. Available at: <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-015-9646-2>>.

3 Research Design and Methodology

Previous studies review shows that there is no unique approach in operationalization of media reporting that foster fear or exaggerate the risk, especially in health-related issues. In order to examine whether did the Croatian online media contribute to public fear and panic while reporting on Covid-19 pandemic, but also on other historically known topics that foster fear (such as crime, migrant crises, etc.) and following the conclusions from earlier studies we propose that conceptualization of media reporting that foster the culture of fear should contain these indicators:

- Extensive volume of media coverage.
- The media content enriched with loaded words and terms which reflect preoccupation with risk accompanied with usage of large, intimidating numbers, depressing visuals and colours.
- Mostly negative tone of coverage.

Since a content analysis of health news in the media is a useful starting point for future research examining the influence such news may have on consumers' understanding and perception of health, potential risk and unnecessary fear and panic, as presented in mentioned studies, this study used quantitative-qualitative content analysis as the material is easily accessible and free for everyone. Indicators for media reporting that foster fear were analysed through these analytical categories. Quantity of media coverage – number of news stories divided according to different issues usually researched as topics that can foster the feeling of fear. Article theme units – various types of topics such as Government News, Economy, Health, Ecology, Terrorism, Crime and Others. Keywords – analysis of potential loaded words that cause feeling of fear and panic and how often do they appear in articles (list of included loaded words was established according to previous studies, and some of them were: death, severe, deadly, urgent, warning, crises, epidemic, pandemic, danger, scary, panic, shock, etc.) as well as their placement (headlines, first paragraph, middle of the story). Visuals and Numbers – presence of intimidated symbols (Biohazard, Danger, Virus), dominated colours in the article (dark, neutral, burner/bright colours) and the ways that numbers were showcased in news articles (as statistics, as ones that give hope, or ones that intimidate). Overall Tone – what kind of emotion, attitude and perspective was used to deliver facts in certain type of news (positive, negative and neutral).

The study examined a two month-long period following the first identified case of coronavirus in Croatia, during which the government introduced first preventive measures as well as first lock down measures (1st February until 31st March 2020). Historically, traditional media like newspapers are the media that is most commonly analysed specially concerning to its contribution to public fear and exaggeration of the risk concerning health issues and pandemics. Recent scholars shifted focus on new media, like Kilgo, Yoo and Johnson⁴⁸ who showed that digital and social platforms can amplify panic and uncertainty regarding Ebola Crisis 2014 significantly more than traditional newspapers. In order to expand research on new media, the sample of this study consists of news stories published in two Croatian online news portals. They were selected also because of the overall Covid-19 online environment (“be responsible and stay at home”) what contributed to higher online media consumption, especially in research time frame (6th to 22nd March, reaching 53% higher numbers of visits on Croatian news portals compared to the same period of time in 2019).⁴⁹ With significant drop in amount of sold

⁴⁸ KILGO, K. D., YOO, J., JOHNSON, T. J.: ‘Spreading Ebola Panic: Newspaper and Social Media Coverage of the 2014 Ebola Health Crisis’. In *Health Communication*, 2019, Vol. 34, No. 8, p. 811.

⁴⁹ GREEN, A.: *Keeping the Show on the Road, Audience Measurement in Times of Crisis*. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2020-05/keeping-the-show-on-the-road.pdf>>.

newspapers due to the pandemic-caused crisis, totalling 25%, according to Ipsos, the pandemic also caused similar shifts in media consumption in the rest of the world (e.g., in the UK average time spent on online media has grown by 28% in the first week of lockdown and continued during April).⁵⁰ Research overview showed that majority of studies focus on broadsheet media, and only few of them have tabloid media in focus. Seeing that tabloid news often relies on scandal stories, mostly negative and dramatic events and because there is a lack of understanding about how the routines of the media based on simplification and sensationalism differ from broadsheet online news portals in media reporting about Covid-19 concerning fostering the culture of fear, this study included both types of online media:

- 24sata.hr – online news portal with daily print edition, published in Zagreb, Croatia. Its format is classic tabloid which includes big, sensational photographs on the newspapers cover, a lot of colourful advertisements in the online version as well as a wide variety of news, ranging from gossip to most relevant news of the day. The website has had constant high traffic, and in the research time frame almost 2 million visits every day and more than 800,000 users daily, especially at the end of February and beginning of March,⁵¹
- Večernji.hr – online news portal with daily print edition and one of the most visited news outlets in Croatia, similar to 24sata.hr. Its format slightly resembles tabloids, but it can still be considered as a more conservative leaning newspaper and does not have as sensationalistic undertone to it as ordinary tabloid newspapers have. Its visuals are much more toned down, using only a couple of colours, predominantly red and white. In the research timeline Večernji.hr recorded second highest number of visits, first being 24sata.hr, counting a little under 2 million daily and about 700,000 real users in February and March.⁵²

The overall sample consisted of 912 articles, including 474 from Večernji.hr and 439 from 24sata.hr. The unit of analysis was a single news story published in regular informative part of the portal (without special sections like showbiz, beauty, local stories, etc.) and that obtained one of the following keywords in its title: crisis, coronavirus, victim, urgent, danger, death, intimidating, shock, panic, warning, disaster, pandemic, etc. or the overall topic of the news item was the one that is usually connected with ones that can foster the culture of fear like ecology, natural disasters, diseases, political events, terrorist attacks, migrations, death cases, crimes, wars, etc. Archival results from both portals were used as part of the research.

4 Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Indicator 1 of Media Reporting That Fosters the Culture of Fear: The Volume of Media Coverage

This study, apart from providing a reliable understanding of Croatian online media news coverage of Covid-19 pandemic provides a unique and systematic conceptualization of the concept of fear coverage based on previously, but separately used approaches and measures. Previous studies have shown that extensive coverage of a certain risk may lead

⁵⁰ GREEN, A.: *Keeping the Show on the Road, Audience Measurement in Times of Crisis*. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2020-05/keeping-the-show-on-the-road.pdf>>.

⁵¹ *Pregled posjećenosti Večernjeg lista i 24sata u veljači i ožujku 2020. godine* [online] [2021-03-09]. Available at: <<https://rating.gemius.com/hr/tree/8>>.

⁵² Ibidem.

to sensationalism and dramatization of that risk,⁵³ as well as it can serve as risk amplifier⁵⁴ or, as Mazur and Lee stated, can often turn public opinion in negative direction and thus produce heightened opposition and fear.⁵⁵ If we look at the total number of posted news in Vecernji.hr and 24.hr in analysed two-month period – 20,093 news items including specials and separate sections – 4.54% (912) of them were articles and topics usually connected with potential risks, fear and panic (as listed in Table 1). Although this seems not to be extensive coverage, topics concerning Illness, more precisely Covid-19 were discussed almost three times more than all other topics. The illness was in analysed time frame by far the leading theme (71.6%) in news coverage. In the light of Covid-19 pandemic, it was expected, same as the almost no difference in volume devoted to this topic by two types of online media – one with tabloid characters (24sata.hr) and one broadsheet news media (Vecernji.hr). But this is important when considered in light of the work of Kasperon et al. who argued that, independent of accuracy large volumes of information can amplify the perception of risk and distract individuals from other sources of risk.⁵⁶ Other sources of risk were presented in other topics. Considering the Croatian unique socio – political context and natural phenomenon (earthquake in Capitol city) presented earlier, next to Illness the second most prominent topic in analysed time frame was Weather and Climate Changes with 9.28% (Vecernji.hr) and 6.83% (24sata.hr) from total analysed news items. They included topics like storms, snow rushes, meteor hits and earthquakes. Most prominent difference in news reporting between to analysed media where tabloid characteristic of 24sata.hr prevail were noted in topic Economy with 36 news items in Vecernji.hr and only 3 news items in 24sata.hr, and also in Political Events, with only 6 articles in 24sata.hr, and more than double in Vecernji.hr. The tabloid approach where dramatic news schemata (tragedies and misfortunes) is in focus rather than governmental actions and economic processes is noticed also in higher number of news items that cover Crime and Migration Issues by comparison with Vecernji.hr. Overall looking at the expected topics that usually can foster fear, such as Terrorist Attacks and Wars are along with wage reduction, rising prices and goods at the end of the list.

Table 1: Distribution of article topics in analysed online media

	Vecernji.hr	%*	24sata.hr	%*	Total	%*
Illnesses	326	68.92%	327	74.49%	653	71.60%
Ecology	11	2.33%	20	4.56%	31	3.40%
Economy	36	7.61%	3	0.68%	39	4.28%
Crime	10	2.11%	14	3.19%	24	2.63%
Migrations	9	1.90%	25	5.69%	34	3.73%
Shortage on Necessities	5	1.06%	3	0.68%	8	0.88%
Political Events	14	2.96%	6	1.37%	20	2.19%
Rising Prices of Goods	4	0.85%	2	0.46%	6	0.66%
War Events	5	1.06%	3	0.68%	8	0.88%

⁵³ See: GRIFFIN, R., DUNWOODY, S., GEHRMANN, C.: The Effects of Community Pluralism on Press Coverage of Health Risks from Local Environmental Contamination. In *Risk Analysis*, 1995, Vol. 15, No. 4, p. 449-458.

⁵⁴ KASPERSON, R. E. et al.: The Social Amplification of Risk a Conceptual Framework. In *Risk Analysis*, 1988, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 185.

⁵⁵ KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 1-3.

⁵⁶ KASPERSON, R. E. et al.: The Social Amplification of Risk a Conceptual Framework. In *Risk Analysis*, 1988, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 184.

Wage Reduction	3	0.63%	0	0.00%	3	0.33%
Death Cases	1	0.21%	0	0.00%	1	0.11%
Terrorism	5	1.06%	6	1.37%	11	1.21%
Weather and Climate Changes	44	9.30%	30	6.83%	74	8.11%
TOTAL	473	100%	439	100%	912	100%

Source: Own processing.

Previous research also noted that the volume of media coverage over pandemic course changes and that there are certain patterns. Although studies differ in analysed time frames, they demonstrate that pandemic news coverage usually have few peaks which coincide with important real-world events.⁵⁷ Based on most important events in Croatian environment earlier mentioned and seeing that the average number of news items regarding Covid-19 in analysed online media in the first week of the research was around 37, we noticed that the first peak in news coverage was on 25th February – Croatian Coronavirus patient zero. The number of articles in that period rose by 5.7% compared to the previous week. Similar as studies analysed by Klemm, Das and Hartman, Covid-19 related coverage was by far the highest at the very start of the pandemic, followed by a rapid fade-away within the first month. Particularly, the second week in March 2020, considered as second peak, in which the WHO declared that Covid-19 became a pandemic, Croatia officially declared an epidemic, kept the numbers of articles posted high, but with 0.22% less than the week prior. In this limited research time frame, only one week later (middle of March) we have another peak event. Croatian CPH introduced stricter measures (closed schools, borders, etc.) but number of articles still decreased, they were 2.85% lower than in previous two weeks. The reason for this is not only that media covered the topic less but due to articles that were updated live because of large amount of new information, which made it easier to track both for journalists and consumers.

4.2 Indicator 2 of Media Reporting That Fosters the Culture of Fear: The Media Content

Using the methodology of earlier mentioned studies a list of potential loaded words that can be interpreted as ones that can foster fear was established which included the words in all their possible formats (adverb, adjective, in phrase) listed in Table 2. It is important to emphasize that all words were mentioned at least ones in news items and were counted only one time, independently of how many times they were mentioned. The extensive volume of media coverage dedicated to Covid-19 pandemic in analysed online media, as expected, contained an abundance of loaded words – emotionally charged adjectives and adverbs which appeared in almost 90% of the analysed news items at least ones. Considering that contagious diseases also have a specific vocabulary, the most used word was infected or contaminated which appeared in more than 60% of news items. The second commonly used word was epidemic mentioned in almost 44% of news items in Vecernji.hr, and 43% in 24sata.hr while word pandemic counted only in 10, 53% of all analysed articles. Although the justification for using different terminology and the questions which term is more appropriate for Covid-19 can be a topic for further research, it is interesting that in analysed time frame WHO declared pandemic, while Croatian Government declared epidemic. This could be explained firstly that unlike a locally limited epidemic, a pandemic extends to one global area, so Covid-19 is synonymous in impact

⁵⁷ KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 8.

with global plagues like SARS and Spanish flu.⁵⁸ Secondly, WHO criteria at the time of pandemic announcement were “more than 20,000 confirmed cases and almost 1,000 deaths in the European Region”⁵⁹ and the official clarification went more in the direction of creating desirable behaviour. So, the justification for this discrepancy in terminology can be interpreted in way that analysed Croatian online media inclined the governments interpretation of epidemic as a part of journalist routines, or that they did not want to contribute to more panic using the word pandemic. Still, as Table 2 shows, emotionally potent words that almost never cause any positive feelings and that usually connote something fearful and negative, like death (27.9% total), crisis (19.74%), the end (18.53%), panic (12.28%), danger (11.40%), etc. counted also very high. Although all these words can induce a caution measure, what was probably their primary intention, they can also lead to an excessive feeling of fear and dread of current world events. The use of such words is similar to an observation in Gadekar et al.’s study of H1N1 news coverage in Indian media which often contained strong adjectives such as: deadly virus, dreaded H1N1 virus, and big threat.⁶⁰ Similar research but in U.S. media by Yu et al. showed that words like fatal, deadly, huge death toll, and lethal were used by 5.3 per cent of the sample news articles.⁶¹ The presence of loaded words was also assessed by determining if they appeared in the first paragraph, the title of the article or anywhere else in the story. The results indicate that 24sata.hr, as tabloid online media mostly used loaded words in the first paragraph (36.7%) and in 28% cases used those words also in the headline. Vecernji.hr more often used loaded words in the middle of the news (36.3%), followed with 27.5% in first paragraph and 27.4% both in headlines and in the text. Loaded words placement in news articles shows that they are often positioned on easily noticeable places so that sometimes it’s not even necessary to read the whole article to achieve the effect of specified words. Similar distribution of the loaded words placement was found in research by Dudo et al.⁶²

Table 2: Distribution of loaded words in analysed news items

	Vecernji.hr	%*	24sata.hr	%*	Total	%*
Crisis	95	20.08%	85	19.36%	180	19.74%
Victim	3	0.63%	0	0.00%	3	0.33%
Catastrophe	24	5.07%	19	4.33%	43	4.71%
Urgent	71	15.01%	67	15.26%	138	15.13%
Warning	39	8.25%	26	5.92%	65	7.13%
Salvation	27	5.71%	24	5.47%	51	5.59%
Escape	3	0.63%	8	1.82%	11	1.21%
Death	133	28.12%	115	26.20%	248	27.19%
Deterioration	35	7.40%	19	4.33%	54	5.92%
Consequences	70	14.80%	49	11.16%	119	13.05%
Epidemic	208	43.97%	183	41.69%	391	42.87%

⁵⁸ MIKAC, R.: COVID-19 Pandemic and Crisis Management in the Republic of Croatia. In *Anali Hrvatskog politološkog društva*, 2020, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 31.

⁵⁹ WHO Announces COVID-19 Outbreak a Pandemic. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic>>.

⁶⁰ GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY, P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1., p. 58.

⁶¹ YU, N. et al: Communicating a Health Epidemic: A Risk Assessment of the Swine Flu Coverage in US Newspapers. In *International Public Health Journal*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 73.

⁶² DUDO, A. D., DAHLSTROM, M. F., BROSSARD, D.: Reporting a Potential Pandemic: A Risk-Related Assessment of Avian Influenza Coverage in U.S. Newspapers. In *Science Communication*, 2007, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 445.

Pandemic	64	13.53%	32	7.29%	96	10.53%
Tragedy	7	1.48%	4	0.91%	11	1.21%
Infected/ Contaminated	298	63.00%	269	61.28%	567	62.17%
Danger	56	11.84%	48	10.93%	104	11.40%
The End	75	15.86%	94	21.41%	169	18.53%
Apocalypse	2	0.42%	2	0.46%	4	0.44%
Frightening	1	0.21%	1	0.23%	2	0.22%
Shock	16	3.38%	18	4.10%	34	3.73%
Panic	58	12.26%	54	12.30%	112	12.28%
Doubt	70	14.80%	76	17.31%	146	16.01%
There are none	38	8.03%	53	12.07%	91	9.98%

Source: Own processing.

Emotionally loaded language was amplified with the usage of intimidating numbers. Analysed Croatian online media had tendency to report mounting death toll and rising infection cases, more precisely in 65.75% in Vecernji.hr and 64.92% of the sample. The news reported the numbers of infected, dead or even birth years of people with high infection risk. In order to examine whether media contribute to fostering perception of fear by using numbers we differentiated three types of numbers occurrences in those news items that used numbers. Intimidation through numbers was used in more than half (52.02%) news items which meant that numbers was used only for infected and dead, while ignoring the number of people who recovered, people who were not on a respirator, etc. Small difference was present between analysed media, where 24sata used intimidation in 58.24% and Vecernji.hr in 46.3% of the cases. More neutral way of using numbers is listing all statistics, which includes the number of infected, dead and cured, and giving all data equal importance and place in the articles. This was mostly present in Vecernji.hr counting in 53.38% of news items and in 40% in 24sata.hr. Numbers in a positive sense, as the ones that give hope (only cases that recovered, or other topics like the percentages of air purification since the beginning of the coronavirus epidemic) counted only one article in Vecernji.hr and five in 24sata.hr. Similar to Gadekar et al.'s research where media used language and continuous statistical updates about rising death and infection cases toll while news of the recovery cases was absent from the coverage⁶³. Still usage of intimidating numbers and loaded language was not accompanied with dangerous and fearful colours and symbols in both online news portals. Results showed that the graphic equipment of the articles was mostly in neutral tones, grey, beige and colours without great saturation (54.9%), darker colours prevailed in negatively toned news (in 21.6% news items) and bright colours like red, orange, yellow where some of them can be connoted both negative or positive, depending of context (danger, warning or fresh and clean air, spring, etc.) counted in 23.12% of analysed news items. Although scary symbols can heighten the feelings of fear in most news items (87.7%) symbols like Covid-19 virus, Biohazard, danger, etc. were not used.

⁶³ GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY, P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 62.

4.3 Indicator 3 of Media Reporting That Fosters the Culture of Fear: The Tone of Coverage

As earlier studies results suggest, while media content (like loaded words and worst-case scenarios) may fuel risk perceptions by stressing the seriousness of health threats, the tone of coverage may still remain sober and reassuring.⁶⁴ Although studies varied greatly in their operationalization of the tone of coverage (overall tone, tone in form of frames, references to emotions such as fear, etc.) the conclusions show that, especially in disease/pandemic development initial phases the most news use alarmist tones⁶⁵ or are pessimistic.⁶⁶ In this study, the measurement of tones in the news was classified into three categories, namely, positive (that cover aspects of the disease outbreak in a hopeful and reassuring way), negative (sceptical about any issue of the disease with the potential to make the audience have negative emotions) and neutral (equally presented both negative and positive aspects, or didn't contain judgments). Similar to observations made in Mutua and Ong'ong'a's⁶⁷ study of Covid-19 outbreak in UK, our results showed that in pandemic initial phases in Croatia, analysed online media mostly used negative tones of coverage, counting 60.68% in Vecernji.hr and 59.91% in 24sata.hr. Negatively toned articles were accompanied with strong loaded words in order to describe the severity of Covid-19 virus. Covid-19 virus was not a war enemy like H1N1 virus in Gadekar et al.'s study,⁶⁸ but a terrorist. Article titles like "*Coronavirus Killed 1,113 People: 'Bigger Threat than Terrorism!'*" are the example of a headline with a negative tone that involves usage of keywords such as threat and kill and involves comparison with terrorism, which takes it to the extreme and gives it dramatic flair. We further found that neutral tone of coverage was by far more prevalent in media reporting during analysed time frame (35.94% in Vecernji.hr and 36.90% in 24sata.hr) in comparison with positive, reassuring and hopeful reporting. News items that mostly did not contain judgments were depicted with the headlines such as "*First Case Confirmed in Croatia: Young Man in Zagreb Has Coronavirus*" which states just the bare, necessary information and does not involve any dramatic exaggerations or numbers that could invoke the feeling of fear. Since the pandemic was in its initial phase, it was not a surprise that positive coverage was present only in 24 news items (2.63% of the total sample) with titles such as "*Man from Split from Corona Cruiser in Quarantine: 'I Feel Well!'*" as it gives hope for healing and surviving the coronavirus infection, using the patient's positive testimony. Following the conclusions from mentioned studies where amount of references to fear and negative coverage decreases over the pandemic course it is to be expected and further examined whether Croatian online media toned down its reporting with the introduction of new preventive measures, new findings about Covid-19 and intensified global cooperation in combating the pandemic.

⁶⁴ See: KLEMM, C., DAS, E., HARTMANN, T.: Swine Flu and Hype: A Systematic Review of Media Dramatization of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 1-20.

⁶⁵ See: VASTERMAN, P. L., RUIGROK, N.: Pandemic Alarm in the Dutch Media: Media Coverage of the 2009 Influenza a (H1N1) Pandemic and the Role of the Expert Sources. In *European Journal of Communication*, 2013, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 436-453.

⁶⁶ MUTUA, S.N., ONG'ONG'A, D.: Online News Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic: Probing the Initial Phases of the Disease Outbreak in International Media. In *European Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Education*, 2020, Vol. 1, No. 2. No pagination.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ GADEKAR, R., KRISHNATRAY P., ANG, P. H.: Framing of the H1N1 Flu in an Indian Newspaper. In *Journal of Creative Communications*, 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 59.

Conclusion

In order to examine did Croatian online media contribute to public fear and panic while reporting on Covid-19 pandemic, but also on other historically known topics that foster fear, based on earlier studies and theoretical framework we developed three indicators that media should contain: extensive volume of media coverage; media content enriched with loaded words and terms which reflect preoccupation with risk accompanied with usage of large, intimidating numbers, depressing visuals and colours; and mostly negative tone of coverage. In the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in Croatia we found that all three indicators were prevalent. Extensive volume of media coverage focused on Illness topic (Covid-19 more precisely), the magnitude of the presence of loaded words along with their placement in first paragraphs and news headlines, usage of intimidating numbers suggests that media reporting about Covid-19 did foster the feelings of fear what was accompanied with mostly negative tones of that coverage. These conclusions also illustrate that fostering of fear cannot be defined by single indicator, since for instance Croatian media did not use depressing visuals and dreadful colours, but did use loaded language. Although sensationalism and tabloid media play smaller role in the situations when the disease risk is elsewhere, and considering the Covid-19 global geographical location, Croatian online media despite their different characteristics reported very similar with only minor differences that can be attributed to sensationalism, more specific for tabloids. These findings come with some notable limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the number and type of analysed media outlets in further research could give more broader insights. We should also account for the fact that this study captured the early stage of COVID-19 coverage and that subsequent analysis should include following pandemic phases as well as insights in similar recent studies focused only on Covid-19 pandemic.

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ARTISTIC TEXT AND COMBINED GENRES IN PRESS FOR CHILDREN

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Abstract:

Genres that are present in published children's press belong to text, picture or combined group. Analysis shows that in children's press literary, educative and journalistic genres are present. This paper is based on original analysis of more than a hundred European and some non-European journals. It includes extensive tables with detailed data of the extent of literary genres and graphs based on questionnaire research of reader rating that show the relation of the reader to various genres. The paper is based on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is focused on literary and combined genres. It justifies the reason why in this subsystem of press a whole spectrum of literary genres is not employed to treat the variety of themes. It briefly touches common genres characteristics but it focuses above all on the modification of literary genres upon publication in children's press. The paper also summarizes their specific signs and attributes upon publication in children's press. It introduces the term combined genres and characterizes them. The paper is part of the author's long term research of print media for children.

Keywords:

Beginning Reader. Combined Genres. Children's Press. Literary Genre. Mass Media. Reader. Reader Rating.

Introduction

The use of types and genres of text and their image components has been dynamically developing in the print media for the children within its entire print subsystem. The development is related to the development of authors, audiences and socio-cultural-technical reality, i.e., the development of internal and external actors. There is a great deal of theoretical work in the specific literature dealing with journalistic genres, literary types, and genres of educative style. It seems, that children's magazines belong to the different printing subsystem and the general theory of journalistic as well as literary genres are not fully applicable. Genre analysis is a small part of several year research of print media for a children that was done by the author of this paper. Research is based on observing and analysing of more than a hundred, especially European, but also non-European children's magazines. For the purposes of this text, the paper analyses magazines for pre-school and younger school-age children to respond the issue how children within their individual age categorization respond to the knowledge of developmental psychology. The paper deals in more detail with artistic text and combined genres in print media for the children.

1 Types of Texts and Genres in Print Media for Children

The mass media main goals are to impress and to be effective towards their recipient. D. McQuail said that the beneficial effects attributed to the media are:

- to provide a basis for social interaction;
- to gain knowledge about the world;
- to learn social attitudes and behaviours;
- to achieve educative effects;
- to help to shape identity;
- to develop of imagination.¹

¹ MCQUAIL, D.: *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. Prague : Portál, 2009, p. 501.

As emphasized by A. Tušer, the quality of the effect on the recipient comes up “*only on the basis of the formal and content quality of the word processing. This means rendering in a certain form, in a particular genre*”.² It should be emphasized that in print media for the children, text and image are an equal component, while in some magazines – especially for pre-school children – the pictorial component has priority. The following table summarizes the extensive text analysis in more than 100 print media titles for children in Europe and beyond.

Table 1: Literary, educative and journalistic texts in print media for the children

MAGAZINE NAME	COUNTRY OF ISSUE OR DISTRIBUTION	ISSN/ISBN/ IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	NUMBER OF PAGES	ART TEXTS	EDUCATIVE TEXTS	JOURNALISTIC TEXTS
<i>Barbapapa</i>	Belgium	Not stated	36	13.89%	8.33%	5.55%
<i>Nickjr.doeboek (Denksport)</i>	Belgium	ISBN 8710835815947	52	0.00%	0.00%	1.92%
<i>Speelboek (Denksport)</i>	Belgium	ISBN 8710835813783	100	0.00%	0.00%	1.00%
<i>Arti</i>	Bulgaria	ISBN 977-131-276-411-9	44	10.23%	15.91%	0.00%
<i>Baraban</i>	Bulgaria	Not stated	24	12.50%	29.17%	8.33%
<i>Brborino</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 1312-2851	40	0.00%	5.00%	7.50%
<i>Maša i Mečoka</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 2367-6604	24	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Pčelica</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 1312-5303	28	32.14%	21.43%	10.71%
<i>Zanimavko</i>	Bulgaria	Not stated	16	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Xekoykoy</i>	Cyprus	ISBN 5282967004953	16	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%
<i>Čtyřlístek</i>	Czechia	ISSN 1213-0141	28	39.29%	7.14%	0.00%
<i>Materídouška</i>	Czechia	ISSN 0025-5440	48	35.42%	20.83%	2.08%
<i>Matýsek</i>	Czechia	ISBN 121-358-100-9	36	8.33%	25.00%	0.00%
<i>Pastelka</i>	Czechia	ISSN 1212-646003	50	16.00%	22.00%	2.00%
<i>Sluničko</i>	Czechia	ISSN 0231-7222	44	9.09%	2.27%	2.27%
<i>Ribica</i>	Montenegro	ISBN 977-18-4582-300-0	36	5.56%	5.56%	0.00%
<i>Anders and Junior</i>	Denmark	ISSN 1904-6510	36	33.33%	13.89%	0.00%
<i>Kvik kids</i>	Denmark	ISBN 570-892-100-230-5	52	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Winx</i>	Denmark	ISSN 1901-2128	68	64.71%	1.47%	2.94%
<i>Filly</i>	Finland	ISSN 2242-1963	36	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Moviestar Planet</i>	Finland	ISBN 488-501-908-6	36	13.89%	8.33%	0.00%

² TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava : Eurokódex, 2010, p. 116-117.

<i>Pets</i>	Finland	ISSN 1798-6060	36	2.78%	41.67%	8.33%
<i>Astrapi</i>	France	ISSN 0220-1186	48	33.33%	27.08%	6.25%
<i>P'tit Loup</i>	France	ISSN 0997-3745	76	28.95%	27.63%	1.32%
<i>Titi</i>	France	ISSN 1964-9150	36	41.67%	0.00%	2.78%
<i>Wapiti</i>	France	ISSN 0984-2314	52	3.85%	69.23%	0.00%
<i>Filly</i>	Greece	ISBN 977-179-286-500-9	36	27.78%	5.56%	0.00%
<i>Bobo</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-152-003-3	24	29.17%	4.17%	4.17%
<i>Plus Penny</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-086-510-103-4	44	63.64%	21.59%	4.55%
<i>Sesamstraat</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-162-002-3	28	17.86%	0.00%	7.14%
<i>Tina</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-122-004-9	40	45.00%	5.00%	5.00%
<i>Zapp Lente</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 90-77119-17-5	52	23.08%	7.69%	0.00%
<i>Bojanka</i>	Croatia	Not stated	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Dječji klub</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1330-1349	52	3.85%	0.00%	1.92%
<i>Dječji zabavnik</i>	Croatia	ISBN 977-184-782-300-8	76	0.00%	40.79%	2.63%
<i>Junior Extra</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1332-3881	68	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Škrinjica</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1334-8080	28	0.00%	5.36%	0.00%
<i>Zagonetke</i>	Croatia	ISBN: 977-133-470- 200-7	20	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%
<i>Paw Patrol</i>	Ireland	ISSN 2396-9555	44	13.63%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Bing</i>	Ireland	ISSN 2056-3590	36	13.88%	5.55%	2.77%
<i>Bitute</i>	Lithuania	ISSN 1648-0880	36	22.22%	52.78%	0.00%
<i>Dambo</i>	Latvia	ISSN 1407-0464	36	19.44%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Kipars</i>	Latvia	ISSN 2029-2945	24	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Spicite</i>	Latvia	ISSN 1691-0540	32	6.25%	0.00%	12.50%
<i>Peppa Pig</i>	Luxemburg	M 05779-6-F	40	17.50%	5.00%	5.00%
<i>Ablakképek</i>	Hungary	Not stated	32	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Dormogo Domotor</i>	Hungary	ISSN 0230-1032	36	0.00%	8.33%	0.00%
<i>Kifestó</i>	Hungary	Not stated	35	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Dóra</i>	Hungary	ISSN 2062-4433	28	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Vakáció</i>	Hungary	ISSN 0239-1457	100	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Mia and Me</i>	Moldavia	ISBN 978-606-651-110-0	26	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%
<i>Neposeda</i>	Moldavia	ISSN 1991-0568	32	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

<i>Basteln mit Kindern</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-626-530-250-1	48	0.00%	0.00%	2.08%
<i>Benjamin Blumchen</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-855-650-230-009	36	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Bummi</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-912-700-230-4	40	31.25%	7.50%	0.00%
<i>Diddle</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-541-490-250-0	52	19.23%	9.62%	11.54%
<i>Lowenzahn</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-511-840-230-6	36	11.11%	50.00%	0.00%
<i>Pettersson und Findus</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-585-670-240-9	36	13.89%	9.72%	1.39%
<i>Pumucki</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-489-490-260-406	36	16.67%	9.72%	2.78%
<i>Rätsels pas</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-613-760-199-2	34	0.00%	14.71%	0.00%
<i>Tabaluga</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-484-130-230-3	44	22.73%	22.73%	2.27%
<i>Wissens Rätsel</i>	Germany	ISBN 378-861-322-X	36	0.00%	69.44%	0.00%
<i>Dora</i>	Norway	ISBN 702-306-021-815-7	36	0.00%	5.56%	5.56%
<i>Moshi monsters</i>	Norway	ISBN 978-820-241-659-1	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Naucz mnie mamo</i>	Poland	ISBN 978-837-316-731-5	16	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Truskawkowe Ciastko</i>	Poland	ISSN 2083-1234	24	16.67%	0.00%	4.17%
<i>Zabawy z Tygrysiem</i>	Poland	ISSN 1640-2286	32	3.13%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Trabalhos manuais</i>	Portugal	ISBN 772-710-101-5	36	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Comunicare</i>	Romania	ISBN 973-706-082-2	42	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Incepe meciul!</i>	Romania	ISBN 978-606-602-579-9	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Benny</i>	Romania	ISSN 1843-5947	36	5.55%	38.88%	278.00%
<i>Cei trei purcelusi</i>	Romania	Not stated	36	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Playmobil</i>	Romania	ISSN 2501-1421	36	0.00%	0.00%	2.77%
<i>Jocuri creative</i>	Romania	ISBN 978-837-962-387-7	28	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Trolii</i>	Romania	ISSN 2451-4632	32	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Akademiki</i>	Russia	ISSN 2313-4666	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>PoniMaška</i>	Russia	ISSN 1995-8145	28	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Uchtyška</i>	Russia	ISSN 2412-3617	36	30.56%	22.22%	2.78%
<i>Maxík</i>	Slovakia	ISSN 1336-5029	32	34.38%	12.50%	3.13%
<i>Zvonček</i>	Slovakia	ISSN 1336-6963	24	41.67%	8.33%	4.17%

<i>Boni</i>	Slovenija	ISBN 977-185-401-800-8	48	35.42%	0.00%	4.17%
<i>Cicido</i>	Slovenija	ISSN 0350-8870	36	25.00%	0.00%	5.56%
<i>Duhec</i>	Slovenija	ISBN 977-131-891-001-5	52	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Junior extra</i>	Slovenija	ISSN 1332-3881	70	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Zmajček</i>	Slovenija	ISSN 1318-7449	64	28.13%	3.13%	1.56%
<i>Boom E Rang</i>	Serbia	ISSN 1820-2772	76	34.21%	21.05%	0.00%
<i>Igraonica</i>	Serbia	ISBN 977-133-473-400-8	28	0.00%	17.86%	0.00%
<i>Zabavnik</i>	Serbia	ISSN 2217-4265	68	0.00%	20.59%	4.41%
<i>Animais</i>	Spain	ISSN 2014-8976	36	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%
<i>Peppa</i>	Spain	ISSN 2254-9358	36	16.67%	0.00%	2.78%
<i>Pettson och Findus</i>	Sweden	ISSN 1652-6147	24	20.83%	6.25%	2.08%
<i>Pyssel & Knap</i>	Sweden	ISBN 738-824-740-390-1	68	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Giocolandia</i>	Italy	ISSN 1972-4020	48	29.17%	10.42%	2.08%
<i>Pico</i>	Italy	ISSN 1973-6428	36	30.56%	5.56%	8.33%
<i>Caillou</i>	Turkey	ISSN: 1309-7652	28	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Cocuk</i>	Turkey	ISSN 1301-2797	52	40.38%	24.04%	0.00%
<i>Panini</i>	Turkey	ISSN 2148-8444	36	38.89%	16.67%	0.00%
<i>Kehrypy</i>	Ukraina	ISBN 482-013-047-016-2	60	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%
<i>Girls</i>	USA	ISSN 1535-3230	68	32.35%	2.94%	0.00%
<i>Favourites</i>	UK	ISBN 977-14-6163-000-6	32	28.13%	6.25%	3.13%
<i>Fifi</i>	UK	ISSN 1747-437X	24	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Mizz</i>	UK	ISBN 977-095-501-199-4	84	9.52%	0.00%	3.57%
<i>Princess</i>	UK	ISSN 1462-7345	32	37.50%	0.00%	3.13%
<i>Art</i>	UK	ISSN 977-175-759-602317	36	0.00%	5.55%	5.55%

Source: Own processing.

The analysis show that the types and genres of published items in periodicals for children can be divided into groups of:

- Text;
- Pictorial,
- Combined.

The analysis of print periodicals for children also show that there are following kind of texts:

- Literary;
- Educative;
- Journalistic.

Literary, educative and journalistic texts are the result of the creative work of the editorial staff and the authors, while there are also advertising texts supplied by the advertisers in the periodicals for children. The following parts of the study will provide a more detailed description and analysis of the different genres of literary texts and combined types and genres. Educative and journalistic texts and their genres will be subject to separate working out.

1.1 Literary Texts in Print Periodicals for Children

Table 1 shows that more than a quarter of one hundred analyzed journals do not publish literary texts. In European and non-European children's journals that publish literary texts, their share varies, ranging from 2.78% up to 64.71% of the total magazine content. The most frequent literary published form in children's magazines is epic (prose), less lyric (poetry). As shown in Table 2, the proportion of prose in the total range is from 5 to 25%, the proportion of poetry is from 5.50% to 13%. There may be more reasons. It could be a greater interest of readers in favour of stories, writing poems is more demanding because the author must express himself in interesting way in a small space and at the same time to use the demanding form of bound verse. One of several reasons may be the fact that many children's magazines are based on transnational projects with language mutations, while translation of poetry is more challenging because it requires not only translation itself but the translation in term of poetry with poetic elements.

Table 2: Share of published prose and poetry in Slovak children's magazines

Magazine	ISSN	Number of Pages	Stories	Poems
Adamko	1336-6505	36	5.55%	5.55%
Fifik	1335-020X	20	15%	5.00%
Lienka	1338-3329	24	4.16%	12.50%
<i>Maxík</i>	1336-5029	32	18.75%	6.25%
Slniečko	0139-911x	24	25%	0.00%
Šikovníček	1337-561x	40	10%	7.50%
Včielka	1335-6488	40	5%	5.00%
Vrabček	1335-5163	36	8.33%	11.11%
Zornička	0139-8962	40	5.00%	0.00%
<i>Zvonček</i>	1336-6963	20	16.67%	12.50%

Source: Own processing.

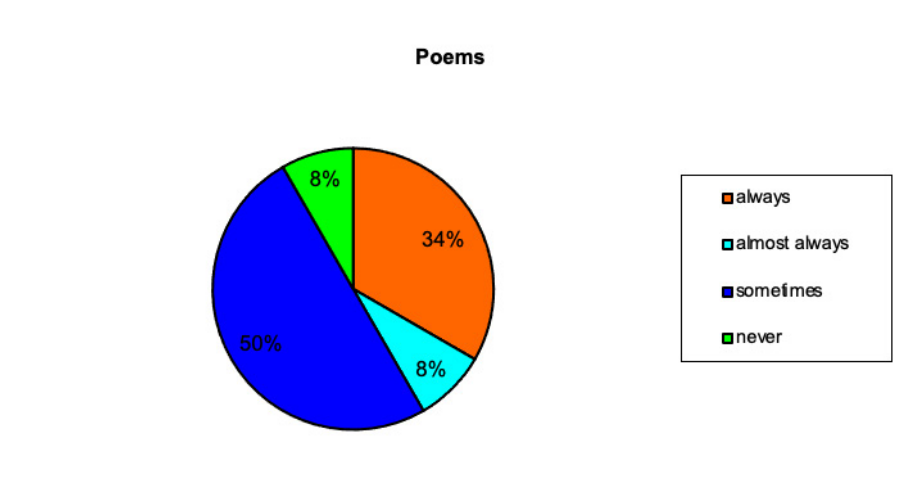
Lyric in the media for the children has its benefits. These include, in particular, a smaller range of text, which is easier in terms of the perception of content for preschool children who are actually listeners of the read text. Equally positive is for readers – beginners who improve their reading skills on a short text. Typical genre attributes of poetry published in print media for a child's recipient include expressions of feelings and author personality which are for child reader understandable and the child reader is able to absorb and feel them. Topics are about the world the child is surrounded by and which the child knows – animals, nature, relatives and well known personalities or professions, children, familiar places and others

phenomena. Precise use of rhythm and rhyme is important (bound verse). Positive aspect of the short poetry is the presence of a mini story, a mini point or a positive turn to better, surprise moment, etc. However, descriptive poems are more published in practise. Metaphor can cause misunderstanding of the text, because especially children with lower reading and linguistic experience often understand metaphor in literal and original sense. The published lyrical texts are dominated by poems and puzzles. The poems are lyrical, but lyrical-epic and epic appearing in younger school age children's magazines are divided into:

- Natural (seasons, animals, etc.);
- Relationships-Related (persons and things that make up the world of the child);
- Occasional (holidays and events that the child reflects).

Those topical texts are read in the periodicals that publish poetry. This is documented by the reading frequency survey conducted in March 2017 among readers of the Slovak magazine *Zvonček*, which covered 1,128 respondents.

1.2 Reading Frequency of Poems



Graph 1: Reading frequency of poems in *Zvonček* magazine in 2017

Source: Own processing.

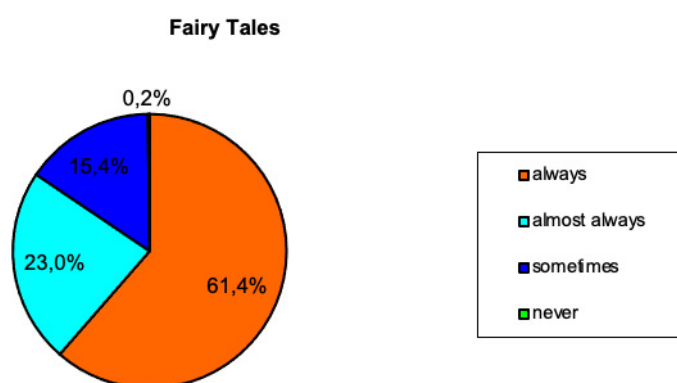
The graph shows that 34% of respondents always read the poems and almost always 8% of the respondents Never read 8% of the respondents. Epic is the most widespread literary genre published in children's magazines. Prose published in periodicals for children is characterized by universal and special attributes, specific attributes are:

- Small extent (1-2 standard pages);
- Dominance of the plot and dynamism;
- Narration of one event;
- Not enough characters;
- The theme of everyday life or phenomena that are known or acceptable to the child reader;
- Short descriptions;
- A narrower range of artistic expressions;
- Understandable to the children;
- Simple syntax;
- Priority in using the basic vocabulary;
- Simple composition;
- General comprehension.

The novel and the novelette due to their complexity and scope cannot be published in the children's magazine, even in the form of serialization. The barriers are standard demands that need to be met for the series of sequels (more is stated below). The fable could be predestined for publishing in children's magazines by its content, scope and educative impact. However, its position is not dominant; it is caused to the lack of authors in which this genre would be more widely represented. Fantastic stories of animals, plants, and objects that behave like humans can show negative manners and actions, it is supposed that they can engaged children's attention and to influence them in a suitable way. The myth as the oldest form of folk literature explaining the origin of the world, the origin of man and nature in a simple, primitive way, or describing the life of the gods is a demanding, thematically distant and inadequate genre and that is why myths are found in children's periodicals rarely. The ballad is not a suitable genre for preschool children and beginning readers with its grim and tragic nature. The fable, myth, and ballad are not published in pre-school children periodicals. They are rarely found in periodicals oriented towards younger school children, especially at the upper age of this group of recipients. The legend, which focuses on displaying the lives of saints, does not find use in universal periodicals for children. It appears in periodicals for children with a religious focus. Stories with a real basis and fictitious elements are acceptable to the recipients in the case that recipients know some well known facts. The short story and a fairy tale are the most frequently published prose genre for pre-school and younger school-age children. Children's short story has short length, deals with one event, has one plot, and a small number of characters. It is easy to distinguish characters. The story is simple and straight. Simplicity dominates both composition and language. Short story and fairy tale represent more than 90 percent of published prosaic texts in print media for children, because of their adequacy and attractiveness and readability.

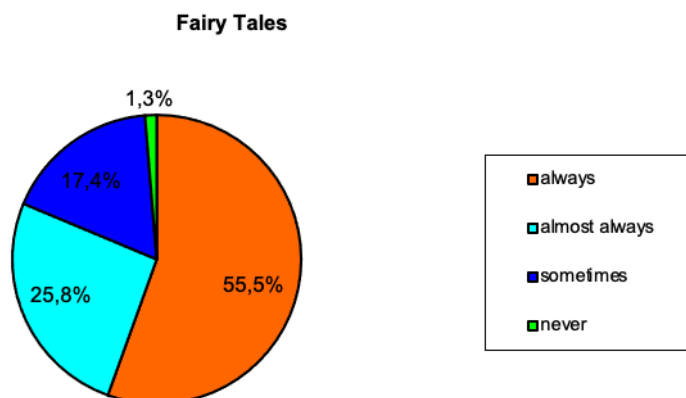
1.3 Fairy Tale

Reading surveys conducted on one preschool children magazine and one younger school children's magazine show a high frequency of fairy tales reading.



Graph 2: Reading frequency of fairy tales in *Zvonček* magazine in 2017

Source: Own processing.



Graph 3: Reading frequency in *Maxik magazine* in 2017

Source: Own processing.

The *Maxik* magazine reading survey was conducted in March 2017 on a sample of 1,692 respondents. As it is shown in Chart 2 and Chart 3, more than half of the respondents always read or almost always read fairy tales in pre-school children's and younger school age magazines. Since these are universal children's magazines, the conclusions of fairy tale reading surveys can be largely generalized. It should be noted, that in the case of pre-school children, i.e. future readers, get the fairy tales through a mediator who is between the magazine, i.e. the published text and the children, Those are adult persons who read the text not to children who cannot read. Similarly, a mediator is an adult person who cooperates with the starting readers, reads the children texts and motivates them to read. The fairy tales in print media for a child's recipient in term of authorship can be divided into four basic groups:

- Folk;
- Elaborated or adapted;
- Authors' ones;
- Anonymous.

The editorial teams pay little attention to the folk tales. The share of published fairy tales in children's magazines is less than 4 percent. Elaborated and adapted folk tales by authors have a slightly larger share, accounting for about 6 percent of the published fairy tales. There is a minimal author's intervention, it is only artistic rewriting of known texts. A greater degree of intervention requires fairy tales in verse. The third set of folk fairy tales created by the author consists of those in which the original folk tale remains only as an inspiration, a well-known thematic and fabulous basis, but the author's adaptation is so significant that it becomes a new work. Adaptation refers to converting of the text to be for reader more current and known one to the recipient in terms of environment, typology of characters, storyline, expression means, language and all. Author's tales and stories clearly dominate in the magazine-published fairy tales. Their share in standard children's magazines within the all published fairy tales represents almost 90 percent. As standard magazines are understood those ones that publish, in addition to amusing contributions, artistic and educative texts with the author's name. Anonymous fairy tales are typical for those magazines that are part of multinational projects based on many language mutations in the magazine being one of the many components of a large-scale commercial project (film, books of various mutations, souvenirs and objects of daily use with a project theme, etc.). Editors prefer modern fairy tales to the classical ones. In terms of content, especially realistic fairy tales (with stories, characters, reality-like environments), animal (in which characters are animals with human traits), fantastic in which

realistic and unrealistic topics, characters, environments and other phenomena intersect. These include sci-fi fairy tales and fantasy fairy tales. Characteristics of fairy tales in print media for a child's recipient are: short length – is located mostly on magazine double page, it consists of one to two standard pages of text with illustrations. Plot, dynamism. Faster shift of action, without storyline and larger static descriptions. A small number of characters. It is important in terms of clarity and easy reader orientation. Content closeness. Each episode of a series is relatively or absolutely closed, which requires a periodicity that is mostly monthly, so a relatively long period between reading the individual parts of the series expires.

Fairy tales in periodicals for children primarily perform aesthetic and educative functions. Artistic texts create, shape and develop the aesthetic feeling and perception of the child reader. The content of some of the texts makes it possible to fulfil some other elements of education.³ The opinions of literary theorists and literary critics on the functions of literature vary. *“If literature is to (...) educate and educate itself”*, it degrades into a summary of imperatives embedded in a transparent story; but if it “merely” wants to aesthetize artistically, it also undermines the complexity of the term literature.⁴ In literature for children and youth, the educative and cognitive function of literature is an *“implicit value of aesthetic value”*.⁵ The most frequently published texts in children's magazines are based on contemporary and original literature. However, there are also artistic texts that are culturally and territorially unfamiliar to the children's reader of a given periodical. *“The phenomena of the distant past are being transferred from one environment to another, in such a way that they can be understood for today's recipient. The poor interpretation doesn't correspond to author's intention and a good one covers all author's ideas in new interpretation.”*⁶ It follows that the published translation or rewriting of a literary work in a children's magazine has a significant impact and effect on the readers' mind. The variety of activities and the range of children's literature functions, including literature and its individual genres published in print periodicals for the child's recipient, create their value characteristics.

2 Combined Art Genres in Children's Periodicals

Combined artistic genres are contributions that are made up of at least two types of art, most often literary and artistic, or literary and musical. The first can include the so-called. painted reading, comics, calligrams, song belongs to the other. Painted reading is the name of a frequent and readers' popular section, where it is a connection of literary text and small illustrations. The text is mostly prosaic, small in size, but poems appear in such adaptation. Illustrations are an integral part of the text, replacing words from the text, most often nouns, in a nominative or in other, but prepositional forms (cases). For ease reading of the pictures (images) combined text, substituted words by images should be not under declination, especially when they are without preposition (in non prepositional case). Text and illustrations exist in absolute symbiosis, coexistence, they are not independent, and cannot be separated. If they are mechanically separated, they cease to fulfil their primary sense. The text length is short, mostly in the range of half to one standard page. The main function of this combined

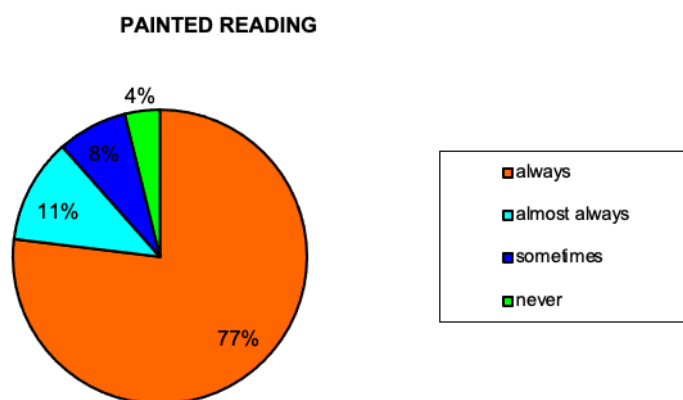
³ See: FAKTOROVÁ, D.: Výchovno-vzdelávací proces a časopisy pre deti v európskych krajinách. In *QUAERE 2017: Recenzovaný zborník príspevků vědecké interdisciplinární mezinárodní konference doktorandů a odborných asistentů*. Hradec Králové : Magnanimitas, 2017, p. 562-569.

⁴ MAGALOVÁ, G.: *Cesta rozprávky*. Trnava : Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2010, p. 109.

⁵ KOPÁL, J.: *Próza a poézia pre mládež. Teória/pedagogika*. Nitra : Enigma, 1998, p. 47.

⁶ BENČIČ, S.: Historický a súčasný pohľad na interpretáciu literárneho textu. In *Slovenský jazyk a literatúra v škole: Časopis pre otázky jazyka a literatúry*, 2007, Vol. 53, No. 9-10, p. 280-284.

genre is the interactive reading of an adult and a child who cannot read, but substitutes words of images to the read text. It develops his imagination and attention. In particular, it has an aesthetic function for children who are able to read. The section is frequent and popular in existing periodicals.



Graph 4: Reading frequency of painted reading in *Zvonček* magazine in 2017

Source: Own processing.

Survey shows that 77% of respondents regularly read painted readings, almost always 11%, sometimes 8%. Only 4% of respondents never read it.

Table 3: Share of painted reading of comics in Slovak children's magazines

Magazine	ISSN	Number of Pages	Painted Reading	Comics
<i>Adamko</i>	1336-6505	36	5.55%	5.55%
<i>Fifík</i>	1335-020X	20	5.00%	10.00%
<i>Lienka</i>	1338-3329	24	0.00%	0.00%
<i>Maxík</i>	1336-5029	32	3.13%	6.25%
<i>Slniečko</i>	0139-911x	24	0.00%	8.33%
<i>Šikovníček</i>	1337-561x	40	5.00%	7.50%
<i>Včielka</i>	1335-6488	40	0.00%	2.50%
<i>Vrabček</i>	1335-5163	36	2.77%	5.55%
<i>Zornička</i>	0139-8962	40	0.00%	5.00%
<i>Zvonček</i>	13366963	20	4.17%	8.00%

Source: Own processing.

The comics are most often referred to as cartoon stories. It is a sequence of images, gradually creating the plot. The text component is used to create a scenario that sets the storyline, characterizes characters and the environment. In this case, the text section in the published comic is absent. However, the text is also often used as part of a published comic book where it can have dual status and function, namely:

- The word of the narrator – explains the content of the pictures or moves the story. In this case, it is published below the image.
- Form of dialogues – direct speech of cartoon characters, which performs several functions (shifts the story, revives, dynamizes, characterizes the characters, etc.).

The main characters of the comic are realistic beings, fantastic creatures, animals (realistic or personified).

Table 4: Share of published comics on the total range of European and some non-European periodicals for children

MAGAZINE NAME	COUNTRY OF ISSUE OR DISTRIBUTION	ISSN/ISBN/IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	NUMBER OF PAGES	COMICS
<i>Barbapapa</i>	Belgium	Not stated	36	0.00%
<i>Nickjr.doeboek (Denksport)</i>	Belgium	8710835815947	52	0.00%
<i>Speelboek (Denksport)</i>	Belgicko	8710835813783	100	0.00%
<i>Arti</i>	Bulgaria	ISBN 977-131-276-411-9	44	0.00%
<i>Baraban</i>	Bulgaria	Not stated	24	0.00%
<i>Brborino</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 1312-2851	40	0.00%
<i>Maša i Mečoka</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 2367-6604	24	16.67%
<i>Pčelica</i>	Bulgaria	ISSN 1312-5303	28	0.00%
<i>Zanimavko</i>	Bulgaria	Not stated	16	0.00%
<i>Xekoykoy</i>	Cyprus	5282967004953	16	0.00%
<i>Čtyřlístek</i>	Czechia	ISSN 1213-0141	28	32.14%
<i>Materidouška</i>	Czechia	ISSN 0025-5440	48	14.58%
<i>Matýsek 1/02</i>	Czechia	ISBN 121-358-100-9	36	2.78%
<i>Pastelka</i>	Czechia	ISSN 1212-646003	50	6.00%
<i>Sluničko (2016)</i>	Czechia	ISSN 0231-7222	44	4.55%
<i>Ribica (13)</i>	Montenegro	ISBN 977-18-4582-300-0	36	0.00%
<i>Anders and junior</i>	Denmark	ISSN 1904-6510	36	27.78%
<i>Kvik kids</i>	Denmark	ISBN 570-892-100-230-5	52	0.00%
<i>Winx</i>	Denmark	ISSN 1901-2128	68	64.71%
<i>Filly</i>	Finland	ISSN 2242-1963	36	16.67%
<i>Moviestar planet</i>	Finland	ISBN 488-501-908-6	36	11.11%
<i>Pets</i>	Finland	ISSN 1798-6060	36	2.78%
<i>Astrapi</i>	France	ISSN 0220-1186	48	25.00%
<i>P'tit Loup</i>	France	ISSN 0997-3745	76	28.95%
<i>Titi</i>	France	ISSN 1964-9150	36	0.00%
<i>Wapiti</i>	France	ISSN 0984-2314	52	3.85%
<i>Filly</i>	Greece	ISBN 977-179-286-500-9	36	16.67%

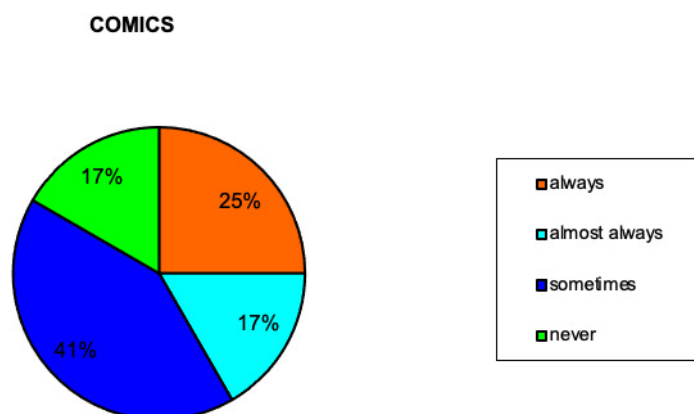
<i>Bobo</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-152-003-3	24	4.17%
<i>Plus Penny</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-086-510-103-4	44	61.36%
<i>Sesamstraat</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-162-002-3	28	7.14%
<i>Tina</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 871-084-122-004-9	40	45.00%
<i>Zapp Lente</i>	the Netherlands	ISBN 90-77119-17-5	52	5.77%
<i>Bojanka</i>	Croatia	Not stated	20	0.00%
<i>Dječji klub</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1330-1349	52	3.85%
<i>Dječji zabavnik</i>	Croatia	ISBN 977-184-782-300-8	76	0.00%
<i>Junior Extra</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1332-3881	68	0.00%
<i>Škrinjica</i>	Croatia	ISSN 1334-8080	28	0.00%
<i>Zagonetke (44)</i>	Croatia	ISBN 977-133-470-200-7	20	0.00%
<i>Paw Patrol</i>	Ireland	ISSN 2396-9555	44	9.09%
<i>Bing</i>	Ireland	ISSN 2056-3590	36	8.33%
<i>Bitute</i>	Lithuania	ISSN 1648-0880	36	5.56%
<i>Dambo</i>	Latvia	ISSN 1407-0464	36	13.89%
<i>Kipars</i>	Latvia	ISSN 2029-2945	24	0.00%
<i>Spicite</i>	Latvia	ISSN 1691-0540	32	0.00%
<i>Peppa Pig</i>	Luxembourg	M 05779-6-F	40	0.00%
<i>Ablakképek</i>	Hungary	Not stated	32	0.00%
<i>Dormogo Domotor</i>	Hungary	ISSN 0230-1032	36	13.88%
<i>Kifestó</i>	Hungary	Not stated	35	0.00%
<i>Dóra</i>	Hungary	ISSN 2062-4433	28	0.00%
<i>Vakáció</i>	Hungary	ISSN 0239-1457	100	0.00%
<i>Mia and Me</i>	Moldova	ISBN 978-606-651-110-0	26	0.00%
<i>Neposeda</i>	Moldova	ISSN 1991-0568	32	15.62%
<i>Basteln mit Kinderen</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-626-530-250-1	48	0.00%
<i>Benjamin Blumchen</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-855-650-230-009	36	25.00%
<i>Bummi (2004)</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-912-700-230-4	40	11.25%
<i>Diddle</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-541-490-250-0	52	19.23%
<i>Lowenzahn</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-511-840-230-6	36	11.11%
<i>Pettersson und Findus</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-585-670-240-9	36	8.33%

<i>Pumucki</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-489-490-260-406	36	13.89%
<i>Rätsels pas</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-613-760-199-2	34	0.00%
<i>Tabaluga</i>	Germany	ISBN 419-484-130-230-3	44	18.18%
<i>Wissens Rätsel</i>	Germany	ISBN 378-861-322-X	36	0.00%
<i>Dora</i>	Norway	ISBN 702-306-021-815-7	36	0.00%
<i>Moshi monsters</i>	Norway	ISBN 978-820-241-659-1	20	0.00%
<i>Naucz mnie mamo</i>	Poland	ISBN 978-837-316-731-5	16	12.50%
<i>Truskawkowe Ciastko</i>	Poland	ISSN 2083-1234	24	16.67%
<i>Zabawy z Tygryskiem</i>	Poland	ISSN 1640-2286	32	6.25%
<i>Trabalhos manuais</i>	Portugal	ISBN 772-710-101-5	36	0.00%
<i>Comunicare</i>	Romania	ISBN 973-706-082-2	42	0.00%
<i>Incepe meciul!</i>	Romania	ISBN 978-606-602-579-9	20	0.00%
<i>Benny</i>	Romania	ISSN 1843-5947	36	5.55%
<i>Cei trei purcelusi</i>	Romania	Not stated	36	0.00%
<i>Playmobil</i>	Romania	ISSN 2501-1421	36	44.44%
<i>Jocuri creative</i>	Romania	ISBN 978-837-962-387-7	28	0.00%
<i>Trolii</i>	Romania	ISSN 2451-4632	32	25.00%
<i>Akademiki</i>	Russia	ISSN 2313-4666	20	0.00%
<i>PoniMaška</i>	Russia	ISSN 1995-8145	28	0.00%
<i>Uchtyška</i>	Russia	ISSN 2412-3617	36	19.44%
<i>Maxík</i>	Slovakia	ISSN 1336-5029	32	6.25%
<i>Zvonček</i>	Slovakia	ISSN 1336-6963	24	12.50%
<i>Boni</i>	Slovenia	ISBN 977-185-401-800-8	48	8.33%
<i>Cicido</i>	Slovenia	ISSN 0350-8870	36	0.00%
<i>Duhec</i>	Slovenia	ISBN 977-131-891-001-5	52	0.00%
<i>Junior extra</i>	Slovenia	ISSN 1332-3881	70	0.00%
<i>Zmajček (1-2014)</i>	Slovenia	ISSN 1318-7449	64	0.00%
<i>Boom E Rang</i>	Serbia	ISSN 1820-2772	76	32.89%
<i>Igraonica</i>	Serbia	ISBN 977-133-473-400-8	28	0.00%
<i>Zabavnik</i>	Serbia	ISSN 2217-4265	68	25.00%

<i>Animais</i>	Spain	ISSN 2014-8976	36	0.00%
<i>Peppa</i>	Spain	ISSN 2254-9358	36	8.33%
<i>Pettson och Findus</i>	Sweden	ISSN 1652-6147	24	12.50%
<i>Pyssel & Knap</i>	Sweden	ISBN 738-824-740-390-1	68	0.00%
<i>Giocolandia</i>	Italy	ISSN 1972-4020	48	22.92%
<i>Pico</i>	Italy	ISSN 1973-6428	36	5.56%
<i>Caillou</i>	Turkey	ISSN 1309-7652	28	0.00%
<i>Cocuk</i>	Turkey	ISSN 1301-2797	52	28.85%
<i>Panini</i>	Turkey	ISSN 2148-8444	36	38.89%
<i>Kehrypy</i>	Ukraine	ISBN 482-013-047-016-2	60	0.00%
<i>Girls</i>	USA	ISSN 1535-3230	68	3.68%
<i>Favourites (79)</i>	UK	ISBN 977-14-6163-000-6	32	18.75%
<i>Fifi</i>	UK	ISSN 1747-437X	24	12.50%
<i>Mizz</i>	UK	ISBN 977-095-501-199-4	84	1.19%
<i>Princess</i>	UK	ISSN 1462-7345	32	37.50%
<i>Art</i>	UK	ISSN 977-175-759-602317	36	0.00%

Source: Own processing.

As shown in Table 4, 54.72% of periodicals are published by the European children's magazines. In them, the proportion of published comics ranges from 2.78%, which represents one page in the magazine, to 64.71%. As shown in Table 3, most Slovak children's magazines publish comics, with their share in the overall range ranging from 2.50% to 13.88%. For pre-school children who do not read separately and do not have the experience to present in pictures without the adult's interaction, comics are less watched. Younger school-age children, i.e., novice readers, are looking for comics, especially because of their short texts for less reading.



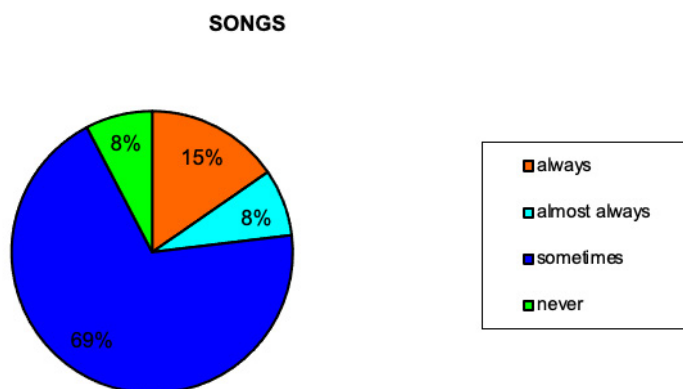
Graph 5: Reading frequency of comics in *Zvonček* magazine in 2017

Source: Own processing.

Calligram is a poem. It is a text-image feature. As a poem, he has all the attributes of poetry, but the text is organized into a picture that is related to the content of the poem. However, in addition to rhythm and rhyme in bound verse, it requires the work of another important attribute of the text, which is the graphic length of the word for the number of syllables. The graphic length of a word means the number of letters, but sometimes even the width of the letters themselves. The length of a verse that has a number of syllables in terms of rhythm must be of a certain length in terms of graphical image creation. If a short line (verse) is needed to create an image with the number of syllables needed, the author extends to words with fewer letters. Thus, the difference is to make use of monosyllabic multi-letter words such as, e.g., air, rain, sob and, on the other hand, short one-syllable words, the most common conjunctions – and, ether, both, etc. Graphically short two-syllable words are, e.g., nor, but, long two-syllable words are, e.g., airiness, jerking, etc.). From the point of view of the graphic length of the verse, the shape characteristics of the letters (narrow letters such as i, j, l, and broad, such as the letter m) are also calculated. In addition to the graphical representation of the text in the pattern, the calligrams can also be illustrated. The relationship between the text and the illustration for the calculus has several variants. Calligram without illustration, the coexistence of a calligram with a relatively separate illustration located near it, the coexistence of the calligram and the relatively inseparable illustration, which together form a compact whole. For example, a baby sleigh calligram and a child's illustration sitting on these texting sleds. Although this form is more demanding for the artist, the overall effect of the interplay of text and illustration creates a distinctive artistic effect.

3 Activities with Songs in the Children's Pre-School Magazines

A song consists of a music and text. It is a small song form, in a children's magazine characterized by a small range. Its integral part is the text, which is a poem with all its attributes. It is therefore a combination of artistic text and music (melody). Print media for the children's recipient are illustrated periodicals, and therefore on the magazine page on which the song is located, the third component alongside the lyrics, the music is the illustration. Thus, such section has a child's reader with three artistic components – poem, music and illustration.



Graf 6: Working with songs in Zvonček magazine in 2017

Source: Own processing.

Working with a song in magazines for a child's recipient requires more than just reading literacy (competency); the basic music competencies are necessary for intonation and tune playing. This causes limited usage in comparison to print subsystem of literary and text-art combined genres. An active approach of a teacher working with a pupil magazine is essential. It is almost impossible to master a song for pre-school and younger school-age children without the assistance of an adult.

Conclusion

The analysis of more than a hundred European and some non-European magazines for the children shows that the genres of published folders in the mentioned periodicals can be divided into groups that use text, image and which are combined. The analysis also shows that literary, educative and journalistic texts are found in print periodicals for children. The article focuses in more detail on literary and combined genres. Of more than one hundred analyzed periodicals, almost three-quarters of these are published by literary texts. The readers' positive relationship to the publication of literary texts is shown by reading surveys, which show that for example poems always read or almost always 42% of respondents, fairytales always read or almost always four fifths of respondents. The article explains why the entire range of literary genres are not used in the all print subsystem. It briefly deals with the general characteristics of genres, but above all it focuses on the modification of literary genres in their publishing in a children's magazine and summarizes their specific features and attributes, which are determined by their publication in periodicals for children. It introduces the concept of combined genres and characterizes individual species that can be included in the set of combined genres. Analyzing more than a hundred children's press titles is enough to give a relevant picture of publishing different kinds of texts in contemporary European children's newspapers. Theoretical processing – especially in relation to the readings of individual texts and genres – in practice will enable publishers and editors to choose the optimum form for processing and adapt the genres in terms of the recipient's typology, its reading preferences and the periodicity of the magazine. The study is part of a year-long research of print media for a child's addressee. Other partial results of the analyzes should result in the preparation of educative texts and genres, journalistic genres and pictorial genres published in print media for the children recipient in the upcoming professional articles.

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CURRENT STATE OF CYBERBULLYING IN SELECTED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract:

The presented paper deals with the issue of cyberbullying, which we consider a negative and very harmful phenomenon existing today. Cyberbullying is one of the many pitfalls of the Internet and one of the risks associated with its use. Although, the issue has recently received increased attention, the so-called e-bullying is relatively widespread, and it is necessary to appeal to the development of educational activities in this area. In the introduction of the presented text, the authors outline the theoretical basis of the issue, describe the current state and possibilities of prevention. The aim of the paper is to review the current state of cyberbullying in selected educational institutions in Slovakia through a questionnaire. The intention of the authors is to find out to what extent the determined research sample has been exposed to cyberbullying, what is the level of awareness of pupils and students about the phenomenon, but also what consequences victims suffer after the encounter with cyberbullying (physical or mental consequences). The paper presents partial results of the research carried out within the research for the diploma thesis.

Key words:

Cyberbullying. Aggressor. Victim. Schools. Slovakia. Education. Prevention.

1 Theoretical Background: Cyberbullying and its Forms

Cyberbullying is a serious social problem of the 21st century, affecting (not only) children and adolescents. It is related to the rapid development of the digital world and human habitation in this environment, not only in leisure time activities, but also in studying and working. In this paper, we address the issue of cyberbullying of children and adolescents in the school environment. This is a serious and dangerous phenomenon of the digital age, which is currently a kind of inseparable part of the school climate. The term bullying originally comes from the French word "chicane" and expresses several meanings, such as physical and mental abuse, persecution, malicious harassment, etc. It does not have a generally valid definition, but we can simply classify it as an aggressive behavior disorder. It is also defined by several authors as the behavior, by which someone hurts someone. The person who is hurt is not able to defend himself. Such behavior occurs repeatedly and is rarely a one-time affair.¹ Vitošová describes bullying as one of the most dangerous problems that threatens the development of students, both mentally and morally, but above all, it damages the victim in its psychological way, and the consequences can be fatal - long-term or lifelong.² This method of communication involves sending anonymous messages from the aggressor, which contain elements of harassment, manipulation, insult, humiliation, threats, defamation, or public dissemination of fabricated content among the online community to harm the victim.³ In essence, cyberbullying is identical to traditional bullying - they have the same intent, to harm. However, the difference is in form and scope. While bullying is a personal contact, cyberbullying takes place through ICT, takes

¹ VAŠUTOVÁ, M. et al.: *Proměny šikany ve světě médií*. Ostrava : University of Ostrava, 2010, p. 53.

² VITOŠOVÁ, A.: Šikana na středních odborných školách ve vybraných obcích s rozšířenou působností Zlínského kraje. In *Prevence úrazů, otrav a násilí*, 2009, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 146. [online]. [2020-10-14]. Available at: <<http://casopis-zsfju.zsf.jcu.cz/prevence-urazu-otrav-a-nasili/clanky/1~2009/62-sikana-na-strednich-odbornych-skolach-ve-vybranych-obcich-s-rozsirenou-pusobnosti-zlinskeho-kraje>>.

³ NALINI, K., JABA SHEELA, L.: A Survey on Datamining in Cyber Bullying. In *International Journal on Recent and Innovation Trends in Computing and Communication*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 7, p. 1865. [online]. [2020-10-14]. Available at: <<https://ijritcc.org/index.php/ijritcc/article/view/3418/3418>>.

place in a virtual world, and is not limited in time or space. In Table 1 we present the basic differences between bullying and cyberbullying according to Królová.

Table 1: Bullying vs. Cyberbullying

	Bullying	Cyberbullying
Environment	Reality	Virtual world
Form	Physical form predominates	The mental form predominates
Means	Words, touches, harm, destruction, and theft of objects	Texts, photos, videos, data, data, misuse and dissemination of information, identity theft
Aggressors	Non-anonymous	Anonymous
Victim	Preselected	Anyone, but also pre-selected
Escape	Safety of home	Does not exist
Audience	Limited	Unlimited
Risk	Spatial-temporal limitation	Spatial-temporal unlimitedness
Solution	More real	Less real

Source: own processing, 2021, According to: KRÓLOVÁ, V.: Kyberšikana jako jedna z forem sociálněpatologických jevů. In *Prevence úrazů, otrav a násilí*, 2013. Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 192. [online]. [2020-10-14]. Available at: <<http://casopis-zsfju.zsf.jcu.cz/prevence-urazu-otrav-a-nasili/administrace/clankyfile/20131219101253730779.pdf>>.

The process of cyberbullying involves several forms of aggressive behavior in relation to its victim. According to Šmahaj⁴, these are: cyberharassment (harassment based on gender, age or sexual orientation), cyberthreats (threats to forward textual and visual materials that cause the victim's unrest), denigration (dissemination of derogatory statements, fabrications and false rumors about the victim, e.g., digitally edited photographs with sexual undertones and their dissemination in the virtual community), flaming (an effort to provoke the so-called flame wars, with the participation of the audience in discussion forums or chat rooms), impersonation (the aggressor, after obtaining a password to the individual accounts, presents and acts in the role of the victim, e.g. sends inappropriate and misleading messages, changes the victim's profile photo, adds / removes people to the friends list, shares inappropriate content, etc.), outing (the aggressor reveals secrets of confidential, intimate and unpleasant nature or information that bothers the victim), exclusion (exclusion from online groups, chat rooms or total rejection of group conversions cyberstalking (repeated sending of harassing and threatening messages), happy slapping (the aggressor physically attacks the victim, capturing the whole action on video and publishing it in a virtual space). Hollá categorizes these forms of cyberbullying according to the severity of the impact on the victim into three groups: 1. less serious (flaming, exclusion, denigration); 2. mild (impersonation, outing, cyberthreats); and 3. very severe (cyberstalking, cyberharassment, happy slapping).⁵ Of course, the severity of the impact of cyberbullying on the victim is individual.

⁴ ŠMAHAJ, J.: *Kyberšikana jako společenský problém*. Olomouc : Palacký University in Olomouc, 2014, p. 47-49.

⁵ HOLLÁ, K.: Cyberbullying and its Forms in Pupils in the Slovak Republic. In *The New Educational Review*, 2014, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 31.

2 Cross - Section of the Current Situation in Slovakia

Bieliková et al.⁶ (*Manifestations of Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 2007) targeted research at a group of young people aged 13 to 18. A total of 1158 respondents were involved in the research, while 12.2% of respondents have experience with electronic bullying. In 2009, Hollá⁷ conducted research on aggressive behavior and forms of e-bullying among children. In a research sample of 446 respondents, she found that the most common forms of cyberbullying are Internet harassment (32.4%), threatening e-mails / SMS messages (30.2%) and phone calls (10.8%), degrading photos (67.6%) and videos (23%). Gregussová et al.⁸ carried out research in 2010 entitled *Adolescents in a virtual space*, in which 303 students were involved. Their results show that 5.9% of children have already encountered some form of aggressive behavior in the online space. The authors were also interested in whether the aggressors acted anonymously, and it is interesting to note that up to two thirds of the victims knew the attacker. In 2012, the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Psychopathology in Bratislava⁹ conducted a survey dealing with *the Mediation of the safe Internet Use*. The survey involved 390 primary and secondary school students aged 9-18. The results of the survey show that only 25.9% of respondents are aware of the risks associated with online activity. In addition, the survey focused on informing pupils about projects dealing with the safe use of the Internet. Only 24.2% of respondents stated that they know a website dedicated to security on the Internet, while the most well-known initiatives are projects from the Slovak Republic (73.7%, especially ovce.sk). Research Detection of cyberaggression - cyberbullying and sexting¹⁰ (2013-2015) examined adolescents aged 11-18 years. Out of a sample of 1619 young people, up to 42.7% of respondents were victims of cyberbullying. The most widespread forms of cyberbullying in this case were the dissemination of false information and offensive comments, the publication of a vulgar photo, identity theft or threatening e-mails / SMS messages. In 2020, the Slovak National Center for Human Rights¹¹ mapped the rate of occurrence and forms of cyberbullying in schools, as well as ways of preventing, punishing, and informing pupils and students. The research group consisted of a total of 2,895 pupils and students, with as many as 5.7% of respondents admitting that they have not yet encountered online bullying. The research shows that up to 67.4% of victims most often found refuge with their parents, 41.1% of respondents asked for help from teachers and 37.5% of respondents asked for educational counselors. On the other hand, the research revealed that although teachers knew about bullying, the culprit was not punished, and the problems persisted (7.4% of respondents said). Pupils gained knowledge about cyberbullying prevention through interviews with teachers (26.1%), school lectures (25.4%), interviews with parents (9.2%) and the media (25.3%). However, up to 14% of respondents lacked instruction. As the research shows, an increase in the number of victims of cyber-aggression can be observed in recent years. The surprising fact is that

⁶ BIELIKOVÁ, M. et al.: *Prejavy násilia na základných a stredných školách*. [online]. [2021-01-07]. Available at: <https://www.cvtisr.sk/buxus/docs//OddMladezASport/Vyskum/vystupy/prejavy_nasilia_na_zs_ss.pdf>.

⁷ HOLLÁ, K.: Elektronické šikanovanie – novodobý fenomén edukačnej reality. In RYBIČKOVÁ, M., HLADÍK, J. (eds.): *Škola v proměnách: učitel – žák – učivo: Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie*. Zlín : Tomáš Baťa University, 2009, p. 345-351.

⁸ GREGUSSOVÁ, G. et al.: *Dospievajúci vo virtuálnom priestore*. [online]. [2021-01-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zodpovedne.sk/index.php/sk/component/jdownloads/finish/3-prieskumy-a-vyskumy/26-dospievajuci-vo-virtualnom-priestore?Itemid=0>>.

⁹ *Thesis - Mediácia bezpečného používania internetu, 2012*. [online]. [2021-01-09]. Available at: <<https://www.zodpovedne.sk/index.php/sk/component/jdownloads/finish/3-prieskumy-a-vyskumy/28-mediacia-bezpecneho-pouzivania-internetu?Itemid=0>>.

¹⁰ HOLLÁ, K.: *Detekcia kyberagresie – kyberšikanovania a sextingu*. Nitra : Constantine the Philosopher's University, 2017, p. 20.

¹¹ *Šikana a kyberšikana na školách*. [online]. [2021-01-16]. Available at: <http://mladez.sk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/%C5%A0ikana_a_kyber%C5%A1ikana_2018.pdf>.

a cyber-aggressor is not always anonymous to his victim. The most common means used against the victim include slander, ridicule, or humiliation via social networks, as well as sending offensive SMS / MMS messages, or publishing and distributing inappropriate photos or videos. Victims most often defend themselves by blocking an attacker and changing their accounts, but since virtual space is part of the way of life, even victims of cyberbullying are not willing to give up their presence on social networks or in the online environment in general. It turns out that young people have the most trust in their parents and friends. Even though a relatively large number of victims would entrust the problem to teachers, experience shows that even here, it is possible to observe an unprofessional approach and inadequate attitude or solution to the student's problem. The way to eliminate this negative phenomenon is therefore not only prevention, but also education, both for students and for teachers and parents.

3 Prevention of Cyberbullying in School Environment

When dealing with aggressive behavior of students at the school level, the cooperation of pedagogical staff with professional staff is also important. The most important position in this process is played by a social pedagogue, who should be theoretically and practically trained also in the field of solving problem behavior.¹² At present, however, the number of social teachers is absent, which is why it is necessary for schools to cooperate with educational counseling and prevention facilities. By these institutions, according to Act No. 245/2008 on Upbringing and Education are the Centers of Pedagogical-Psychological Counseling and Prevention (CPPPaP) and the Centers of Special Pedagogical Counseling. In accordance with paragraph 132, the CPPPaP provides comprehensive psychological, special pedagogical, diagnostic, educational, counseling, and preventive care to children. It provides consulting services to legal representatives and pedagogical staff.¹³ When cyberbullying occurs, schools often cooperate with the Police Force and the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family.

School prevention is a system of measures aimed at preventing and reducing the incidence of risky behavior in students. It is a deliberate, comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous application of psychological, psychotherapeutic, resocialization and educational methods.¹⁴ School prevention will ensure and at the same time fulfill Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education - § 152, dedicated to the safety and health protection of students in education.¹⁵

Experts recognize several alternatives in the form of measures, projects, procedures and means that help to prevent or already face e-bullying. The first step in every start of the prevention process is to make people aware of the problem, which includes enough relevant information about the phenomenon itself, as well as the causes, forms, methods, stages, and consequences. This is followed by the establishment of a basic intervention program.¹⁶ It follows the spirit of

¹² ŠAJGALOVÁ, M.: Školský sociálny pedagóg v teoretickej reflexii. In RAJSKÝ, A. (ed.): *JUVENILIA PAEDAGOGICA*. Trnava : Trnava University, 2016, p. 154.

¹³ Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z., Zákon o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov. [online]. [2021-01-05]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2008-245>>.

¹⁴ Bezpečnosť a prevencia v školách. [online]. [2021-01-05]. Available at: <<http://bezpre.mpc-edu.sk/>>.

¹⁵ Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z., Zákon o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov. [online]. [2021-01-05]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2008-245>>.

¹⁶ GABRIELOVÁ, J., VELEMÍNSKY, M.: Teórie detskej šikany. In *Prevenca úrazů, otrav a násilí*, 2013. Vol. 9. No. 2, p. 164. [online]. [2020-11-02]. Available at: <<http://casopis-zsfju.zsf.jcu.cz/prevenca-urazu-otrav-a-nasili/administrace/clankyfile/20131219092302829275.pdf>>.

three basic rules, which are the focus of any prevention against cyberbullying: STOP (immediately end communication with the aggressor); BLOCK (quickly restrict access to the aggressor) and TALK (do not be afraid to tell adults).¹⁷ Intervention measures at the school level, which are implemented in the form of school regulations or are personally implemented by teachers within the established counseling center, ensure the development of clear rules for the use of ICT, create a favorable school climate, implement an anonymous system for reporting bullying, investigating these cases, and establishing a plan of disciplinary consequences for the aggressor.¹⁸

Gabrielová and Velemínsky, as with most similar socio-pathological phenomena, distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. If bullying has not yet taken place, we can talk about primary prevention. In this case, the content consists of the harmonious upbringing of a child, the information of pupils, teachers, parents, and the public, both about the issue and about safety measures. If bullying has already taken place, secondary prevention shall be applied, emphasizing measures as a result of which the problem described no longer occurs again. Measures include early diagnosis, case investigation, pedagogical measures at various stages and educational procedures with the aggressor. Tertiary prevention includes specialized workplaces with experts who provide all-day re-education of aggressors. However, professional care is also offered to victims with the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder, due to participation in advanced stages of bullying.¹⁹

At a time when electronic bullying can no longer be sufficiently captured - at a stage when the aggressor endangers his victim to the point of committing a crime, then a legal solution in the form of redress, a fine and even imprisonment is coming. However, the terms bullying, and cyberbullying are not defined by criminal law, and therefore, it is necessary to include them under other criminal offenses, or the facts of the criminal offenses, which are captured by Act No. 372/1990 Coll. Act of the Slovak National Council on Offenses and Act No. 300/2005 Coll. Criminal Law.

The Act on Offenses states that an offense is committed by a person who offends, injures, or otherwise disrupts civil cohabitation or causes damage to other people's property.²⁰ According to Directive No. 36/2018 on the Prevention and Solution of Bullying of Children and Pupils in Schools and School Facilities, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic with effect from the 1st September 2018, criminal injury is considered to be personal injury, restriction of personal liberty, extortion, threats, slander, persecution, coercion, theft, misuse and damage to property or rights.²¹ A person who has reached the age of 14 at the time the offense was committed is criminally liable. However, if

¹⁷ HOLLÁ, K.: Kyberšikana: Prevence a intervence jako aktuální výzva pro školy. In *Evropské pedagogické fórum 2012 – Pedagogicko psychologické aspekty výuky*. Hradec Králové : Magnanimitas, 2012, p. 390. [online]. [2020-11-02]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279183878_KYBERSIKANA_PREVENCE_A_INTERVENCE_JAKO_AKTUALNI_VYZVA_PRO_SKOLY_CYBERBULLYING_PREVENTION_AND_INTERVENTION_AS_THE_CURRENT_CHALLENGE_FOR_SCHOOLS>.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ GABRIELOVÁ, J., VELEMÍNSKY, M.: Teórie detskej šikany. In *Prevence úrazů, otrav a násilí*, 2013. Vol. 9. No. 2, p. 164. [online]. [2020-11-02]. Available at: <<http://casopis-zsfju.zsf.jcu.cz/prevence-urazu-otrav-a-nasili/administrace/clankyfile/20131219092302829275.pdf>>.

²⁰ *Zákon č. 372/1990 Z. z Zákon Slovenskej národnej rady o priestupkoch*. [online]. [2021-01-06]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1990-372>>.

²¹ *Smernica č. 36/2018 k prevencii a riešeniu šikanovania detí a žiakov v školách a školských zariadeniach*. [online]. [2021-01-06]. Available at: <<https://www.minedu.sk/20471-sk/smernica-c-362018-k-prevencii-a-rieseniu-sikanovania-deti-a-ziakov-v-skolach-a-skolskych-zariadeniach/>>.

the perpetrators are younger people, this does not mean that they cannot be punished in any other way. In such cases, it is necessary to contact the social curator of the youth of the social affairs department of the relevant city or district office.²²

If the listed criminal offenses take place in the school premises, the relevant educational institution, headed by its principal, assumes full responsibility for the situation. In this case, the parents can demand compensation from the school for things or health.²³ Also, Directive No. 36/2018 in Art. 2 par. Article 10 stipulates that a pedagogical or professional staff member who is aware of a case of bullying and does not take any action may be prosecuted for the offense of failure to prevent, report or injure a criminal offense.²⁴ Parents who neglect the upbringing of their children and thus encourage an immoral life can also be legally handicapped. At present, the pedagogical discipline places considerable emphasis on the positive climate of the classroom and the whole school, which has a positive effect on the elimination of hostile behavior between pupils and students. In today's context, which is largely influenced by the very existence and excessive use of ICT, the profession of pedagogical staff requires a high level of professionalism, expertise, qualifications, and responsibility, making it an increasingly demanding and desirable profession.

Many projects focused on the safe use of the Internet are dedicated to the prevention of Internet pitfalls in the Slovak Republic, even in the context of media education. They provide the necessary theoretical information, examples, practical demonstrations, manuals or implement trainings or courses that help primarily in prevention, but also in combating the negative aspects of the Internet.

The civic association eSlovensko, with the support of the EU Safer Internet Plus, has been implementing several educational activities since 2007 aimed at protecting children and young people from threats in the digital space. The main activity of the association is the project *Zodpovedne.sk*, which currently provides activities in raising awareness and spreading awareness about responsible use of the Internet. The association also operates a free helpline, *Pomoc.sk*, which provides help and advice on using the Internet. Other projects are *Nehejtuj.sk*, *Stopleveline.sk*, *Ovce.sk* or *Deti v sieti* (Children in the Net).²⁵

One of the important projects of the association, focused specifically on the area of online bullying, is the project *Kyberšikanovanie.sk*, which provides on its website all the necessary information, protection principles, activities, film samples and a manual together with a workbook. Since 2016, it has also provided training for young people in the form of interactive lectures with audiovisual and musical elements called *Narodení pre výhru – Aless a kyberšikanovanie.sk* (Born to Win).²⁶

OZ Preventista - an association for security and prevention, was founded in 2013 with the intention of spreading the message of prevention against IT crime and thus contribute to education in the field of information security. It provides a platform for the exchange of

²² HRONCOVÁ, J. et al.: *Preventívna sociálno-výchovná činnosť v škole. Metodická príručka pre sociálnych pedagógov a koordinátorov prevencie*. Banská Bystrica : BELIANUM, 2012, p. 261.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Smernica č. 36/2018 k prevencii a riešeniu šikanovania detí a žiakov v školách a školských zariadeniach*. [online]. [2021-01-06]. Available at: <<https://www.minedu.sk/20471-sk/smernica-c-362018-k-prevencii-a-rieseniu-sikanovania-deti-a-ziakov-v-skolach-a-skolskych-zariadeniach/>>.

²⁵ *eBezpečnosť*. [online]. [2021-01-17]. Available at: <<https://eslovensko.sk/ebezpecnost.htm>>.

²⁶ *Kyberšikanovanie.sk*. [online]. [2021-01-17]. Available at: <<https://www.kybersikanovanie.sk/>>.

experiences with the practical implementation of preventive action at all levels of social life in the form of articles, webinars, projects, competitions, and surveys.²⁷

The organization IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute, based on a mandate from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic, implements the School without hate program. The aim of the program designed for primary and secondary schools is to implement a quality standard in the field of prevention of (cyber) bullying, hate speech and the promotion of human and civil rights among pupils and students. By signing up for the program, schools are committed to the values of tolerance and a democratic society, thus contributing to the creation of a positive school climate as part of their activities.²⁸

Counseling and training for teachers, professional staff and for parents is also provided by Pointre, civic association. The website provides advice in the form of articles and information in the field of bullying, as well as training aimed at gaining knowledge about the issue, along with methods and measures that can be used in the process of solving the problem in accordance with Directive no. 36/2018 on the prevention and solution of bullying of children and pupils in schools and school facilities.²⁹

The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic also deals with the issue, which, through the Regional Directorates of the Police Force (KR PZ), provides primary and secondary schools with several projects and activities aimed at crime prevention in connection with the use of the Internet and related risks. The project of the Communication and Prevention Department of the Presidium of the Police Force, which in 2017 began the implementation of the nationwide prevention project Children's Police Academy, is closely related to this activity. The project takes the form of a workbook with information, stories, recommendations, and tasks on individual topics. The primary goal is the prevention of crime and the secondary prevention of anti-social activities, socio-pathological phenomena, and the education of responsibility for one's own behavior and actions.³⁰ The issue of cyberbullying and safe use of the Internet is addressed by e.g., KR PZ in Nitra, KR PZ in Trenčín (Un) safe Internet, Bullying - let's not give up!), KR PZ in Trnava (Prevention of Internet crime) or KR PZ in Žilina (Cyberbullying and sexual violence via the Internet). The Ministry of the Interior also oversees the Stop Bullying project, in which the Office of the Commissioner for Children addresses all pupils to cooperate in the event of a conflict with any form of bullying. Slovak post office became a partner for the delivery of free letters from children to the Commissioner.³¹ The Markíza Television Foundation is also involved with the support of the Child Safety Line and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic. The Odpíšemeti.sk project wants to lend a helping hand to victims of bullying, as well as spread awareness among children, teachers, and parents. The project is based on the communication of psychologists with victims of bullying.³²

It follows from the above that cyberbullying (but also bullying as such) is a societal problem that needs to be addressed, not only from the position of civic associations, but also from the position of the state.

²⁷ *Preventista.sk – Spoločne proti IT kriminalite*. [online]. [2021-01-17]. Available at: <<https://preventista.sk/info>>.

²⁸ *Škola bez nenávisťi*. [online]. [2021-01-18]. Available at: <<https://www.pracasmladezou.sk/index.php/skola-bez-nenavisti/>>.

²⁹ *Pointre, o.z. – Pomoc, riešime šikanu*. [online]. [2021-01-18]. Available at: <<http://pointre.sk/poradenstvo/prepedagogov/>>.

³⁰ *O projekte*. [online]. [2021-01-19]. Available at: <<http://www.minv.sk/?DPA>>.

³¹ *Stop šikane*. [online]. [2021-01-19]. Available at: <<https://www.stopsikane.sk/>>.

³² *O projekte odpíšem ti*. [online]. [2021-01-19]. Available at: <<https://www.odpisemeti.sk/o-projekte>>.

4 Methods

The aim of this paper is to review the current state of cyberbullying in selected educational institutions in Slovakia. The intention of the authors is to find out to what extent the determined research sample met with cyberbullying (from the position of victim, aggressor, or witness), what is the level of awareness of pupils and students about the phenomenon, but also, what consequences (physical and mental consequences) victims experience. In connection with the set of goals, we set research questions and assumptions:

Research question No. 1: To what extent and in what form do pupils and students from the addressed schools have personal experiences with cyberbullying?

Assumption 1: More than 50% of respondents have experience of cyberbullying as an aggressor, victim, or witness.

Research question No. 2: Is the level of awareness of children and adolescents about Internet traps sufficient?

Assumption 2: More than 50% of respondents are aware of the pitfalls and risks associated with using the Internet.

Research question No. 3: Which group of negative impacts on victims of cyberbullying predominates among respondents (physical consequences / psychological consequences)?

Assumption 3: Cyberbullying has a psychological consequence on respondents.

The research sample consists of lower secondary students and upper secondary students in the age range from 11 to 19 years. Selected institutions are the Jánošovka Primary School in Čierny Balog, the Business Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas in Žilina and the Private Hotel Academy HaGMA in Bratislava. The research group was deliberately chosen, and it is a group of respondents that ranks among the most vulnerable groups of the population in connection with Internet traps. The total research sample consists of 136 respondents, of which 55 are primary school pupils and 81 students from the above-mentioned secondary schools, of which 41 are men (boys) and 95 are women (girls), whose average age is 15 years. To obtain the necessary data, the authors carry out a quantitative anonymous questionnaire survey distributed in electronic form. The questionnaire is a method of sociological questioning, consisting of a group of questions to obtain significant data from the respondents. The questionnaire for pupils and students entitled Current status and rate of cyberbullying of pupils and students in primary and secondary schools contains closed questions with a dichotomous offer, simple and multiple selection, open and semi-closed questions. The questions are divided into sections, while the individual questions are displayed to the respondents according to their previous answers. For the purposes of this paper, we present and evaluate only selected questionnaire questions.

5 Results

In the following part, we present the results of the research in the form of evaluation of selected questionnaire items related to the set research questions and assumptions, as well as those that provide a deeper insight into the issue. In some cases, we present only a verbal evaluation of questionnaire items without graphs.

Question 1: Which of the following activities do you perform most often on the Internet?

Based on the respondents' answers, we evaluate that the most frequently performed activity on the Internet (85.3% of respondents) is communication via social networks. Listening to music and watching videos is also high (75.7%). 69.1% of respondents use the Internet for activities related to school duties. Less than 50% of respondents said they shop online, play games, track lifestyle information, or create media content.

Question 2: Does an adult supervise your online activity?

The related question is focused on supervising the activity of children and young people on the Internet. As many as 70.6% of respondents stated that they are not under the supervision of any adult, which may prove the lack of interest from parents regarding their children's activities on the Internet. The remaining 24% of pupils and students are supervised by parents and, in the case of 2.2% of respondents, by older siblings.

Question 3: Have you ever been informed about possible risks on the Internet?

A positive finding is that up to 97.8% of respondents state that they have been informed about possible Internet risks and they are expected to be particularly careful when using it. On the contrary, the survey includes 2.2% of pupils and students who have not been instructed in the safe use of the Internet and who are expected to be much easier, sooner, or less able to defend themselves against the pitfalls and risks of the Internet.

Question 4: Have you ever encountered the term "cyberbullying"?

The research sample in the percentage of 79.4% answered positively. Almost 80% of the young people surveyed are familiar with the concept. However, more than 20% of respondents have not yet encountered the concept of cyberbullying.

Question 5: Write briefly in your own words what do you think "cyberbullying" means.

Among the most common definitions we list: - *"Bullying / Internet bullying."* - *"A kind of bullying through technology."* - *"Ridiculing, humiliating others through the Internet."* - *"In my opinion, cyberbullying is the condemnation, written assault, blackmail and slander of another person using the Internet."* - *"I think it's something to do with stealing your identity over the Internet or insulting over the Internet."* - *"Injury, threatening and defamation over the Internet."* - *"It is bullying over the Internet, e.g. You send someone a photo and you say it's only between you, but once you send something to the Internet, it stays there forever, and he will blackmail you with that photo to achieve his."* With these answers, students demonstrated an awareness of reckless conduct in relation to Internet sharing, personal data protection, but also the degree of empathy in relation to victims of cyberbullying.

Question 6: Have you already had personal experience with cyberbullying as a participant / victim / witness?



Chart 1: Respondents' personal experience with cyberbullying

Source: Own processing, 2021

30.1% of respondents have personal experience with online bullying, of which 5.9% were in the position of victim and 20.6% in the position of witness. 0.7% of respondents admitted to the role of aggressor. 2.9% of cases experienced cyberbullying as a victim and witness. The high proportion of responses shows that up to 69.9% of respondents have so far had no experience with the described Internet threat.

Question 7: What form of cyberbullying was most common in this case? (More than one answers are possible.)

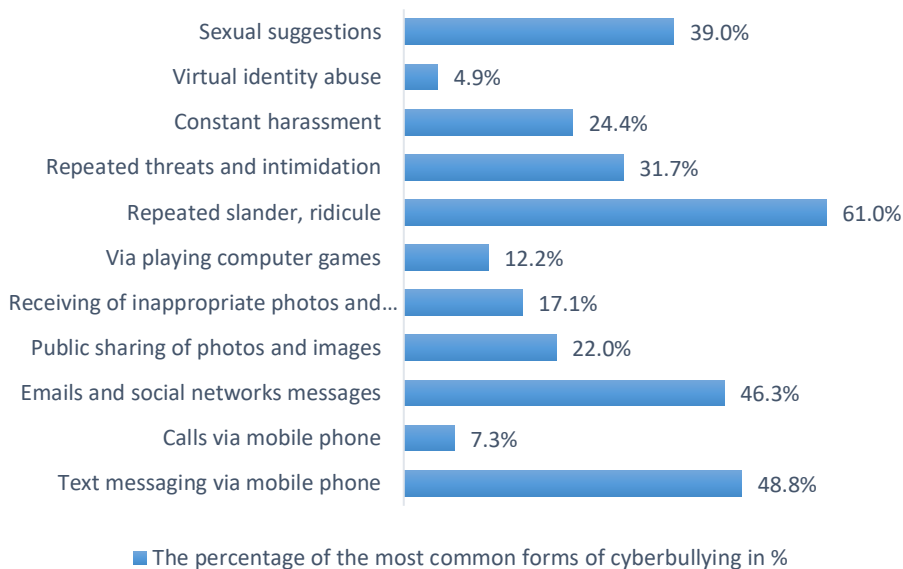


Chart 2: The most common forms of cyberbullying

Source: Own processing, 2021

The most common form of cyberbullying that participants encountered was repeated slander, ridicule, or humiliation (61%), followed by SMS messages (48.8%) and electronic messages in the form of e-mail or chat (46.3%). Up to 39% of respondents have experience with sexual suggestions. Other forms, in their descending nature, were repeated threats and intimidation;

constant harassment; public distribution of various content that no one has seen; receiving inappropriate content through personal contact; in the form of playing online games and finally through telephone calls.

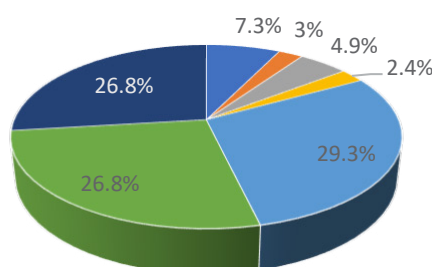
Question 8: When someone bullied you over the Internet or by phone, do you know who it was?

Survey participants were most often bullied by a well-known person from out-of-school environment (30.5%), a classmate from the same class (25.6%) or a person they only knew from the Internet environment (25.6%). In 18.3% of cases, it was a classmate from another class.

Question 9: What was the name or nickname of the person who bullied you?

An interesting finding is, that in most cases the aggressors acted under their own name (as many as 43.9% of respondents stated). 39% of respondents encountered bullying by an anonymous person or a person with a nickname. Up to 17.1% of aggressors used the name of another person. In this case, the most common answer seems surprising. We can assume that the aggressors in these cases are either unaware of their own responsibility for their actions or are convinced that the victim will remain silent. There is also a possibility that the aggressor in such a case is not aware of his actions, i.e. he does not think he's bullying anyone.

Question 10: If someone from your school was the aggressor, was he punished for his actions?



- Received a note from a teacher.
- Received a reduced grade for behavior.
- Was not punished.
- Was from a different school.
- Was reprimanded by the school principal.
- Had to change school.
- Nobody knew about it

Chart 3: Ways of punishing the aggressor

Source: Own processing, 2021

The graph shows that 7.3% of delinquents were punished by a note, 4.9% by a reduced mark for behavior, 2.4% had to transfer to another school and the same percentage was reprimanded by the school principal. An alarming percentage of aggressors (29.3%) were not punished for their behavior. There is also a high proportion of cases where bullying remained undiscovered (26.8%), or aggressors were from the external environment, to which the disciplinary consequences of the school did not apply. Unpunished offenders are the most represented group, and in this case it is not clear whether teachers did not know how to behave in a given situation or generally approached the issue irresponsibly and unprofessionally, which in terms of their profession would be a great failure.

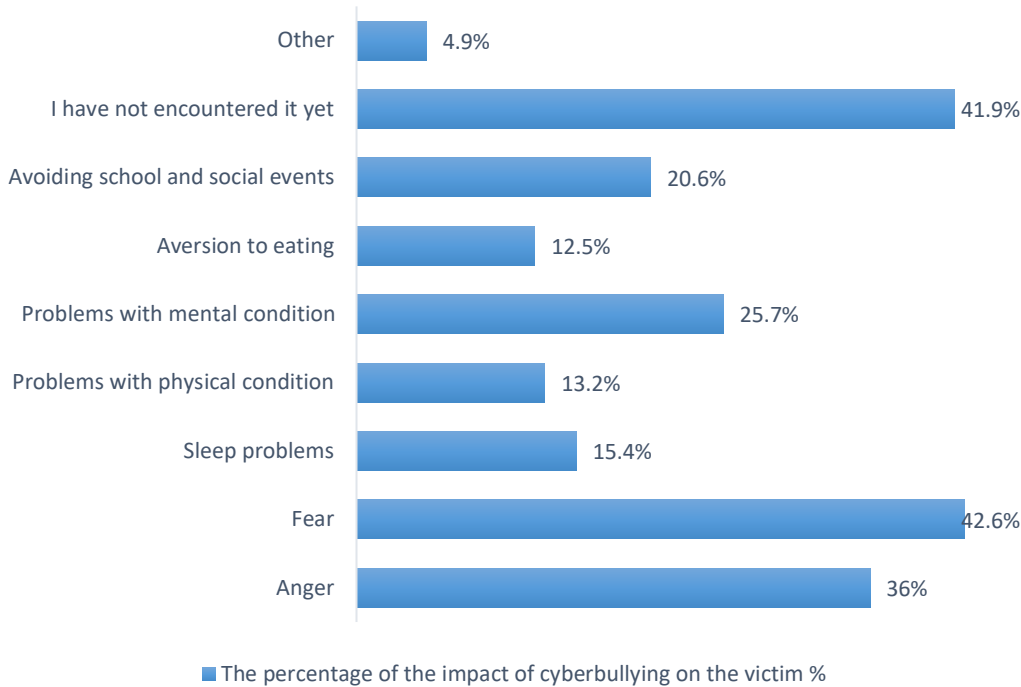


Chart 4: Consequences of cyberbullying on the victim

Source: Own processing, 2021

42.6% of respondents said they felt scared, 36% said they were angry. As many as 25.7% of respondents had problems with their mental state and 20.6% avoided school or social events. In 16% of cases, pupils and students experienced physical problems, insomnia, or anorexia. 41.9% of the research sample has not yet encountered a similar situation.

Question 11: Are you informed about how to defend yourself or prevent cyberbullying? (than one answers are possible)

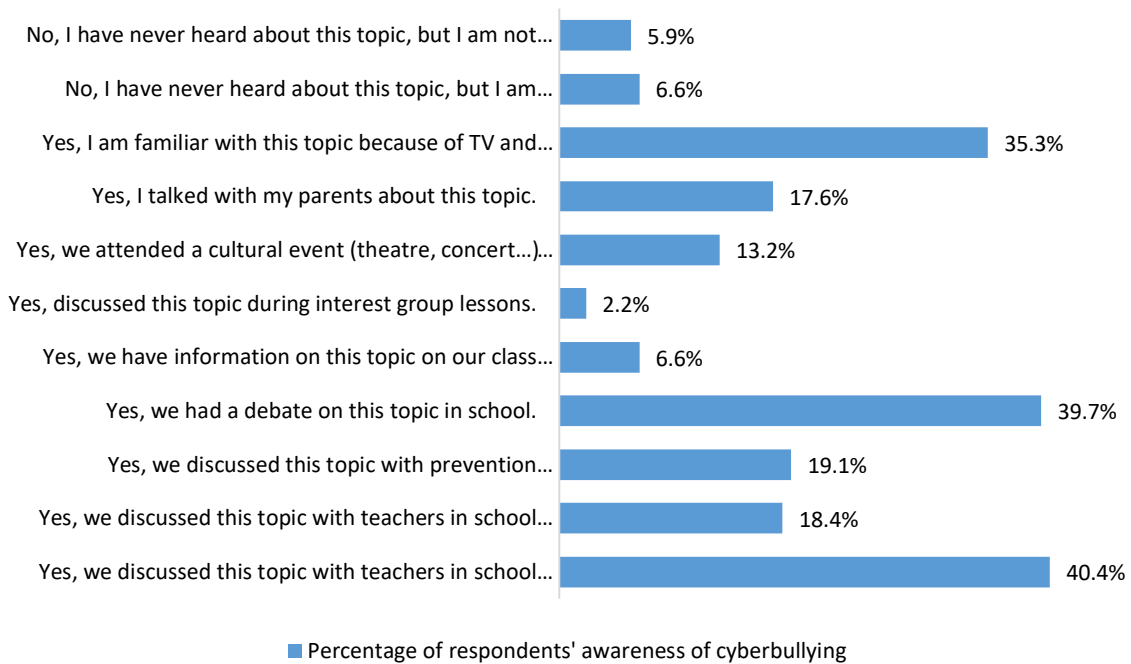


Chart 5: Awareness of pupils and students about prevention and defense in the event of cyberbullying

Source: Own processing, 2021

Information on cyberbullying was mostly obtained by the school. In 40.4% of cases the info is from class, 39.7% in the form of a lecture or discussion, 19.1% from a prevention coordinator / educational counselor, 18.4% in the classroom lessons and 13.2% of respondents participated in a cultural event. More than 35% of respondents have information from the Internet and 17.6% of students know about the prevention of cyberbullying from their parents. As many as 12.5% of students have not yet heard about this topic, and more than half of them would like to know more about it. However, almost 6% of young people are not interested in this topic at all.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, we summarize the most important findings:

- The most frequently performed activities on the Internet are communication via social networks (85.3%), listening to music and watching videos (75.7%) and activities related to school duties (69.1%).
- Only 24% of pupils and students are under parental supervision when using the Internet. As many as 70.6% of respondents stated that they are not supervised by any adult when using the Internet.
- 97.8% of respondents state that they have been informed about possible Internet risks. The research sample in the percentage of 79.4% answered in the affirmative, i.e., that almost 80% of the young people surveyed are familiar with the concept. However, more than 20% of respondents have not yet encountered the concept of cyberbullying.
- 30.1% of respondents have personal experience with online bullying, of which 5.9% were in the position of victim and 20.6% in the position of witness. 0.7% of respondents admitted to the role of aggressor. 69.9% of respondents have so far had no experience with cyberbullying.
- The most common forms of cyberbullying encountered by participants are slander, ridicule or humiliation (61%), SMS (48.8%) and e-mail / chat (46.3%).
- Survey participants were most often bullied by a well-known person from out-of-school environment (30.5%), a classmate from the same class (25.6%) or a person they only knew from the Internet environment (25.6%).
- In most cases, aggressors acted under their own name (as many as 43.9% of respondents stated). 39% of respondents encountered bullying by an anonymous person or a person with a nickname.
- The most common penalties for a school aggressor include: a note (7.3%), a reduced grade for conduct (4.9%), transfer to another school (2.4%) and reprimand by the school head (2.4%).
- As many as 29.3% of respondents stated that the aggressor was not punished for his behavior.
- No one was informed about the bullying of the victim in 26.8% of cases.
- The effects on victims of cyberbullying are primarily psychological. Victims feel fear (42.6%), anger (36%), have problems with their overall mental condition (25.7%).
- The level of awareness of pupils and students about the issue of cyberbullying is relatively high. They obtain information most often at school (during lessons and discussions). The second most common source of information on the issue is the Internet. Getting information from parents is in third place.

Based on the evaluation of questionnaire items, we answer the set research questions and evaluate the assumptions:

Research question No. 1: To what extent and in the form do pupils and students from the addressed schools have personal experiences with cyberbullying?

Based on the evaluation of questionnaire question no. 7 we state that 30.1% of pupils and students from the surveyed schools have personal experience with cyberbullying (5.9% of respondents in the role of victim, 20.6% in the position of witness, 0.7% in the role of aggressor, in 2.9% cases in the role of victim and witness).

Assumption 1: More than 50% of respondents have experience of cyberbullying as an aggressor, victim, or witness.

By answering this research question, we reject Assumption 1. According to the results of the survey, less than 50% of respondents have personal experience with cyberbullying.

Research question No. 2: Is the level of awareness of children and adolescents about Internet traps sufficient?

By evaluating the questionnaire item no. 4, we can say that the level of information is sufficient, nearly excellent. Of the total research sample, up to 97.8% of respondents (i.e. 133 pupils and students) are instructed about Internet pitfalls.

Assumption 2: More than 50% of respondents are aware of the pitfalls and risks associated with using the Internet.

By answering Research question no. 2, we confirm Assumption 2, i.e. that more than 50% respondents are informed about the pitfalls and risks associated with using the Internet.

Research question No. 3: Which group of negative impacts on victims of cyberbullying predominates among respondents (physical consequences, psychological consequences)?

From Chart 4: Consequences of cyberbullying for the victim and based on the evaluation of the relevant questionnaire question, we state that the group of psychological consequences prevails among the respondents. Victims of e-bullying have mainly feelings of fear (42.6%), anger (36%) and problems with the overall mental state (25.7%).

Assumption 3: Cyberbullying has a psychological consequence for respondents.

We confirm the stated assumption based on the evaluation of the questionnaire item and the answer to Research Question no. 3.

The issue of cyberbullying is a topical and really serious issue, which needs to be given increased attention. Protecting the victim from cyberbullying requires the attention and participation of several people – parents, teachers, society / environment. However, it is not just about the victim's surroundings, because both parties – the victim and the aggressor – need help in this process. In the context of prevention, cooperation between school and family is also essential. Hollá ranks among the primary preventive activities of schools, the gradual reduction or even elimination of aggressive behavior, which is largely the result of excessive and especially incompetent use of ICT. She sees further steps in raising the awareness of pupils and students about the pitfalls of the Internet, in creating rules for the use of ICT and in developing a plan for protection against Internet pitfalls.³³

³³ HOLLÁ, K.: Kyberšikana: Prevence a intervence jako aktuální výzva pro školy. In *Vstupná štúdia k projektu KEGA 004UKF-4/2013: „Sociálno-výchovná prevencia a intervencia vo vzťahu ku kyberšikanovaniu z pohľadu profesie sociálneho pedagóga“*. [online]. [2021-01-05]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279183878_KYBERSIKANA_PREVENCE_A_INTERVENCE_JAKO_AKTUALNI_VYZVA_PR_O_SKOLY_CYBERBULLYING_PREVENTION_AND_INTERVENTION_AS_THE_CURRENT_CHALLENGE_FOR_SCHOOLS>.

The reasons why we consider cyberbullying to be a serious social problem are the targeted / random selection of the victim; it is being addressed by a number of experts, as well as by institutions of an interdisciplinary nature; it exists in the field of law and legislation, which is expected to be of particular interest to the government itself; requires the release of funds for research, including at the international level or cooperation, and builds on education and prevention of pupils, students, but also teachers, parents and other educators.³⁴

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³⁴ ŠMAHAJ, J.: *Kyberšikana jako společenský problém.* Olomouc : Palacký University in Olomouc, 2014, p. 47-49.

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TREASURE CHEST: HOW MICRO-HEADINGS CREATE COGNITIVE FRAMES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL WEB-SITE “ARZAMAS”)

Arina Medvedeva

Abstract:

In the context of the functioning of an educational web-site, there is a need not only to create large courses, but also small-volume materials. This paper analyzes how the largest Russian educational web-site “Arzamas” uses micro-headings to create cognitive frames. For the analysis, we used the frame theory of M. Minsky, mediaesthetic approach and theory of machines by F. Guattari and G. Deleuze. Using one topic (like “Advertising of the Day” or “Smell of the Day”), “Arzamas” publishes a small thematic material every day for a certain period of time. Micro-heading consists of “cards”, each of which reflects a specific aspect of the topic. Thus, using the media format Arzamas forms a pattern of functioning of a certain phenomenon on the cognitive level.

Key words:

Arzamas. Educational Journalism. Educational Web-Site. Frames. Mediaesthetics. Micro-Headings. Theory of Machines.

Introduction

In the circumstances of a pandemic, the problem of distance education has become especially urgent. There are various approaches to understanding distance education, from expanding education in the digital space to self-paced online courses. In this regard, the phenomenon of educational journalism has gained particular expansion. Within the framework of this article, we consider the functioning of independent educational websites, the goal of which is to form a knowledge system for anyone. For analysis we chose Russian educational project “Arzamas” and its micro-headings. “Arzamas” is an educational project dedicated to the history of culture. The basis of the site is courses in history, literature, art, anthropology, philosophy, culture. Courses are 15-minute audio or video lectures by scientists and materials prepared by the editors: reference notes and long articles, photo galleries and newsreels, interviews with experts and bibliography that further expands on the topic. Also on the site there is a “Journal”. It is a section in which weekly materials are published that are not directly related to the topics of the courses: cheat sheets, rare archival documents, recommendations, reviews, monologues of specialists and much more.

1 Literary Review

A number of researchers define the term “educational journalism” in different ways. Educational journalism can mean “journalistic materials on socially significant educational topics of the media outlets”,¹ a tool for expanding the pedagogical process,² a platform for discussion of educational problem³ a function of journalism, responsible for the dissemination

¹ KATERYNYCH, P.: Educational Journalism in Ukraine: Current Status and Development Prospects. In *Sinopsis: Tekst, Kontekst, Media*, 2020, Vol. 26, No. 4, p. 152.

² See: LEYKIN, V. V.: Obrazovatel'naya zhurnalistika: Problemy i perspektivy. In *Global and Regional Research*, 2020, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 567-575.

³ See: NAZAROVA, N. E.: Obrazovatel'naya zhurnalistika: Problemy i perspektivy. In *Prepodavatel XXI vek*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 13-18.

of high cultural values, to educate people on the models of global culture.⁴ We are more interested in the first definition of educational journalism, which emphasizes journalism as a translator of certain knowledge to a wide audience. P. Katerynych also defines the objectives of educational journalism as follows: “*The multimedia thinking, use of “smart” ideas, deep immersion into the topic and presence in the educational process are the primary tasks of a journalist who writes on educational topics.*”⁵ The peculiarities of educational content “Arzamas” is analyzed in few studies. The specificity of the tools for popularizing culture in the educational content of the site is described by K. S. Stetsenko:

1. The culture of everyday life.
2. Recreation of the educational atmosphere.
3. The historical context of anthropology.
4. Emphasis on documentary.
5. Online university concept.
6. Sophisticated navigation.
7. The ability to consolidate the knowledge gained in practice.
8. Section “Children’s room”, education for children.⁶

From these results, it can be concluded that “Arzamas” follows one of the conventions of journalism: openness to a wide audience, accessibility of information for the user. K. K. Dmitrieva, comparing “Arzamas” and “EDSITEment”, describes the specifics of setting up the site, which allows “EDSITEment” to remain in the top in search engines, although readers’ activity is much less than that of “Arzamas”.⁷ E. R. Guseinova notes the importance of using the technique of medialization as a way of translating scientific knowledge in new forms when creating educational content. The timeline on web-site “Arzamas” used to facilitate the perception of dates, cultural and historical changes. E. R. Guseinova identifies three properties of the timeline on the “Arzamas” website that meet the requirements of medialization: multimodality, hypertextuality and interactivity.⁸ We can conclude that the functioning of educational content largely depends on the presentation of information (medialization), therefore, one of the key factors is the interface as the main structure of communication in the digital space. A. V. Shchekoturov’s research raises the problem of the representation of cultural meanings in the interface of social networks.⁹ The main prerequisite is taking into account the affordances of the interfaces, the functionality originally incorporated into it, which is characterized by relative stability. Such a premise allows us to speak not only about the difference in interface design in different cultures (and on different sites), but also about the possible ways of the user’s manifestation in the digital space, which may have certain limitations (due to the peculiarities of the architecture of the specifically presented interface). An important fact remains that the general functionality of the interface should also be taken into account when analyzing cultural codes.

⁴ KOMAROVA, N. I., SUHAREVA, A. S.: *Obrazovatel'naya zhurnalistika dlya molodezhnoy internet-auditorii*. In *Modern Science*, 2020, No. 4-3, p. 350.

⁵ KATERYNYCH, P.: *Educational Journalism in Ukraine: Current Status and Development Prospects*. In *Sinopsis: Tekst, Kontekst, Media*, 2020, Vol. 26, No. 4, p. 152.

⁶ STETSENKO, K. S.: *Instrumentyi vnedreniya kulturyi v povsednevnyuyu zhizn cheloveka (na primere obrazovatel'nogo proekta «Arzamas»)*. In *Mediasreda*, 2020, No. 1, p. 183-184.

⁷ DMITRIEVA, K. K.: *Sravnitel'naya harakteristika saytov «Arzamas» i «Edsitement»*. In ALESHKOVSKIY, I. A., ANDRIYANOV, A. V., ANTIPOV, E. A. (eds.): *Lomonosov – 2020*. Sevastopol : Moscow State University, 2020, p. 107-108.

⁸ GUSEYNOVA, E. R.: *Taymlayn kak element medializatsii (na primere sayta prosvetitel'skogo proekta «Arzamas»)*. In YASCHUK, T. F. (ed.): *Molodyozh tretogo tyisyacheletiya*. Omsk : Izd-vo Om. gos. unta, 2019, p. 934.

⁹ SCHEKOTUROV, A. V.: *Interfeys sotsialnykh setey kak reprezentatsiya kulturnykh smyslov*. In *Slovo.ru: baltiyskiy aktsent*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 43-53.

The interface can also become a way of creating implicit collective knowledge.¹⁰ Communication platforms act as hybrids that exist at the junction of material and non-material components, but the field of communication itself is formed by the interface. Implicit collective knowledge becomes possible as a set of practices which are predetermined by the interface: the interface can be represented as a “machine” for the production of “collective implicit knowledge”, transforming the experience of participants in communication platforms.¹¹ The openness, clarity and flexibility of the interface multiplies such digital interaction practices, while an unfriendly interface leads to the disappearance of an entire communication platform, which in this case is recognized as unproductive. Therefore, interface remains an important connecting link in the transmission of any type of information in the digital space. As part of the broadcast of educational content, the interface must also meet these parameters. Basically, one of the interface’s goals is to facilitate the process of interacting with new information. Thus, we refer to the term “frame” given by M. Minsky: “*A frame is a sort of skeleton, somewhat like an application form with many blanks or slots to be filled.*”¹² According to the researcher, a frame is a cognitive structure considered as a built-up system of knowledge. Frame can be reflected through the interface.

2 Method

As part of the research, we use the method of media aesthetic analysis, which was largely theorized by H. Zettl and is defined as follows: “*media aesthetics investigates how their fundamental image elements—light, space, motion, and sound—function within*”.¹³ Media aesthetic analysis is used to consider the features of the interface design and its participation in the formation of an educational atmosphere for the user. We also used machine analysis theorized by F. Guattari and J. Deleuze. It is most fully explained in the work of F. Guattari *Schizoanalytic cartographies*.¹⁴ The researcher assumes that the essence (or meaning) is not something crystallized (although such an outcome is quite possible), but is a process. Meaning is what happens. The researcher proposes to distinguish four basic entities of any process: flows (F), machine types (F), universes (U) and territories (T). For Guattari, it is important that the machine is running constantly, mutating all the time and ready to become something else. Thus, using such a machine model allows us to construct framing strategies within the micro-headings on the Arzamas website. The use of such a methodology in the analysis allows us to identify how micro-headings form frames on different levels of perception.

3 Results

The results of the study showed that each micro-heading, regardless of the topic, is a frame for the transfer of certain knowledge. As part of the analysis, we identify the main ways of interaction and transfer of knowledge: through an interface and a media-aesthetic component that implements a certain register of perception; through the functioning of frames. In total,

¹⁰ MASLANOV, E. V., FEYGELMAN, A. M.: Neyavnoe znanie v internet-kommunikatsii: Interfeys kak mehanizm proizvodstva neyavnogo znaniya. In *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2020, No. 460, p. 77-83.

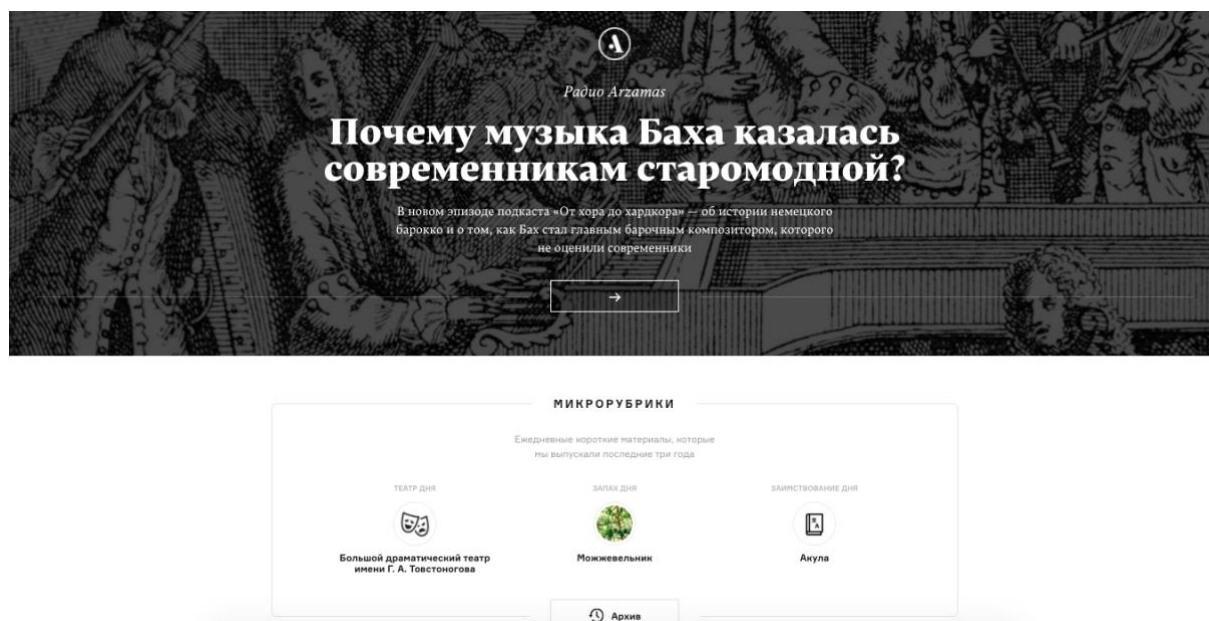
¹¹ Ibidem, p. 82.

¹² See: MINSKY, M.: Frames. In MINSKY, M.: *The Society of Mind*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<http://aurellem.org/society-of-mind/som-24.html/>>.

¹³ ZETTL, H.: *Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*. Boston : Cengage Learning, 2011, p. 13.

¹⁴ See: GUATTARI, F.: *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. New York, London : Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

there are 87 micro-headings on the Arzamas website. The micro-headings themselves are no longer published. However, they did not disappear from the site, but have remained in the section “Archive”, a special page where all the micro-headings are presented. Micro-headings can be discovered from the main page of the site: micro-headings are located immediately after the main large material at the very top of the web page. Their location is unchanged, and a selection of three micro-headings is periodically updated, so you can see a reminder of different micro-headings every day. Unlike large material that occupies the entire strip on the screen, micro-headings are located in the middle in a more compact form. The use of a framework that isolates micro-headings from other media formats emphasizes the comprehensiveness of information.



Picture 1: Correlation of micro-headings with large materials on the main page of the “Arzamas” website
Source: *Arzamas*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://arzamas.academy>>.

3.1 Mediaesthetic Features of Micro-Heading’s Interface

The use of a neutral combination of white and black colours promotes a detached perception of information. Unlike large materials, for which a grand picture becomes the background, here the emphasis is made on minimalistic design. Minimalistic visual design is necessary to enhance the conciseness of the transmitted information. Minimalism also encourages a focus on the information itself. It does this by reducing distractions: bright colors, pictures. Thus, the reduction of the emotional component of information perception is achieved. To differentiate micro-headings, the original icons drawn for each of them are used. Firstly, they contribute to more comfortable navigation, taking up more space than the heading of a micro-heading. Thus, the primary perception is likely to be visual rather than textual. Secondly, some of the icons have animation, which contributes to an additional emphasis on the background of static images. Thirdly, the style of the icons is just as minimalistic; in contrast to other information on the site (large headlines and banners), this design makes it easy to accept such information. The graphic symbol is taken as a basis with reference to the topic of the heading. Such a graphic design creates a semantic node for a micro-heading, reduces the abundance of various information to a single component, a leitmotif. The selection of a symbol is not always carried out by direct association. Some of them require additional cognitive chains. Symbols of the micro-headings “Smell of the Day”, “Alchemy of the Day”, “Mosaic of the Day” are accompanied by additional animation, especially emphasizing them in comparison with other static symbols. The use of animation is necessary here, because

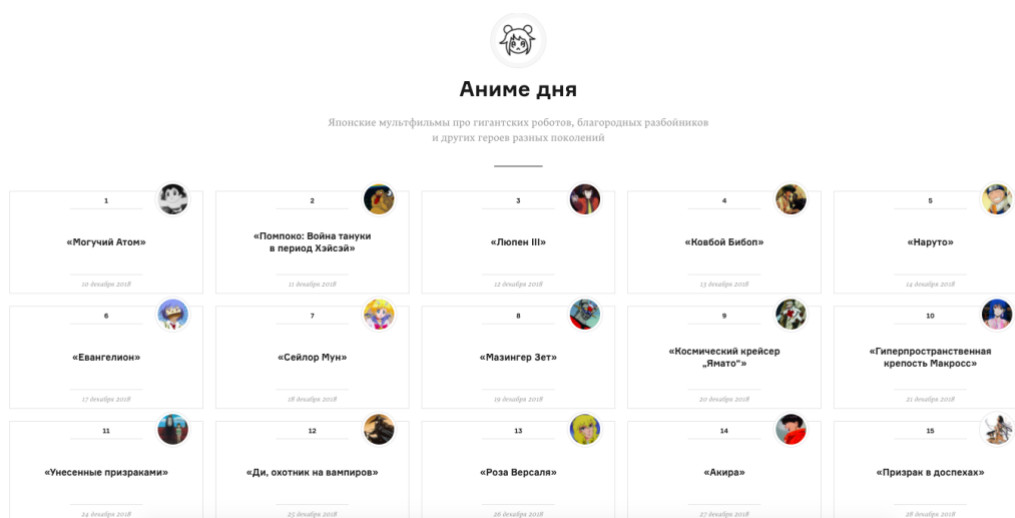
the symbol of the smell is vibes rushing upward; the symbol of the mosaic is a moving pixel monster from an old game; the symbol of alchemy is a bottle of bubbling liquid. Such a set of symbols does not explicitly carry an associative link to a topic, so animation focuses user's attention on symbolism.



Picture 2: „Archive” – A page where all micro-headings are listed

Source: *Arzamas*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://arzamas.academy/micro>>.

The main principle of organizing information in micro-headings is the “Archive”. The use of that principle contains association with the collected information, already packed and organized. In the “Archive” one observes the organization of information “on the shelves”: three micro-headings in a row, exactly in the middle of the screen. This organization of information contributes to the order of perception. The vertical organization of information is used for chronological ordering of information: there are the last published micro-headings at the top, and the first ones that appeared on the site are at the bottom of the web-page. The abundance of free space on the side of the web page helps to focus on centered information. Each micro-heading is divided into “cards” – micro-articles. They are organized by four in a row and occupy not the middle of the page, but the entire width. This effect is organized according to the principle of approximation. Thus, when all the headings are presented, they are centered like in a showcase, whereas when you select one heading, the cards take up much more space on the page. This approximation contributes to immersion in a specific topic. All micro-heading's cards are numbered according to their appearance on the site (i.e., in chronological order).



Picture 3: The web-page of “Anime of the Day” micro-heading

Source: *Arzamas*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://arzamas.academy/micro/anime>>.

The cards are also organized in a minimalist style: a large topic name, serial number and publication date. In some micro-headings, a fourth element is added to the design: a circle in the upper right corner of the card, which contains a part of the image. This element appears in those micro-headings, the subject of which is related to the visual representation of information (for example, headings “Anime of the Day”, “Design of the Day”, “Series of the Day”). Each card within the micro-heading is organized in the same way. There is a heading at the top of the card, immediately below it is an image (optional) and text (about 1,500 characters). The design unification makes cards semantically equal within the framework of the micro-heading. This approach allows one not to cycle through the chronological order of the cards, but to start the study of the topic from any card.



Picture 4: An example of a card from the micro-heading “Letter of the Day”

Source: *Arzamas*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://arzamas.academy/micro/letters/25>>.

The use of cards with clear visual borders is due to the associative binding to the “container” for information (one can also remember the cards in the library). The general principle of organizing information comes down to collation/packaging. Information turns out to be closed

within the framework of a micro-heading. The information is universalized by the visual parameter. At the headline level, the “something” + of the day” formula becomes such a marker of universalization.

3.2 Micro-Headings Interface Trajectories

The visual component of an interface is important for constructing a particular register of perception, but affordances become even more important. Affordances within an interface define a set of interactions with elements of the web page.

We can identify several common trajectories of working with information:

1. Immersion. The dive trajectory is entirely based on the aforementioned close-up property. The main page of the website → Archive → Micro-heading → topic card under number 1. This strategy is focused on the sequential processing of information according to the logic of chronology, the creation of a system of narrowly focused knowledge.
2. Fragmentation. The fragmentation trajectory is not aimed at the formation of a system; on the contrary, it is focused on the search for specific information that exists outside the knowledge system. Any page of the website → Archive (optional) → Micro-heading → a topic card with the most relevant information.
3. Wandering. The use of such a trajectory is due to the processing of information without a specific purpose. Any page of the website → Micro-heading → a topic card with the most interesting information. The main difference is that the user does not make a special selection from all the existing options, rather one is attracted by one of the three micro-headings displayed on the website page, where the user has consumed information of a completely different type.

3.3 Micro-Heading Frame Paths

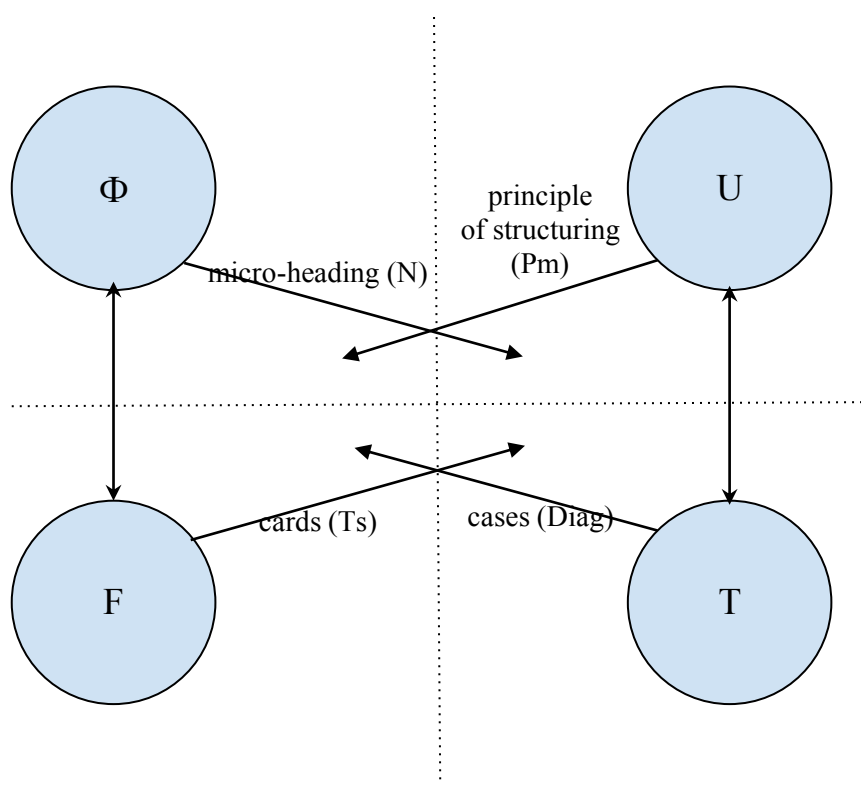
Speaking about the trajectories of creating frames, we turn to the theory of machines, which allows us to highlight the main components of this process within the framework of micro-headings on the “Arzamas” website. Taking into account the machine theory, we distinguish the following main components of the process of creating a knowledge frame:

Table 1: Entities of frame constructing process in micro-headings of “Arzamas” web-site

Entity	Expression of Entity	Features of Entity
Features (F)	Cards (Ts)	Actual, Real
System of Frame (Φ)	Micro-Heading (N)	Actual, Possible
Structure of Frame (U)	Principle of Structuring Information (Pm)	Virtual, Possible
Triggers (T)	Cases (Diag)	Virtual, Real

Source: Own processing, 2021.

Thus, the existing frame collides with its possible extensions and is materialized in the interface of the Arzamas website as follows:



Graph 1: The machine of frame-constructing on the web-site “Arzamas”

Source: Own processing, 2021.

The frame as a knowledge system (Φ) separates from the others by means of a heading, design solutions and a system of organizing information in the archive (there is no hierarchy within the micro-headings). The knowledge system is made up of cards (F), in which individual cases of frame expansion (T) are also packed. The selection of cases is carried out according to a certain structural principle (U). As part of the study, several structural strategies on the Arzamas website were identified:

1. Chronological strategy. The frame is complemented on a diachronic basis. Examples: The “Theatrical Performance” frame through the history of performances that changed theater.
2. Local strategy. A strategy, where there is a binding of a frame to a specific event or place. Examples: frame “Propaganda” through flyers of the Second World War.
3. Case strategy. The frame is created on the principle of collected cases, usually masterpieces of a particular phenomenon. Examples: frame “Icon” through analysis of masterpieces of icon painting; frame “Cameo” through episodic film roles of celebrities.
4. The unknown facts about cultural phenomenon. The frame is built around a familiar phenomenon, by revealing unusual / little-known facts around it. Examples: the “Elephant” frame through amazing stories about it; frame “Newsreel” through unusual film shots.
5. Operation frame. A complex approach focused on binding to a specific format of existence of any phenomenon. Examples: frame “Poem” through poems no more than 7 lines; frame “History of the World” through postcards.
6. Intersection of frames in a common frame. A micro-heading that builds a common thread between different frames on the same basis. Examples: frame “Riddle” through the riddles of different nations; frame “Hangover” through examples of this phenomenon in cultural objects.
7. Fragmentation. For example, the “Cyrillic” frame through each letter of the alphabet.

Conclusion

The unified design of micro-headings points to the equal availability of knowledge, regardless of the content of the micro-heading. Frames of micro-headings are compiled at the visual level (web-site and section design), system level (the principle of organizing information), structural level (web-site interface) and content. As part of the analysis of the “Arzamas” website, we identified how these levels are represented in order to provoke a certain perception algorithm for the user, aiming at forming frames.

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GOD ONLINE

Radek Mezulánik

Abstract:

When we do ordinary things with great love, as advised by Therese of Lisieux, we bring beauty and healing to our companions on the Internet. The omnipresent God is as close as another keystroke, another post, or a response to another's online comment. We need a human spirituality based on a sense of holiness of all creation and respect for life, despite the conflicts that characterize our world - and given the amount of time most of us spend online, we must incorporate these activities into our spiritual life.

Key words:

Church. Internet. Liturgy. Media. Pandemic. Social Networks.

Introduction: Digital “Divine” Environment

Today, the Internet is part of the daily lives of many people, and therefore increasingly contributes to building the religious identity of the people of our time and affects their ability to understand reality and therefore their faith and live accordingly. The Internet and cyberspace culture present new challenges for our ability to formulate and listen to symbolic language that speaks of the possibilities and signs of transcendence in our lives. Maybe it is time to think about cyber theology understood as the intelligence of faith in the age of the Internet. In the digital environment, there is a risk that the personal and community dimension of faith will be abolished. ‘Friends’ are always online, meaning that they are available to contact or imagine as present to see their updates on social networks. They are always present. The concept of the ‘neighbor’ has its roots in spatial proximity. Today, however, proximity is given by technological mediation – the neighbor is the one who is ‘connected to me’. I can be ‘far away’ from a friend who lives nearby but is not on Facebook and uses few e-mails. Instead, I feel ‘close’ to a person I have never met but has become my ‘friend’ on Facebook. The risk today is to confuse these two concepts. The connection alone is not enough to make the network a fully human place to share. Working with this goal in mind is a specific task for a Christian. Is the Internet a divine environment? Above all, it is the environment, the space of experience, that is increasingly becoming an integral part of everyday life: it is a new existential context. By no means is it a simple ‘tool’ of communication, but it has evolved into a cultural ‘environment’ that determines the style of thinking, creates new forms of education, helps define the way the world lives and its organization. Theological intuition here sees the magnetic attraction of humanity towards a more radical connection, which explains and appreciates all the efforts of the interaction of human minds in social networks. In this context, the Internet can be considered an important stage in the path of mankind, initiated, and controlled by God. So, we can understand the Internet as part of the unique ‘divine environment’ that is our whole world. This vision does not ignore all the problems and dangers but seeks to understand and explain the place of the Internet in human history.

1 The Church in the Digital Environment

The Internet as a social network, formed by the exchange of content in personal relationships, leads us, more than ever, to the understanding that faith is not just information, and the Church is not a place of mere ‘transmission’ of the gospel. It is a place of living witness: it is not about passing on abstract concepts, but about offering an experience that you can share.

The Church in the network, therefore, is called not only to ‘broadcast’ content, but also to ‘witness’ in the context of broad relations. Benedict XVI wrote that when people exchange information, they already share themselves, their worldview.¹ Information technology thus helps to create a network of connections and leads people to become ‘witnesses’ of the values on which they base their existence. I believe this is the best way the church can be present in the digital environment.

2 Digital Ecosystem

The digital environment is a certain ecosystem – communication is an environment in which many different elements interact. It contains not only various means of communication, namely telephone, radio, television, social media, print media, etc., but also people, ideas, cultures, historical events, etc. As it happens in every ecosystem, every part that changes affects everyone else. The same dynamics occur in the ecology of the media. We have seen it dramatically over the last 15 years. The advent of the smartphone, i.e., the mobile phone that allows access to the Internet, has changed all ways of communication. People do not talk to each other, but they write SMS; instead of reading newspapers, they follow the ongoing updating of information channels; instead of watching movies or television, they watch video clips; instead of meeting friends, they join social media. We could find many more examples of this kind. This ecosystem model describes the communication environment in which the Church faced the Covid-19 pandemic. In this case, however, the changes did not occur with the introduction of new communication technology, but with the introduction of the virus.

3 Church and Pandemic

When a pandemic broke out, the Church, like all social actors, faced shocks in its communication models. Church institutions continued to use printed paper, and the Vatican owned a radio and television station for distribution in countries around the world. The Internet has enabled other ways of distribution and offers websites run by church institutions. In principle, they maintained a model based on ‘transmission’, i.e., the distribution of content by institutional sources. With its two-way communication, social media has opened new opportunities and, by its very nature, has challenged existing communication models. The Church, both universal and local, responded to the pandemic at all levels of communication. The communication, which affected most people in technologically advanced countries, took place online. When local health authorities banned all public gatherings, parishes offered live masses, significantly increasing the number of Eucharistic celebrations on television and online. Parishes and dioceses have also converted religious education to online channels. Religious communities and other church groups have prepared spiritual guides online, the range of spiritual aids has increased: reading, guided meditation, art, commentary, etc. Individual parishioners have continued to study the Bible online, as have prayer groups. The Vatican continued to broadcast the Pope’s activities in the traditional media, broadcasting, for example, the unforgettable blessings of *Urbi et Orbi* from the deserted St. Peter’s Square. Given the nature of online communication, further changes are most likely to occur. However, innovation requires time to affect society as a whole.

¹ BENEDICTUS XVI.: *MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE 45th WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY: Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age*. [online]. [2021-07-28]. Available at: <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110124_45th-world-communications-day.html>.

4 Media Ecology in History

Media ecology can show us this phenomenon from a historical point of view. The communication ecosystem is constantly changing and sometimes radically. However, it took decades, not to mention centuries, for both society and the Church, to adapt to the first experience of mass communication made possible by the press. Further development is related to the form of information. The oral presentation of the manuscript culture did not correspond to the printed page.² It took several centuries for scientists, theology, and the Church to master the world of the printed word: how to better conceive arguments (moving from an oral style to a style intended for reading); how to use the shape of the printed page (taking over the visual composition); how to choose an audience (instead of Latin other languages); how to exercise authority (directly or through information control). Over time, some elements of the ecosystem have evolved and others have disappeared. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Church has also faced another slow revolution in the media ecosystem due to the spread of electrical technologies and their impact on communications: the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the mass media. Increasing the speed and scope of communication allowed the church to increase its centralization because, for example, the Vatican dicasteries could immediately communicate with local dioceses and specific people. At the same time, the Church faced a new communication situation: in addition to competing with other religious voices in the context of the Reformation, it had to deal with an ecosystem in which popular culture contributed to shaping the possibilities of communication. The changes concerned forms of government (democracy), information (instant news of distant events, the progressive role that information took on as a commodity, definition of priority issues run by the mass press), entertainment (transition to mass entertainment based on music, cinema and radio), migration of people (who have discovered new places and new opportunities) and employment (from agriculture to manufacturing, to the electrical products sector). Cardinal Avery Dulles, in his reflection on the structures of the Church after the Second Vatican Council, noted that different models or concepts of the Church refer to different models of communication.³ The institutional structure of the church was well suited to radio and television broadcasting, as these networks provided a single source. Who could speak better for the church than the pope? So, the Vatican has set up its own station – Vatican Radio – to make the most of this technology. Other models are often appropriate for the local Church – for example, those who see the Church as a community of believers. Dulles also hinted at other interpretations of the church: as a sacrament, as a herald of God’s word, as a servant, as a place of dialogue with secular culture, etc. All are present at the same time, and each involves different communication methods.

Each of the historical examples and models that Dulles offers suggests how an ecological approach to the media can help to understand specific passages from church history. Because the ecological model focuses on communication, it does not seek to explain all the events or actions or perspectives of the church. However, it is suggestive compared to today's situation where the Church faces the challenges posed by a pandemic. Two proponents of the concept of the media as an ecological system – Canadian theorist Marshall McLuhan and his son and collaborator Eric McLuhan (1988) – have tried to summarize in the “four media laws” some of the ways in which media ecology works.⁴ Wondering what happens when the media

² For more information, see: ONG, W. J.: *Oralność i piśmienność. Słowo poddane technologii*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011.

³ See also: DULLES, A.: *Models of the Church (Image Classics)*. New York : Image, 1991.

⁴ Compare to: MCLUHAN, M., MCLUHAN, E.: *The Lost Tetrads of Marshall McLuhan*. New York : OR Books, 2017.

ecosystem changes? They deduced from this some specific characteristics put forward in the form of a “quad” of questions:

- “*What repetition or recovery from previous actions and services does the new form bring at the same time?*”
- “*If the new shape is pushed to its limit, it will tend to reverse its original properties. What is the potential for reversing the new form?*”
- “*If any aspect of the situation is expanded or improved, the old condition or unimproved situation is set aside. What is postponed or obsolete by the new ‘authority’?*”
- “*What is it that makes new media amplify or accelerate?*”⁵

Marshall Soules cites the example of the Internet, which increases decentralization, access speed and network communication, reverses the trend towards information congestion and isolation, thus obsolete travel, distance and retail, and restores writing, small groups and local activism.⁶ These ‘laws’, which focus mainly on the media, illustrate two other general aspects. First, the media and other events are interrelated. Whatever happens in one medium will affect the others. Although we notice this especially in relation to new communication technologies affecting the older ones, the phenomenon also occurs when people are looking for new uses for existing communication technologies (for example, a church that broadcasts Mass on television). These ‘media laws’ can be applied to other types of historical change (Roman roads facilitated the migration of nations; the plague of smoke indirectly led to the development of labor-saving devices, including the press). Whenever we encounter a historical change, we often look at past experiences to understand how to imitate something already known (Gutenberg’s printed Bibles resembled handwritten Bibles in characters and arranged in columns) or restore something (radio that reinforces the value of oral expression for centuries press).

5 Media, Church and Pandemic

These general notions of ‘media laws’ suggest some reflection on the impact of the pandemic on the church, its communication, and its nature. The Catholic Church largely complied with the regulations of the civil authorities, which were to restrict meetings, such as services, sacramental celebrations, catechesis, or other parish activities. The bishops freed the faithful from compulsory Sunday worship, and church ministers simultaneously sought ways to help people maintain and cultivate their faith. It happens everywhere and in all sorts of ways, but in the developed world all these ways involved communication technologies: many parishes celebrated the Eucharist through video reception, made Mass accessible in real time or even in recorded form. Experiences of these rapid and necessary changes in the daily life of the Church varied from place to place, but they were always people who practiced worship at home in front of the screen. Individual pious activities instead of parish meetings, Bible study or *online* prayer groups, telephone calls by pastoral workers to vulnerable members of parishes and congregations (often elderly) who had no *online* connection, priests visiting patients in the hospital with adequate protection, more active *social networks* using

⁵ SANDSTROM, G.: Laws of Media – The Four Effects: A McLuhan Contribution to Social Epistemology. In *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*, 2012, Vol. 1, No. 12, p. 1-6. [online]. [2020-07-28]. Available at: <<https://social-epistemology.com/2012/11/11/gregory-sandstrom-laws-of-media-the-four-effects-a-mcluhan-contribution-to-social-epistemology/>>.

⁶ *McLuhan Light and Dark*. [online]. [2020-07-28]. Available at: <www.media-studies.ca/articles/mcluhan.htm>.

advertising and *marketing* techniques began to promote prayer. Someone, out of necessity (the parish did not broadcast Mass *online*) or of their own free will (did not like the quality of the digital broadcast of their parish), watched other parishes or communities. More systematically, at the level of concrete actions, the pandemic pushed the Church to restore the Eucharistic reverence and the various practices that could be carried out at home. This led to the renewal of traditions and forms of personal prayer: never forgotten, but now emphasized in the *online* services of the Church. It also led to a return to the medieval custom of looking at the Eucharist or attending it only from a distance, without communion, in the form of ‘spiritual communion’ as in the 18th and 19th centuries. Guidelines for civil society and public health officials have replaced church law.

By ending physical religious gatherings, the pandemic reduced the importance of the physical place. And the pandemic increased the importance of the local church, as the parish retained its role as the most visible point of contact (even online) with the church. The pandemic did not affect the central role of the pope and the symbolic role that the papacy publicly plays. However, the negative effect has been to increase digital inequality, separating individuals and parishes without connections or skills to use these technologies from those who have been active. In this sense, many of the Church’s recent initiatives for greater participation and inclusion have become obsolete. The sense of the church as a community diminished by reducing direct contact, although in some places it was possible to strengthen it through social media, in which individuals connected home churches with prayer groups. The understanding of the Church as a sacrament was largely diminished because, with rare exceptions, parishioners could not attend the sacraments, but only observed a few people who celebrated the Eucharist. To compensate for this shortcoming, many have sought to provide greater experience with the Church, which is dedicated to proclaiming God’s word. This was due to the increase in Bible study, spiritual reflection, online spirituality, etc. Finally, many individuals joined the Church’s institutional efforts to heal the sick and help those in need.

What significance can this have for the future of the Church? The idea of drawing and renewing the historical experience of worship in limited contexts could be applied to the reflection on ‘laws of the media’, both in areas of the world where Christians are persecuted and in areas where there is a shortage of priests. Although not globally, the Church has experienced a similar situation in the past. It could now more consciously evaluate the practical reactions adopted by parishes and dioceses – realities gained from the past, such as the spiritual community. Although public health authorities can find ways to reduce its impact, the experience of a pandemic will remain in the memory and history of those who have experienced it. The Church will most likely return to much of its pre-pandemic activities but will have the opportunity to reflect on the opportunities this experience opens up, the communication and structural ecosystems that open up, and how it has used them in extraordinary times. “Media Ecology” offers an opportunity to understand the nature of the Church as it stands and how it responds to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the “models of the Church” proposed by Cardinal Avery Dulles describe several ways in which the Church exists, the “four laws of the media”, originally used to show how media systems are changing, may also describe how the Church faces external pressure, how it has changed its communication procedures. The impact of the pandemic led the Church to return to ancient communication practices and invent new ones.

6 “Let Down the Nets” (Luke 5:4)

At this point, the question arises spontaneously: if the digital revolution changes the way we live and think today, will it not affect faith in any way? If the network enters the process of forming personal identity and relationships, will it not also affect the religious and spiritual identity of the people of our time and the church conscience itself? The Internet seems to be the place for answers. However, they are rarely unique: the answer is a set of links that link to texts, images and videos. If you type the word God or even religion into a search engine, spirituality, we get a list of hundreds of millions of pages. There is a growing religious need in the network, which the ‘tradition’ is trying to satisfy. The man who seeks God today begins to navigate. The Internet, thanks to the fact that it can contain everything, can be easily compared to a large supermarket. The gospel, among many others, appears as only one novelty. The challenge we face now is serious because it marks the distinction between faith as a “commodity” to be seductively sold and faith as an act of intelligence by a person who freely gives his consent, led by God. Therefore, it is necessary today to realize that there are facts that are always and, in any case, able to escape the logic of the ‘search engine’ and that the ‘Googlization’ of faith is impossible. In this context, it is necessary to consider a possible real radical change in the perception of religion. Sacred things once attracted human attention as a source of fundamental importance. As a compass needle, he knew he was radically attracted to a precise, unique, and natural direction: north. If the compass does not point north, it's because it does not work, and certainly not because there is no north. Later, especially in World War II, man began using radar, which is used to detect and locate fixed or moving objects. Radars search for their targets and are open to even the mildest signals, not an indication of the exact direction. And so, man began to look for the meaning of life and God capable of some sign, thanks to which he will hear his voice. The expression of this logic is the question: “*God, where are you?*” This is the wait for Godot and other works of twentieth-century literature. Man is intended as a ‘listener of the word’ – a radar – who is looking for the message he needs in the depths of his soul.

Today, however, the most present is the image of a person who feels lost if their mobile phone does not have the right range or if their technological device (computer, tablet or smartphone) does not have access to some form of wireless network connection. If the radar used to look for a signal, today we are looking for an access channel through which data can pass. Today, a person is accustomed to more than just looking for a signal, but rather trying to always be able to receive it without necessarily looking for it. In short – when data is available (such as email), I receive it automatically because I leave the receive channel open. Instead, I have the option to go look for him when I feel like making a connection. The man of the compass and then of the radar is now transformed into a decoder, decoding the questions on the basis of the many answers that come to him without bothering to look for them. We live bombarded with news, we suffer from excessive information, so-called information overload. Today’s problem is not to find the message of meaning, but to decode it, to recognize it on the basis of the many answers we receive. And it can be ‘hidden’ anywhere. In a world that offers answers to questions that have not yet been formulated, the religious question is changing to a comparison of credible and subjectively meaningful answers. Today, the Internet is increasingly a place for social networks and communities. Is it possible to imagine church life basically on the net? The ‘network Church’ itself is a community without any territorial reference and specific reference to real life. This, of course, has an impact on the importance of church ‘affiliation’. There is a risk that it will be seen as the fruit of a ‘consensus’ and thus a ‘product’ of communication. The steps of Christian initiation thus become a kind of ‘access procedure’ (logging in) to information, perhaps also on the basis of a ‘contract’, which also

allows for quick disconnection (logging out). Rooting in the community would lead to a kind of ‘installation’ (setup) of the program (software) into the machine (hardware), which you can easily ‘uninstall’ (uninstall).

The Internet, on the other hand, is destined not to be a parallel and different world to the world of everyday reality, the world of direct contacts: two dimensions, online and offline, are a challenge to harmonize and integrate into life full and sincere relationships. The Church itself is increasingly understood (and is understandable) in terms of networks. The Internet therefore asks questions about the mentality and model of how the Church can be understood in her being a ‘community’. In the past, in addition to ‘biblical’ parables, other kinds of images have been used to ‘denote’ the Church; for example, maritime and navigation metaphors. Some of these images may in fact be ecclesiological ‘models’. The question, then, is whether there is no need today to seriously consider the ‘network’ model of the Church and what follows from it at the level of ecclesiology. The Church as “*the kingdom of God in terms of the relationship of people with God, with each other and with all creation*”.⁷ The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the holiness of the Church in her being “*an instrument of reconciliation and communion of all mankind with God in the unity of the whole human race*”.⁸ So, according to our model – an organic, interconnected, decentralized, flexible and constantly evolving church.

This vision of the church is based on the idea of an interconnected church that re-evaluates and reconnects the structures of local churches. The primary purpose of the Church would thus be to create and develop an interconnecting environment where people can easily gather in the name of Christ. The church would thus be a support structure where people could ‘gather’. The Church is not a reference point, it is not a beacon that radiates light in itself, but a support structure for the growth of God’s kingdom. It is the idea of a Christian community that acquires the characteristics of a virtual community. Such horizontality certainly helps to understand the mission of the Church as an instrument of evangelization. From the Catholic point of view, however, it must remain clear that the Church cannot be understood as a kind of great network of immanent and horizontal relations. The desire to be part of the body of Christ, which is the Church, cannot be reduced to a sociological model of aggregation. The Church is “*the people whom God calls and gathers from all over the earth to build an assembly of those who, by faith and baptism, become children of God, parts of the Body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit*”.⁹ Belonging to the Church is given by this external foundation, because it is Christ who, through the Spirit, intimately unites his believers with himself; it is he who unites her to himself in the eternal covenant and makes her holy. The network, purely ‘horizontal’, has no roots or branches, and therefore represents a model of structure closed in on itself. If online relationships depend on the presence and effective functioning of communication tools, the ecclesial community is instead a radical ‘gift’ of the Spirit. The communication activity of the Church has its basis and origin in this gift. A Christian immersed in social networks is called to a very demanding authentic life: it directly affects the value of his ability to communicate. Information technologies, which help to network, enable human friendships and knowledge sharing, leading people to ‘witness’ what they are based on. Preaching the gospel without the authenticity of a shared personal daily life

⁷ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. (No. 774 – 780). [online]. [2021-07-28]. Available at: <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM>.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH LUMEN GENTIUM (No. 1). [online]. [2021-07-28]. Available at: <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_cs.html>.

would, more than ever, remain a *flatus vocis*, a message expressed in code understandable to the mind but not to the heart. Therefore, faith is not only ‘transmitted’, but above all it can be aroused in a personal encounter, in authentic relationships. The Church in the network, therefore, is called not only to ‘broadcast’ content, but above all to ‘witness’ in the context of broad relationships formed by believers of every religion, unbelievers, and people of all cultures.

7 Liturgy Online

In the early 1970s, the aforementioned great mass media scientist Marshall McLuhan and his son Eric published an essay on the fate of religion in the West under the influence of electronic media. The seventh chapter of the book *Medium and Light* has the theme *Liturgy and the Media*.¹⁰ Today’s demand seems to have become more important due to the proliferation of digital and network technologies: Is the Internet and digital technologies changing the way we live and understand the liturgy? The question is complex and needs to be well formulated and well understood in order to avoid misunderstandings or too easy conclusions. The problem begins at a time when the Eucharistic celebrations were broadcast only on television or radio, while today the possible participation in an ‘interactive’ way through networks is expanding. The challenges facing the Christian today lead them to reflect on their faith and to strive to live it fully and consciously.

After all, the questions that culture and digital life pose to the liturgy are already present, at least in outline, in the changes that took place when the microphone was first placed on the altar. The non-circuit ‘spherical cloud’ that McLuhan was talking about has now spread, first through radio and then digital and network technologies, from the church's perimeter to the rest of the world. Today, if a priest speaks into a microphone, his voice and image can hit anyone in audio/video streaming anywhere in the world where an Internet connection is available. But let us look at simulated virtual worlds, such as Second Life.¹¹ In general, with the growth of virtual spaces, many began to feel the need to create places of worship or even churches, cathedrals, monasteries, and monasteries for rest and meditation. The list of churches in Second Life is long: we find here a simulation of the Catholic Notre-Dame in Paris or the cathedral in Salzburg, but also the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. There is also an Anglican cathedral, where regular services are held, but also other similar initiatives, such as the church of the Fools.¹² You enter this world through your own virtual representation, your virtual ego, which is defined as an avatar in jargon. The Catholic Church has always insisted that it is impossible and anthropologically incorrect to consider virtual reality able to replace the real, tangible, and concrete experience of the visible and historical Christian community, and thus of the sacraments and liturgical celebrations. ‘Virtual reality’ here means a multimedia and interactive experience carried out through means of communication connected to the Internet.¹³ The 2002 documentary *Church and the Internet* of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication clearly states: “*Virtual reality cannot replace the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacramental reality of other*

¹⁰ MCLUHAN, M.: *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*. Eugene : Wipf and Stock, 2010, p. 182-184.

¹¹ For more information, see: SPADARO, A.: Second Life: Il desiderio di un'altra vita. In *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 15-16, p. 266-278.

¹² For more information, see: JENKINS, S.: Rituals and Pixels. Experiments in Online Church. In *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, 2008, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 95-115.

¹³ HEIM, M.: *Virtual Realism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 3.

sacraments and participatory worship in the human flesh and bone community. There are no sacraments on the Internet. Even the religious experiences that are possible for you by the grace of God are insufficient if they are separated from the interaction of the real world with other believers."¹⁴

The answer is clear and protects us from any shift that abstracts the sacramental dimension from the embodied dimension of visible and tangible signs. The problem of the liturgy on the Internet may not be far from the problem that Walter Benjamin introduced in 1936 regarding a work of art in the era of its technical reproducibility.¹⁵ In his essay on the subject, a German scientist remarked that *"even in the case of highly perfect reproduction, one element is missing: a hic et nunc work of art – its unique existence is unrepeatable in the place where it is located"*.¹⁶ In fact, *"the hic et nunc of the original represents the concept of its authenticity"*.¹⁷ This 'here and now' work of art basically refers to the ritual context of worship associated with the temple, which was later replaced by the museum. The magic of technology, which disturbs the distance from *hic et nunc*, unleashes a dynamic in the liturgical act that is in some respects similar to the dynamics of a technical reproduction of a work of art, creating very faithful reproductions in which everything but the work itself is. In reality, however, the liturgical event is never 'technically reproducible', because it involves *hic et nunc*, in which the action of the Holy Spirit is unreproducible celebrated, thus presenting and updating the mystery of Christ. The Secretariat for the Liturgy of the US Bishops confirms that the celebration of the sacraments requires a 'physical' and 'geographical' presence, *"the presence of the whole person in contact with the reality (not just the image or idea) of Christ's saving presence"*.¹⁸ Electronic projections seem to *"lack the ability to communicate at the level of speech, action, and physical perception that are natural to those who are physically present"*,¹⁹ and thus generate a 'limited presence'. In short: a liturgical event is not applicable in a digitized and virtualized way, regardless of its objectivity; each of its 'scans' (in the manner of a scanner that interprets an image in the form of pixels) is ineffective. In fact, the liturgy always 'works' with the body and organizes the spheres of emotion, sensitivity and action.

This is the insurmountable difference between reality and information.²⁰ The reality of a liturgical event can never be reduced to the information we have about it. On the other hand, it is necessary to deal with the fact that many emotional relationships, even the most common ones, are now mediated by machines. Our biological senses no longer seem to be sufficient to expand into a possible state of relationship that transcends 'here and now'. Their spread through machines tends to become 'normal', so for example, when a mobile phone has no signal, one has the impression that an important form of relationship is no longer possible and

¹⁴ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS: *THE CHURCH AND INTERNET*. (No. 9.). [online]. [2021-07-28]. Available at: <https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html>.

¹⁵ For more information, see: BENJAMIN, W.: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Cambridge : The Belknap Press, 2008.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 22.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 22.

¹⁸ UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS: *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers (No. 1.)*. [online]. [2021-07-28]. Available at: <<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-faqs>>.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ For more information, see: BORGMANN, A.: *Holding on to Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium*. 1st Edition. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2000.

has a sense of isolation. It therefore remains true that the information allows for some form of participation in the event. It is necessary to deepen this participation in the liturgical sphere, which is certainly much more interactive and engaging than simply watching television. A series of reflections on the understanding of the liturgy in the age of digital technology was published by the philosopher Albert Borgmann, who shows the differences between “*technological devices*” such as radios, televisions, computers, mobile phones and “*central things*” such as fireplaces, communal meals and altars, places of liturgy.²¹ Borgmann combines these two cultures of extraordinary events with two very different realms. The first is related to comfort and control, where the links between space and time or traditions are not relevant and things in themselves have no meaning beyond their use. In this sense, air conditioning that heats the environment is an advantage that switches on and off as needed (or switches on automatically) compared to a fireplace, which instead evokes not only the preparation process but also a wide symbolic and emotional spectrum. The characteristic of central things, as at home, is to create a world that is semantically cohesive, requiring intense involvement of body and mind, promoting a form of common consciousness. In the net liturgy, the emphasis is on abstract *operatio* more than on *opus*. The liturgy and its sacramental dimension, with its highly symbolic sensitive elements, offers a special form of ‘graphic interface’ of mystery. As St. Augustine teaches, in fact, it is invisible *res* and visible signals that are interconnected in an inseparable bond. So, it is an analog interface, not a digital one. In the digital world of *res*, ‘reality’ when it appears on the monitor, ‘floats’. In fact, I see the same thing on different screens, for example, when several TVs are tuned to a channel that broadcasts Sunday Mass at the same time. However, in the case of a network, an event is potentially always available for any access: its center is everywhere and its boundaries are nowhere. Reality is no longer anchored to the local display or to a specific display area. It is precisely this form of reality, which we call ‘virtual’, that is able to generate many concrete manifestations at different times and places, but without itself being associated with space or a specific time.²² Theological grace thus remains at risk of becoming a good but ‘consumable’, that is, ‘comfort’, while liturgical celebration is a reality of grace and not ‘satisfaction’.²³ And for grace to remain in its own logic, it is necessary that the ‘breaking of bread’ be an event in which one participates physically.²⁴ Another example – a liturgical text. With the extension of digital reading to portable tools such as the Kindle, ‘text’ is definitely separated from its firm anchorage to the material reality of ‘book pages’. The ‘respect’ for the written text has shifted completely to the report today, while the ‘page of the book’ is becoming substitutable. However, the liturgy tends to think of the sacred ‘page of the book’ as an icon that remains an integral part of the ritual activity of the Christian community. It is not possible to imagine that an iPad or laptop is carried in a procession. It is inconceivable that in the liturgy the monitor is solemnly smoked and kissed. The book, on the other hand, is a sacred object that is carried and worshiped with great solemnity during the liturgy. The ‘event’ that occurs on the network always tends to be a ‘show’ that is always ‘available’ and replicable. If an event appeared on the network, it was precisely because it escaped the world of our primary experience. And this can create a kind of short between the ‘virtual’ and the ‘spiritual’ in the idea that the ‘spiritual’ is different from the ‘physical’.

²¹ BORGSMANN, A.: *Power Failure*. 1st Edition. Grand Rapids : Baker Publishing Group, 2003, p. 117-128.

²² LÉVY, P.: *Cyberculture*. 1st Edition. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 51.

²³ BORGSMANN, A.: *Power Failure*. 1st Edition. Grand Rapids : Baker Publishing Group, 2003, p. 127.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

Conclusion

Digital technologies redefine the sense of “presence” and the common presence as well as the sense of the present. The question remains how “virtuality” can affect the understanding of the sacrament itself and the way it is lived. Of course, the network experience cannot be limited to extremes and dangers. In addition, it is increasingly a special form of experience, not a substitute. Digital and telematics technologies have created a new space of experience, as have all the major technologies of the past that the Christian cult has been confronted with. But we can observe that a person on the net expresses a desire to pray and even have a liturgical life. That is why the right attitude is not only to ‘defend’ the richness of the liturgy, as we are used to understanding, but also to understand how the desire for God and the search for new forms of expression appear in this new plane of existence. So how does a virtual experience change a person who is the subject of a ‘contemporary’ liturgy? Marshall McLuhan, as he spoke of media culture in the early 1970s, understood this well: “*The changes brought about by the cultural transformations we are undergoing also affect the liturgy.*”²⁵

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²⁵ MCLUHAN, M.: *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*. Eugene : Wipf and Stock, 2010, p. 159.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE CRIMINAL LAW CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA BEHAVIOR DURING THE CORONA CRISIS

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Abstract:

In the presented article, the author focuses on the possible criminal law effects of media behaviour with an emphasis on the ongoing corona crisis. He conceives his contribution in two basic lines, first of all he considers the possibility of criminal punishment of the media (or individuals appearing in the media) primarily in connection with issues related to COVID-19. He analyses, in particular, whether it is possible to punish such situations through the Criminal Code, respectively under what circumstances would this be permissible. The assessment of the situation in question is also carried out with regard to the basic principles of substantive criminal law, primarily with emphasis on the principle of legality (*nullum crimen sine lege*) and the principle of subsidiarity of criminal repression. The second basic line of the presented article is an insight into the mediation of information about criminal proceedings through the media (and the impacts associated with it), and not only at the time of the corona crisis.

Key words:

Corona Crisis. COVID-19. Criminal Offence of Disseminating of an Alarm Message. *Nullum Crimen Sine Lege*. Subsidiarity of Criminal Repression. Substantive and Procedural Criminal Law.

Introduction

The media¹ play a very important role in the current democratic system. With regard to their importance and impact, they affect the daily life of society, respectively affect the way of life of a given society with an emphasis on the behaviour of individuals and groups of people. At this point, it is necessary to realize that the reach of media is practically general, and the area of law is no exception. It is true that the purpose, or the influence of media in the field of criminal law may not be only positive (in the sense of properly informing society), but also negative, although such conduct may not ultimately be intentional or explicitly stated, in our opinion. It is therefore an interesting area of knowledge and research if we focus on the relationship between the media and criminal law, although at first sight we are not aware of these connections. We believe that although this is undoubtedly a multi-level relationship, in the following text we will focus on two basic lines, while the choice is primarily influenced by the corona crisis. The basic line, which is dedicated space in the present article, is the substantive line of the issue, namely the consideration of whether it is possible to talk about potential criminal liability of the media or individuals appearing in the media, with emphasis on informing the public about corona crisis (e.g., misleading information to the public). This covers, in particular, the assessment of whether criminal law allows for the prosecution of the conduct in question under certain circumstances, respectively whether Act No. 300/2005 Coll. The Criminal Code, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Criminal Code” or the CC), regulates the subject matter of criminal offenses, the object of which would be to protect individuals from such conduct. Such consideration requires not only a horizontal analysis of the provisions of the Criminal Code, but primarily such an analysis of the basic principles on

¹ For more information, see: *Slovníkový portál Jazykovedného ústavu L. Štúra SAV*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://slovník.juls.savba.sk/?w=média&s=exact&c=rc8c&cs=&d=kssj4&d=psp&d=sss&d=orter&d=scs&d=sss&d=peciar&d=ssn&d=hssj&d=bermolak&d=noundb&d=orient&d=locutio&d=obce&d=priezviska&d=un&d=pskcs&d=psken#%3E.%20Undoubtedly,%20the%20medium%20is%20also%20the%20Internet,%20in%20the%20age%20of%20informatization%20and%20electronization%20it%20is%20probably%20the%20most%20informative%20medium>>.

which substantive criminal law is based. Such principles are primarily the principle of legality (*nullum crimen sine lege*) and the principle of subsidiarity of criminal repression.

On the other hand, a follow-up line of the presented article to the basic line is the reflections on the role of the media in connection with providing information on criminal proceedings. It is a relatively well-known matter, not only at time of the corona crisis, that media play an important role in the criminal process, especially with regard to the co-implementation of the principle of publicity, respectively the right to information. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the perception of this as an absolute goal may result in an interference with the principle of the presumption of innocence. This conclusion has not only doctrinal basis, but it is also accepted in terms of decision-making activities of courts. In view of the above, it is necessary to realize that the media play an important role in the criminal process, but they should not interfere unduly in its course. However, is it stated by an explicitly accepted rule or only by a proclaimed norm?

1 Substantive Line of Reflection on the Criminal Law Impacts of Media Behaviour during the Corona Crisis

If we consider the criminal law effects of media behaviour (and not only in the time of the corona crisis), considerations in the field of substantive criminal law can be guided by both the general line and the special line. In the case of the general line, these are primarily considerations through the general starting points on which substantive criminal law is based, and such starting points are undoubtedly its basic principles. In the case of substantive criminal law, or alternately of the Criminal Code, these are not part of the legal text, have a doctrinal essence, or have their basis in established decision-making. The basic principles can be seen as the guiding ideas on which a particular branch of law is exposed,² and this is also the case with substantive criminal law. With regard to the presented article, we will focus on the principle of legality (through the rule of *nullum crimen sine lege*) and on the principle of subsidiarity of criminal repression.

In the case of the principle of *nullum crimen sine lege*, we will focus on its purpose, or essence. In practice, this is a fundamental principle of substantive criminal law, namely that it is not possible to speak of a criminal offense without law in a free translation, meaning that if any conduct (as well as the omission of the procedure to which the person was liable) is not provided for in the law (in the case of the Slovak Republic in the Criminal Code) as a criminal offense, such conduct cannot be punished by criminal law. In terms of practicality, this principle is derived at national level also from Art. 49 of the Constitutional Act No. 460/1992 Coll. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Constitution of the Slovak Republic”), which states that “*only the law shall lay down which conduct constitutes a criminal act, and what punishment, or other forms of deprivation of rights, or property, may be imposed for its commitment*”.³ It is thus a prism that is respected in the terms of international pacts and treaties. Therefore, if we intend to describe the criminal law consequences of media behaviour, this principle will be the basic starting point for us. In addition, however, it is necessary to pay attention to the second basic principle of substantive

² STRÉMY, T., JANKO, S.: Teoreticko-metodologické východiská zásad trestného práva hmotného. In STRÉMY, T., TURAY, L. (eds.): *Zásady trestného práva hmotného – Teoretické aspekty: Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie*. Prague : Leges, 2020, p. 21.

³ Art. 49, *Constitutional Act No. 460/1992 Coll. – The Constitution of the Slovak Republic from 1st October 1992*. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <<https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf>>.

criminal law, which practically determines the contribution in question, and that is the already mentioned principle of subsidiarity of criminal repression (*ultima ratio*). Indeed, in a democratic society in particular, since criminal law is a mechanism capable of the most serious interference with the legal position of individuals, it should be used in subsidiary means, that means, provided that the instruments of other branches of law are not inherently sufficient to protect rights and legitimate interests. It is then up to the legislator to define the protection of whose interests requires criminal protection, respectively which interests can also be protected through other branches of law (in connection with criminal law, it is possible to mention primarily the area of administrative law or financial law). The above considerations on selected basic principles of substantive criminal law are not an end in themselves. In essence the principles described above are interconnected, mutually conditioned in a certain way, and thus determine the possibilities of criminal law to intervene against interventions that may occur by the media, more precisely through the media (if these are used precisely as a means of expressing conduct that may give rise to criminal liability). At a given place, even before we proceed to the analysis of the applicability of the Criminal Code in relation to such interventions, there is a possibility to describe a partial question (partial conclusion), and whether the Criminal Code in a certain way takes into account differences in the manner of committing a criminal offense (regardless of the actual content of the proceedings), if it is committed through selected media. The answer, in connection with the above, is Section 122 Par. 2 of the Criminal Code, i.e., one of the interpretative provisions of the Criminal Code, the said provision alternatively defines when a criminal offense is committed publicly.⁴ In general, it represents the method of committing a crime (as a requirement of the objective aspect of the subject matter of the crime), while in relation to the criminal liability of the person, acts in the case as a qualification mark (or a special qualification circumstance).⁵

In relation to a specific crime, there may be several alternatives (taking into account the impact mentioned in relation to the criminal liability of the person), which state that the crime is committed publicly. In the first place, it is the given of the sign “publicly” as a mark of the basic subject matter of the crime. The basic subject matter of a criminal offense expresses a basic description of the conduct, which is a criminal offense, such an example, when the sign “publicly” is a part of the basic subject matter of crime, is, for example, the crime of Disorderly Conduct (Section 364 of the Criminal Code). In the present case, it is perceived even not only as a way of committing a criminal offense, but possibly also as a place of committing a criminal offense, since the criminal offense contains the phrase “(...) *in public or in a place accessible to public (...)*”.⁶ In the given case, the said mark is the condition of criminal liability. The second alternative is the case where the commission of a criminal offense “publicly” increases the seriousness of the individual's conduct, as the already mentioned qualification mark. This means that if a person fulfils the characteristics of one of the crimes and such a crime is committed in public (and it is not the basic subject matter of the crime, as in the case of the first alternative), the sign “publicly” is perceived as a qualification mark, and thus increases the seriousness of such conduct, while this has the

⁴ Remark by the author: That provision states: “*The criminal offence is considered as having been committed in public if it is committed a) through the content of a printed matter or a disseminated written material, through a film, through the radio, television, with the use of a computer network, or using the means of similar effect, or (...)*.” See more: Section 122 Par. 2 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

⁵ Remark by the author: See the interpretation of Section 122 Par. 2 CC, e.g., in BURDA, E. et al.: *Trestný zákon. Všeobecná časť. Komentár I. diel*. Prague : C. H. Beck, 2010, p. 692.

⁶ Section 364 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

effect of increasing the penalty of imprisonment (an example may be the crime of Violence against a Group of Citizens within the meaning of Section 359 of the Criminal Code). The last alternative is that the fact that the crime was committed “in public” will be perceived as a generally aggravating circumstance within the meaning of Section 37 Letter f) CC. Such a generally aggravating circumstance does not affect the seriousness of the conduct and thus the legal individualisation of the custodial sentence, but the ratio of generally aggravating and mitigating circumstances affects the sanctioning of the perpetrator within the chosen penalty rate (i.e., within the variance of the upper and lower limits of the sentence). imprisonment). However, it should be noted that in connection with a specific criminal offense (i.e., in relation to a specific criminally relevant conduct) only one of the described alternatives is possible, as the opposite approach (i.e., multiple attribution of the character “publicly”) violates the substantive principle *ne bis in idem* (not twice in the same case). In this, we have tried to demonstrate that the legislator is undoubtedly aware of the power of the media, in relation to the commission of a crime, as this is undoubtedly more serious than when the crime is committed not in public. We will work with this starting point in the next part of the article.

From the point of view of *in concreto* considerations, the question arises as to whether it is mentioned as the only criminal impact of media behaviour (or behaviour through the media) or whether the actual appearance of the media (and in the media) can be the basis for deducting criminal liability. In specific terms, we will focus primarily on the process of informing the population. It is undeniable that media activity should be linked to a certain level of ethical conduct, in particular to avoid providing false or unverified information. We believe that the database, which is provided to the population, can be the subject of criminal liability, or may be an element in relation to the motive for committing a crime. In the following text, we will therefore focus primarily on the possible criminal law effects of media behaviour. With regard to the subject of the article, the basic line of our consideration will be the dissemination of false information about coronavirus, as it is an extremely relevant topic that has been affecting our daily lives for more than a year. It is true that the dissemination of such information (as part of a set of dissemination of misinformation) may be of criminal relevance, in connection with the spread of COVID-19,⁷ such information could be, for example, guaranteed information on the first confirmation of the disease in the Slovak Republic (in March 2020), or information on the negative effects of vaccines. If we look at the Criminal Code, it does not regulate the punishment of the dissemination of misinformation in general, but only a part of the given set, as long as such dissemination of misinformation is also the dissemination of an alarm message (see the text below). Recently, there has been a growing awareness of the interest in more significant punishment of disinformation disseminators (primarily through the media), while the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic has announced⁸ that this topic represents a challenge for the future. We believe that these considerations will have to be resolved primarily through a test of the principles of substantive criminal law, i.e., whether such conduct, given its seriousness, should be sanctioned by criminal law, or sanctioning through the branch of administrative law (e.g., as a misdemeanour) will suffice. With regard to misinformation, it is necessary to emphasize

⁷ Remark by the author: At the time of the corona crisis, information was also spread on the Internet that people are financially rewarded in cases where the cause of death in their relatives is the death of COVID-19. Despite the relatively massive dissemination of the information through social networks, the author of the original article was not sanctioned in any way, as he stated that he had heard about it from acquaintances.

⁸ HODÁS, M.: *Budeme trestať širiteľov dezinformácií? Ministerka spravodlivosti chce najst' spôsob*. [online]. [2021-05-04]. Available at: <<https://zive.aktuality.sk/clanok/150968/budeme-trestat-siritelov-dezinformacii-ministerka-spravodlivosti-chce-najst-sposob/>>.

primarily the thesis that, in addition to punishing the spread of misinformation, it is necessary to focus on their proper refutation.⁹

First of all, it must be stated, based on the principle of *nullum crimen sine lege*, that a certain reflection of our considerations is precisely the criminal offense of Disseminating of an Alarm Message within the meaning of Sections 361¹⁰ and 362¹¹ of the Criminal Code. The mentioned criminal offense contains three basic subject matters of the criminal offense, while for the purposes of the subject of investigation defined by us, exactly two have special relevance (Section 361 Para. 1 of the Criminal Code and Section 362 of the Criminal Code). The criminal offense in question is classified as a criminal offense against other rights and freedoms (Title 9 of a special part of the Criminal Code) and its object is to protect peaceful civil cohabitation against reports which are both alarming and untrue.¹² The provision in question also protects against similar proceedings which could give rise to a risk of serious concern in relation to a section of the population of a place (e.g., sending a letter-post item containing an imitation of a substance at risk of causing an epidemic).¹³ Thus, although the primary scope of application of that provision is not to penalize conduct executed through the media, it is one of the lines which comes into consideration as a cumulative fulfilment of the characteristics of the offense in question.

We see the applicability of this provision in relation to informing the population primarily in the fact that the perpetrator of such a crime may be a natural person appearing in the media, for example, who disseminates an alarm message, as in the context of the media it is indisputable to speak of the impact in relation to a part of the population of a place (whether we are talking about a regional or national scale). Such a natural person can be anyone (a general entity meeting the requirements of age and sanity – that is, every criminally liable person) who disseminates a false alarm message (with emphasis on the perpetrator's knowledge that such a message is false), in the case of people appearing in the media (or

⁹ Remark by the author: An important step in the above in Slovak Republic is the document *Coordinated Mechanism of the Slovak Republic's Resilience to Information Operations* (in Slovak *Koordinovaný mechanizmus odolnosti Slovenskej republiky voči informačným operáciám*).

¹⁰ Remark by the author: The provision states: “Disseminating of an Alarm Message, Section 361.

(1) Any person who deliberately creates the danger of serious concerns among the population of a certain location or at least a part thereof by disseminating a false alarming news or commits other similar act capable of giving rise to such danger, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of up to two years.

(2) Any person who reports a false alarming news, or other similar act referred to in paragraph 1, to a legal entity or the Police Force or other State authority or to the mass media, although he knows that such news is false and may cause serious concerns among the population of a certain location or at least a part thereof, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of one to five years.

(3) The offender shall be liable of a term of imprisonment of three to eight years if he commits the offence referred to in paragraph 2, a) and he was already convicted for such offence, or b) and seriously impairs economic operation or economic activities of a legal entity or the activity of a State authority or other particularly serious consequence through its commission.” See: Section 361 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

¹¹ Remark by the author: The provision states: “Disseminating of an Alarm Message, Section 362.

Any person who, under a crisis situation in the State, even though by negligence, creates the danger of serious concerns, mood of despondency or defeatism among at least a part of the population of a certain location through spreading a false alarming news, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of between six months and three years.” See: Section 362 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

¹² For more information, see: ČENTĚŠ, J. et al.: *Trestný zákon. Veľký komentár*. 4th Edition. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2018, p. 773; MENCEROVÁ, I. et al.: *Trestné právo hmotné. Osobitná časť*. Šamorín : Heuréka, 2014, p. 290-291.

¹³ ČENTĚŠ, J. et al.: *Trestný zákon. Veľký komentár*. 4th Edition. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2018, p. 773.

communicating through the media) this cannot be ruled out. In the given concept, it is necessary to perceive as media not only traditional print and electronic media, but also the Internet (particularly social networks). With regard to the criminal liability of legal persons, which is applied in the conditions of the Slovak Republic on the basis of Act No. 91/2016 Coll. on Criminal Liability of Legal Entities and on Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended, it is true that the perpetrator of these crimes cannot be a legal entity (only for comparison, in the conditions of the Czech Republic, a legal person may also be the perpetrator of a similar criminal offense [Dissemination of an Alarm Message] according to Section 357 of Act no. 40/2010 Sb. Criminal Code as amended with reference to Act No. 418/2011 Coll. on Criminal Liability of Legal Persons and Proceedings against Them, as amended).

With regard to the applicability of the crime in question, in the following text we will focus on individual features of the subject matter of the crime of Dissemination of an Alarm Message, primarily with regard to concluding whether the commission of the crime also comes into question in connection with the dissemination of alarm message in the media. In connection with Section 361 par. 1 of the Criminal Code, it is an intentional criminal offense, the basis of the objective aspect (which defines the action, the consequence and the causal link between the action and the consequence) is the connection “(...) *creates the danger of serious concerns (...)*”.¹⁴ In the first place, the offense in question is a threatening offense and, in order to be completed, the very risk of serious concern is sufficient, which may not actually happen.¹⁵ However, in order to assess the seriousness of the conduct, it is then necessary to take into account not only the damage which was imminent, but which may have occurred in connection with that conduct. The second basic (cumulative) component of the consequence of the perpetrator's actions is that the risk of serious concern is directed “(...) *among the population of a certain location or at least a part (...)*”.¹⁶ It is necessary to assume that the object of the attack in a given case cannot be an individual, but a group of inhabitants, from the quantitative point of view, it must be at least a part of the population (exceeding a group of persons, it can be a municipality, for example). To put it bluntly, the spread of a false alarm must result in the population concerned being concerned about certain, albeit not directly identified, events that affect their lives. In practice, it must be a larger number of people, it is possible to include here anyone who takes the concerns seriously, or who feels threatened, e.g., with regard to social status, age, ethnic group, etc. Here, the cause of concern for at least part of the population is not conditioned by the type of mass media used in that case, the purpose is at least that a part of the population knows about such a report and can cause serious danger.

From the point of view of the conduct, the subject matter of the criminal offense in question is also conceived of several features. It is true that the perpetrator “(...) *disseminating a false alarming news or commits other similar act capable of giving rise to such danger (...)*”,¹⁷ for the purposes of the article, we will focus on spreading the alarm message, which is untrue. The alternative of a similar act capable of giving rise to the danger¹⁸ described above (i.e., the

¹⁴ Section 361 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

¹⁵ JELÍNEK, J. et al.: *Trestní právo hmotné. Obecná část. Zvláštní část.* 7th Edition. Prague : Leges, 2019, p. 888.

¹⁶ Section 361 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, from 20th May 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3763/file/Slovakia_CC_2005_en.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Remark by the author: In the present case, it may also be a message which, however, does not have the character of an alarm message, but is capable of giving rise to the danger in question. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that such conduct could also take place through the media.

danger of serious concern) covers order of different situations (e.g., sending a suspicious consignment to State's authorities). It is true that the presented message must on the one hand meet the character of an alarm message, on the other hand it must be false, and still on the other hand the condition that it is disseminated must be met (the given conditions must be fulfilled cumulatively). The perpetrator's conduct must be assessed in relation to its nature and character, so that the dissemination of an alarming report, which is untrue, is distinguished from the situation of disseminating a true report, or a subjective assessment of the situation.¹⁹

An alarm message is a message which, in view of its content, is capable of giving rise to a danger of serious concern in relation to a certain part of the population (and therefore cannot be a random message but a message of a certain intensity), it may apply to both past, present and future circumstances.²⁰ Usually, it will be a notification of circumstances (albeit uncertain and future) that may raise the population's concerns with regard to the interference with the peaceful life of persons (life, health, property concerns).²¹ The conclusion as to whether or not a message is alarming in relation to every single message in general depends on many attributes, such as specific conditions, location, time, but also the method of dissemination.²² Such an attribute can then undoubtedly be whether such an alarm message is spread in a crisis situation, for example in the state of necessity (as was the case in the Slovak Republic). The second attribute is that the spread alarm message must be false. It is true that the perpetrator must be aware of the untruthfulness of such a report, in terms of fault he must at least be aware of its untruthfulness (as it is an intentional crime), as well as be aware of the consequences that may occur by its utterance and dissemination. By the untruthfulness of the message, we mean that it is in conflict with reality or misinterprets (or significantly distorts) reality. It must be true that the report is objectively untrue.²³ It is necessary to distinguish from the above situations where a true report (although alarming in nature) is capable of creating a danger of serious concern, in this case it is not possible to speak of a criminal offense (or the fulfilment of the subject matter of a criminal offense). As far as true message is concerned, it is useful, and although the risk of concern may be even greater, the object of the crime (a legitimate interest) does not cover protection against the dissemination of truth. The last cumulative feature of the conduct is the dissemination of such a false alarm message, whereby by enlargement we mean its transport to a larger number of persons, it is in this context that the media play a significant role, if we are talking about dissemination through the mass media²⁴ (however, dissemination at demonstrations or other assemblies is also possible).²⁵

The criminal offense of Spreading of an Alarm Message according to Section 361 Par. 2 of the Criminal Code is linked to situations where the offender reports an alarm message or other similar action capable of triggering measures leading to the danger of serious concern to the relevant entity (legal entity, police force or mass media). As in the given case the media can be the maximum addressee of such a report, the provision in question is of no further

¹⁹ ŠÁMAL, P. et al.: *Trestní zákoník. Komentář. 2. díl.* 2nd Edition. Prague : C. H. Beck, 2012, p. 3315.

²⁰ Remark by the author: This merely emphasizes that the features of the offense in question must be interpreted in conjunction with each other. See: ČENTÉŠ, J. et al.: *Trestný zákon velký komentář.* 4th Edition. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2018, p. 773.

²¹ MENCEROVÁ, I. et al.: *Trestné právo hmotné. Osobitná časť.* Šamorín : Heuréka, 2014, p. 290-291.

²² JELÍNEK, J. et al.: *Trestní právo hmotné. Obecná část. Zvláštní část.* 7th Edition. Prague : Leges, 2019, p. 887-888.

²³ Ibidem, p. 887.

²⁴ Remark by the author: The mass media are traditionally the press, television and radio, or even the Internet, as long as it is used as a mass medium (public dissemination of information).

²⁵ ŠÁMAL, P. et al.: *Trestní zákoník. Komentář. 2. díl.* 2nd Edition. Prague : C. H. Beck, 2012, p. 3315.

significance from the point of view of the submitted article. As mentioned above, the criminal offense of Spreading of an Alarm Message is also regulated in Section 362 of the Criminal Code, and this becomes important in times of crisis situation.²⁶ The crisis situation expresses the time of committing the crime, from the point of view of the theory of substantive criminal law it is an optional feature of the objective aspect of the subject matter of the crime. From the point of view of culpability, it is possible to commit the crime both intentionally and negligently, the objective element is to cause danger of serious concerns (as in the case of Section 361 of the Criminal Code), mood of despondency or defeatism at least among part of the population by spreading alarming messages. In this case, we will focus primarily on the differences in relation to Section 361 Para. 1 CC. The difference is the cause of the danger of mood of despondency or defeatism, from the point of view of theory, these relate rather to the defence and defiance of the population.²⁷ Although this is also an alarm message, the legislator does not require it to be false, the essence is based on the fact that such a report is capable of causing the danger of concerns in question (again, it is possible to speak of a threatening crime).

In relation to Section 362 of the Criminal Code, it applies that precisely with regard to committing during a crisis situation, its seriousness is in comparison with Section 361 Par. 1 TZ higher, based on the basic analysis, it can be stated that even in this case it would be possible to talk about its commission through the media. In view of all the above, we believe that in connection with defined crimes, media can also play an important role, or persons presenting and disseminating information through the media. As mentioned above, the offenses in question are not only conceived in relation to the prosecution of the dissemination of alarming messages through the media, but the field clearly falls into place, this also includes punishing the spread of misinformation, the so-called hoaxes, provided that the cumulative elements of the substance of the offense of Dissemination of an Alarm Message are fulfilled. Regarding the general starting points stated in the substantive line of the article, it is not possible to attribute the mart "in public" in the given case, as this is undoubtedly implicitly already part of the basic subject matter of the crime (if we speak of spreading at least in relation to part of the population).

2 Procedural Line of Reflection on the Criminal Law Impacts of Media Behaviour during the Corona Crisis

In the procedural part of the presented article, we will focus on the relationship between the media and criminal law from two basic points of view. On the one hand, it is the influence of the media on the perception of some institutes of criminal procedural law (currently the relevant term is, for example, the cooperating accused), with regard to the creation of public opinion, on the other hand, it is the importance of the media in relation to informing about the course of criminal proceedings. At present, we are increasingly confronted with a situation where criminal law institutes are questioned, whether such doubts come from the political environment, from practitioners or from the media. It is necessary to add that a special space is devoted mainly to media-exposed topics, it is possible to mention either the institute of a cooperating accused or the so-called collusive custody. It is the impact of the media that can influence public opinion on such topics, for example, if only one line of opinion is presented.

²⁶ Remark by the author: With reference to Section 134 Par. 2 of the Criminal Code, for the purposes of the Criminal Code, "crisis situation" shall mean: state of necessity, state of emergency, state of war, or war.

²⁷ For more information, see: MENCEROVÁ, I. et al.: *Trestné právo hmotné. Osobitná časť*. Šamorín : Heuréka, 2014, p. 291.

It is true that the basic aspect of the media's approach to such topics should be the objectivity of the reports provided and not just the narrative on the one hand.

The example of the aforementioned institute of a cooperating accused can be taken. The mentioned institute is not a novelty in Act No. 301/2005 Coll. The Criminal Procedure Code, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Criminal Procedure Code” or the CPC), is also not a new institute that would be created only in connection with the recodification of criminal procedural law in 2005. Although perceptions are significantly different (especially in view of the widespread arrests and mood in society), the institute is a traditional instrument of democratic systems and was incorporated into our legal system after adaptation from the Anglo-American and continental legal systems. It is also necessary to add that the so-called penitents do not have general impunity for the cooperating accused and various legislative guarantees apply in relation to the applicability of the institute. First of all, it should be added that the statement of the penitent has no general power and the accusation cannot be made on the basis of only one statement without finding out the facts of the case without reasonable doubt (Criminal procedure pursuant to Section 206 Par. 1 provides that an accusation may be made only if, on the basis of the criminal report or the facts established after the commencement of the criminal prosecution, it is a sufficiently substantiated conclusion that the criminal offense was committed by a certain person). On the contrary, that institute is justified in relation to criminal offenses which the legislature considers to be very serious (crimes of corruption, criminal offenses committed by a criminal or organized group, criminal offense of terrorism) and it is therefore possible for a particular person to be perceived as cooperating accused. The Criminal Procedure Code provides that “(...) *the interests of society on the clarification of such criminal offence outweigh the interest in the criminal prosecution of the accused for such criminal offence or another criminal offence (...)*”.²⁸ The procedural guarantee is, for example, that the cooperating accused cannot be the person of the organizer, instigator or hirer of the crime in which he participated. A certain guarantee is also the determination of the trial period for two to ten years. From the procedural point of view, in connection with the use of the institute of the cooperating accused, there is a conditional cessation of criminal prosecution (Section 218 CPC) or a cessation of criminal prosecution (Section 215 Para. 3 CPC). In the case of conditional cessation of criminal prosecution of a cooperating accused, it applies that if such a person does not prove himself during the probationary period, the criminal prosecution will continue.

In view of the above, no criminal law institute should be perceived solely through information provided in the media (unless it is objective, with knowledge of the substance of the matter), as these then significantly influence not only public opinion, but undoubtedly also persons appearing in criminal proceedings. It is unacceptable for a judge, for example, to be influenced not only by the statements of politicians, but also, for example, by the media. This is also related to the second line of criminal law implications in the field of procedural law. This is the position of the media in relation to informing about the course of criminal proceedings. It is true that in the democratic system the media play an important role in connection with informing about the course of criminal proceedings, we believe that the right to information (or the implementation of public criminal proceedings) is not an absolute right and the limit is the rights of the accused, or the defendant, primarily through the principle of the presumption of innocence. It is now customary for criminal proceedings, especially in socially important cases, to be tabloid and associated with a significant leak of information

²⁸ Section 215, EXCERPT Law No. 301/2005 Coll. Code of Criminal Procedure of the Slovak Republic, 2005. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8295/file/Slovakia_CPC_2005_excerpts_en.pdf>.

from investigative files (last year there was a situation where the transcript of the interrogation of the accused appeared on the Internet a few hours after the interrogation). It is the finding of this boundary between the right to information and the rights of the accused that should be a basic precondition for the work of the media. It is true that all persons have the right to a fair trial, which is guaranteed, among other things, Art. 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Information on criminal proceedings that cross the border in question may have an impact on the fairness of criminal proceedings (the so-called fair process).

The greatest impact of inappropriate media behaviour is perhaps on the presumption of innocence. This must be observed not only by the courts, law enforcement agencies, but also by the media themselves, which is indisputably based on the decision-making work of the European Court of Human Rights. Protecting the rights of journalists to disseminate information about ongoing criminal proceedings requires them to act in good faith, on a factual basis and to provide reliable and accurate information in accordance with journalistic ethics.²⁹ From the point of view of practicality, the impact can be the bias of courts and judges, when they cannot avoid the pressure of public opinion. It is the state that should act as the guarantor of these rights. But what if the interference with the presumption of innocence through media coverage has not been prevented? Based on the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (e.g., *Eckle v. Germany*), some compensation should be achieved by means of criminal law, such as judicial individualisation of a sentence or an extraordinary reduction of a sentence below the lower limit of imprisonment. This is also identifiable in the decision-making activity of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, with emphasis on the fact that the media are limited in connection with the provision of information on criminal proceedings and that the public debate must respect the principle of presumption of innocence.³⁰ It is true, that “(...) *in a democratic society, however, the conclusion of guilt must not be based on public opinion, but must be proved in a procedurally adequate manner in criminal proceedings. This is nothing more than an elementary respect for the person facing the suspicion and his rights. Informing the public about criminal proceedings, as well as the ensuing public debate, must not be conducted in the sense that the question of guilt is decided in advance (...)*”.³¹

Conclusion

In the presented article, we have tried to point out the criminal law effects of media behaviour with an emphasis on the ongoing corona crisis. It can be stated that although the activity of the media in the democratic system is irreplaceable, there are certain limits that need to be accepted in connection with their activity. First of all, it is necessary to be aware of the implications at the level of substantive criminal law, and that the dissemination of information (as well as disinformation) through the media can be a criminal offense. As we have stated, a certain platform for the above may be the criminal offense of Disseminating of an Alarm

²⁹ LINDTNER, D.: *Média a trestní řízení*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<http://www.pravnelisty.sk/monitoring-literatury/a823-media-a-trestni-rizeni>>.

³⁰ HUTÁR, J.: *Sloboda prejavu médií, mediálne odsúdenia a prezumpcia nevinny*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<http://www.pravnelisty.sk/rozhodnutia/a905-sloboda-prejavu-medii-medialne-odsudenie-a-prezumpcia-nevinny>>.

³¹ For more information, see: *Nález Ústavného súdu Českej republiky sp. zn. II. ÚS 577/13 from 23rd June 2015*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://nalus.usoud.cz/Search/ResultDetail.aspx?id=88906&pos=1&cnt=1&typ=result>>.

Message in the sense of Sections 361 and 362 of the Criminal Code. As we have analysed in the text of the article itself, this crime is not only related to the dissemination of information through the media, but this area may fall into place. We support the statements of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic that the punishment of dissemination of misinformation should be more significant, but it is necessary to perceive the essence of criminal law through its basic principles, primarily with regard to the principle of legality (*nullum crimen sine lege*) and subsidiarity. It is true that criminal law cannot be a means of redressing all acts violating objective law, but only the most serious ones. Secondly, we assume that the media are of great importance in relation to information about criminal proceedings, respectively in connection with information on individual institutes of criminal law. At the same time, however, it must be true that such information is objective, with knowledge of the matter. However, information on criminal proceedings also has its limits, as it is not an absolute right, it is necessary to take into account primarily the principle of the presumption of innocence. Only in this way, i.e., by the appropriate approach of the media to the given issue, will the presumption of innocence of the individual be perceived as a fundamental principle of criminal procedural law, and not only as a proclaimed instrument.

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USING FACEBOOK APPLICATIONS IN TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE

Dmytro Poberezhnyi

Abstract:

Use of applications integrated into Facebook, such as *Quiz your English*, *Quiz Planet*, *Word Search Challenge*, *Word Blitz*, *LinGo Play*, *Enguru*, *4English App*, etc. gives English teachers an opportunity to diversify traditional classroom activities as well as increase their effectiveness. In combination with the built-in components of Facebook, such as group chat, post and poll, they are most helpful in teaching Spoken English remotely. A number of applications engage students into games and team activities, such as quizzes and contests, promoting student-centred learning, which is quite a challenging task for a teacher working online. The *Facebook* platform can be used to promote both group interactivity and individual interactivity with the educational apps, as well as to encourage facilitated learning. The use of *Facebook* application is to be demonstrated for a class in spoken English for the Intermediate level (topic “Environment”).

Key words:

English. Environment. *Facebook* Application. Quiz. Teaching Online.

Introduction

At the present stage of development of education, wide-ranging informatization of language didactics is observed. Information technologies ensure qualitatively new learning outcomes which meet modern requirements for students’ education. In particular, they offer a possibility of using online resources for educational purposes. This presupposes modernization of forms and methods of teaching and learning, taking into account the trends of the information society, interests and needs of students. The aim of this article is to outline the possibilities of using applications of the social network *Facebook* in teaching and learning English in the remote format. The study is novel since the applications of the social network *Facebook* have not yet been studied from the standpoint of the methodology of teaching. The timeliness of the research is accounted for by the fact that interests and needs of students during the pandemic of COVID-19 require new forms and methods for effective distant learning.

1 *Facebook* as a Web 2.0 Educational Platform

The social network *Facebook* as a Web 2.0 platform has a vast didactic potential. Its main benefit is that it allows users to share resources and media files.¹ In particular, students studying English have the opportunity to share projects and learning tasks, opinions on the material under study on the group’s page. The ability to exchange messages in the form of a mini-chat on the page allows teachers to send students their assignments, lecture materials, links to relevant articles, etc. In their turn, students have the opportunity to submit their homework, term papers, etc. The function of a group conversation allows students to get a better grasp of the target language and its culture, as well as gain experience of cooperation,² to discuss research problems, to consult their research advisor. The video bank can be formed

¹ CHEUNG, C. M. K.: Online Social Networks: Why Do Students Use Facebook? In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2011, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 1339.

² JOE, T., GRAF, K.: In the Classroom. Using Facebook in the Language Classroom as Part of the Net Generation Curriculum. In *The Language Educator*, 2009, p. 44-47. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLEsamples/TLE_Nov11_Article.pdf>.

only with the help of the group application. The use of groups is effective for teachers: they can upload their lectures or other educational materials, making them available to respective groups. The function of video broadcasting,³ or video chat,⁴ is a new one, but it is rapidly gaining popularity. It can be used both for teaching and research purposes. By creating a group, teachers have the opportunity to increase the level of motivation of their students and give them the opportunity to participate in multi-level interaction. *Facebook* allows each student to complete tasks at their own pace, and therefore, they do not depend on their groupmates as much as in a usual classroom.⁵

2 Facebook Applications for Teaching English

The social network *Facebook* is a software package consisting of a large number of not only built-in but also integrated components. These components include applications and games. Among the applications that are integrated into *Facebook* and can be used in learning English, there are the following ones: *Guess the Word: 2 Pics 1 Word*, *Quiz Your English*, *Quiz Planet*, *Fun with English*, *Word Search Challenge*, *Parrot Puzzle*, etc. The application *Quiz Planet* is the online quiz with the adversarial element that allows one to check and receive training. The information presented in the materials of the application is educational in nature and is divided into the following categories: Geography, History, Science, Animals and Plants, Food and Drink, Customs and Traditions, Politics and Society, Sports, Technology, Brands and Business, Beauty and Fashion, Celebrities, Literature & Language, Movies, TV Shows & TV Shows, Music, Games & more. The materials of the application are available in English, which allows one to use them when studying vocabulary on a particular topic, as well as to obtain background information. English-language content update is regular. *Quiz Your English* is an application in the form of an online quiz with a competitive element; it is designed for group participation. The advantage of this application is the possibility of both local and distance learning through an online quiz.

Thematically, the quiz aims to help learners to gain better command of colloquial English to be used in everyday situations – at work, at home, in the street and even in class. Developers of this application point out that it can stimulate intellectual development of users, beside enlarging their vocabulary for everyday use. The latter factor is of particular importance for Ukrainian learners, who, on average, have a limited exposure to everyday communication with native speakers. *Word Search Challenge* is an online game, a word puzzle with an adversarial element. Its methodological importance is accounted for by the fact, that it can be used to test learners' vocabulary stock. The game is practically oriented and may be used with learners of various levels. The main purpose of the application is to consolidate the knowledge of the graphic form of the word; students also have the opportunity to check whether their knowledge of a particular topic is deep enough. The information which the application contains is educational in its nature; it is organized in over 45 groups, which include such categories as “Verb”, “School”, “People”, “Mathematics”, “Emotions”,

³ PEMPEK, T. A.: College Students' Social Networking Experiences on Facebook. In *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 2009, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 237.

⁴ BLATTNER, G., LOMICKA, L.: Facebook-ing and the Social Generation: A New Era of Language Learning. In *Alsic*, 2012, Vol. 15, No. 1. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-15]. Available at: <<https://journals.openedition.org/alsic/2413>>.

⁵ JOSHI, O.: English Language Learning Using 'Facebook'. In *Proceedings of MonTeC-2014*. Ahmedabad : HGCE, 2014, p. 390. [online]. [2021-04-17]. Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321331492>>.

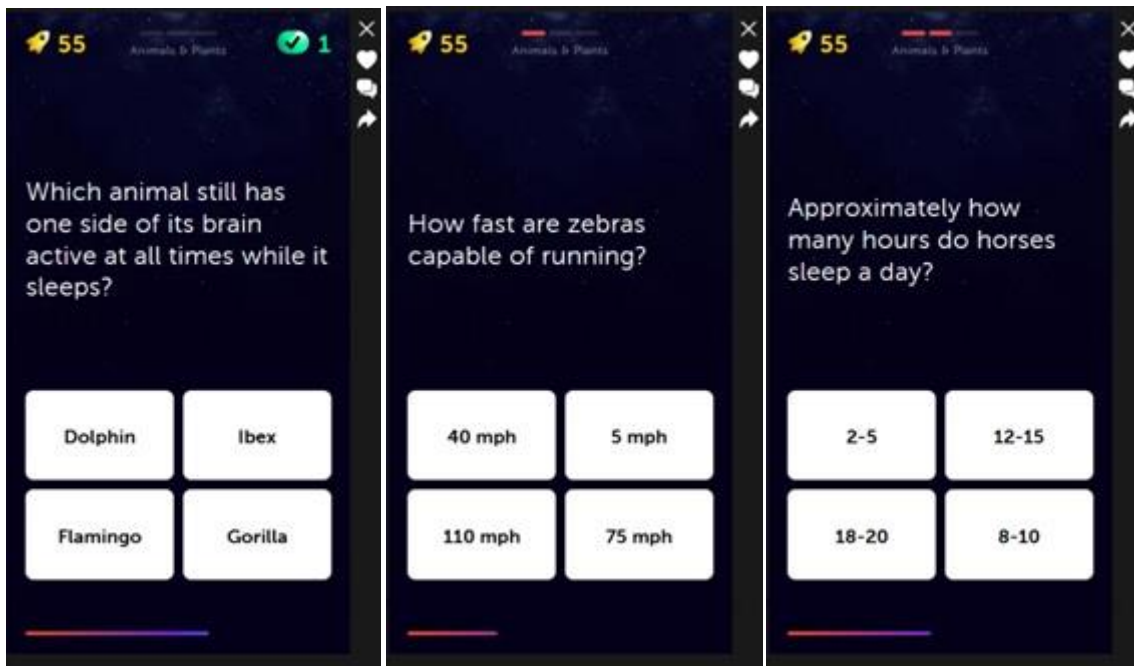
“Summer”, etc. It is possible to use the application in a variety of modes, for example, single-player or multi-player mode. Using the application in the multiplayer mode brings in a competitive edge, gives learners the opportunity to compare their knowledge and skills with those of other students.

3 Methodology of Facebook Application Usage

We consider the use of *Facebook* applications in a Spoken English class (topic “Environment”) for learners of the “Intermediate” level. The learning objectives of the lesson are as follows: to hone learners’ comprehension skills; to expand their knowledge about environment; to make them interested in nature and aware of the necessity to preserve it; to develop critical and logical thinking skills, to stimulate quick reaction of students, their creativity, ability to see and consider strong and weak, positive and negative sides of environmental issues; ability to listen to their opponents, to be tolerant to them and work in teams, to develop their ability for public speaking. The lesson also aims to develop students’ social competencies, such as being self-confident, environmentally aware, good communicators, respectful of others and tolerant of diversity. The class starts with the introduction of the problem by a teacher, for example: *“Environment has its problems which have to be discussed and resolved. Today animals all over the world are moving out of forests to small villages or even to big noisy cities. This movement from wild areas has been going on for over two hundred years. Why are animals moving from their area of habitat like hills, mountains, fields, rivers and stream of the country side to the human areas?”*

The recent pandemic connected with COVID-19 is another problem which is advisable to be proposed for group discussion. A probable zoonotic origin⁶ (in this case hypothetically linked to bats from the *Rhinolophus* genus or scales) of the virus leads to a topic of environmental problems and animal migration, which led to the pandemic. However, this and other fields of vision among scientists can be introduced and discussed by students. The next part of the lesson is playing a quiz. *The Quiz Planet* game is launched on the computers with the topic “Animals & Plants” (Pictures 1 – 2), which presents scientific facts about animals to students.

⁶ PANASENKO, N. et al.: Covid-19 as a Media-Cum-Language Event: Cognitive, Communicative, and Cross-Cultural Aspects. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2020, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 127. [online]. [2021-05-14]. Available at: <https://lartis.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Panasenko_et_al_Issue-2_2020.pdf>.



Picture 1: The Quiz Planet game

Source: Authors' screenshots of the *Facebook* instant games page, 2021.

After the quiz, the correct answers are discussed in order to check students' previous knowledge, raise their awareness of animals' biology and enlarge their vocabulary necessary for this topic (for example, *extinction*, *drought*, *climate change*, *desertification*, *deforestation*, etc.). Another application mentioned is *Word Search Challenge*, which is used in order to enlarge students' knowledge about the environment. The words from the application are introduced and then written down into students' vocabularies.



Picture 2: The Word Search Challenge game

Source: Authors' screenshot of the *Facebook* instant games page, 2021.

This is followed by a debate between students on which factors are causing animals' extinction and change of habitat in 2021. The students are divided into several groups of

nature experts, village and urban citizens. The participants of the discussion are motivated to use the facts from the quiz as arguments (i.e., horses sleep a lot -> possibly this is the reason for extinction), words from the application. The debate is aimed to develop critical and logical thinking, quick reaction of students, creativity, ability to see and consider strong and weak, positive and negative sides of environmental issues. For this objective we raise the questions connected with the words learnt from the application: 1. Are animals safe in caves? 2. Does the speed of the animal causes to prevent extinction? 3. Is the number of rivers important for natural habitat? The homework is an essay of about 180 words to check students' knowledge of words and phrases learnt during the class, to develop their writing skills and give them an opportunity to study the topic of pandemic deeper.

4 Results and Discussion

The use of *Facebook* apps under analysis can be useful in a situation when it is necessary to reach one or more categories of lesson's objectives while teaching online both in the process of its usage and during the rest of the procedure. In the lesson with the topic "Environment" *Facebook* applications of *Quiz Planet* and *Word Search Challenge* are used to reach practical and educational objectives during the usage of the apps, while developing and upbringing objectives (to develop critical and logical thinking, quick reaction of students, creativity, ability to see and consider strong and weak, positive and negative sides of environmental issues; ability to listen (and hear) opponents, to be tolerant to them and to work in teams, to develop their ability for public speaking; objectives are to encourage them to be more self-confident, environmentally aware and real patriots of their motherland, to teach them good manners, respect for each other) are reached while having a debate and writing an essay, that is during the other stages of the lesson. The group interactivity can be facilitated with communicating other students during the debates or in chat, while individual interactivity can be observed during the interaction with the apps.

Conclusion

Among the applications that are integrated into *Facebook* and can be used in learning English, methodological value lies in such applications as *Quiz your English*, *Quiz Planet* and *Word Search Challenge*. These applications can be used alone or in combination with the already explored features of the social network *Facebook*. Their use provides an opportunity to actively involve students in game, collective, theoretical, practical forms of learning, as well as quizzes and quizzes, promotes the active acquisition of knowledge, the formation of skills and abilities of practical English. Involvement of integrated components both separately and together with built-in components (personal pages, video broadcasts, groups, etc.) opens the possibility to significantly improve the process of learning foreign languages. The use of applications allows you to diversify and increase the effectiveness of traditional forms of learning. Prospects for further research can be seen in the in-depth study of these applications of the social network *Facebook* in the framework of modern methodological paradigms.

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IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ABSENCE OF ORGANIZED PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES ON POSTURAE AND SPINE IN SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

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Abstract:

The aim of the study was to evaluate posture and spine in children of younger school age after lockdown, distance education and after the cancellation of the sport and organized movement activities. The examination of posture and spine of 45 children was carried out in 3 schools in Slovakia in the years 2020, before pandemic restrictions, and 2021, after pandemic restrictions. To evaluate the posture and spine, we chose the modified methodology according to Napoleon Wolanski. In the order to verify the assumptions, that posture and spine will be aggravated after in one year after distance education, we used paired t-test for two mean values. We set a significance level of 0.05. After comparison of postural state and spine of schoolchildren before the pandemic and after the pandemic restrictions we yielded the following results: $T_{\text{stat}} = -6.88 < 1.68 / 2.02 = T_{\text{crit}}$. We took absolute values into account. According our results, the posture and spine were worsened. The locomotor system and children's spine react negatively to this sudden and lasting changes. We recommend to children and their parents to spend more time with movement activities in the nature and to do so called telerehabilitation.

Key words:

COVID-19. Distance Education. Lockdown. Posture. School Children. Spine.

Introduction

The time we live has brought sudden and unexpected changes to the lives of the population not only in Slovakia or Europe, but also on a global scale. The relatively dynamic way of life stopped. To protect human lives, the governments of almost every country in the world recommended 'home isolation' for citizens, home office working and distance forms of education. An organized physical activity such as sports, cultural and public events were banned. The movement of people was also limited. These restrictions persist till today – one whole year. Even before the restrictions, in inconsistencies with the effects of COVID-19, experts warned of the so-called hypokinesia of the population. Consequently, the global pandemic caused by the Sars-CoV-2 virus only helped to accentuate the hypokinetic lifestyle that we, as a population, had fought before the pandemic. According to Šutvajová et al., quarantine measures increased prevalence of poor posture in young generation and get situation worsen.¹ The impact of hypokinesia caused by distance education and the abolition of organized physical activities on posture and spine in children was studied in this article.

1 Research

The main aim of the study was to evaluate posture and spine in children of younger school age after lockdown, distance education and after the cancellation of the sport and organized movement activities.

¹ See: ŠUTVAJOVÁ, M. et al.: Screening of Flat Feet in Preschool Children as Prevention of Postural Disorders. In *AIP Conference Proceedings 2343*. Zurich : AIP Publishing, 2021, p. 1-8. [online]. [2021-03-06]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350518301_Screening_of_Flat_Feet_in_Preschool_Children_as_Prevention_of_Postural_Disorders>.

1.1 Methodology

The examination of posture and spine was carried out in 3 schools in Slovakia in the years 2020, before pandemic restrictions and in 2021, after pandemic restrictions. For the posture and spine analyse we choose the aspeky. During the examination pupils were barefoot and in underwear. The examination was carried out in distance of 1 m. Children were examined with the consent of their legal guardians. To evaluate the posture and spine, we chose the modified methodology according to Napoleon Wolanski.² We observed 6 body segments which position directly affects posture and spine. The physiological position of the body segment was expressed by 0, a faint position was indicated by 1 and a value of 2 represented a poor position. The points for each segment were counted and the overall score was obtained. Based on the overall score, the subjects were categorized in 4 postural groups. The lower the overall score, the better the child's posture was, and vice versa.³ Posture groups were created as follows:

- **physiological posture** – 0 – 5 points (postural category A),
- **slightly disturbed posture** – 6 – 8 points (postural category B),
- **significantly damaged posture** – 9 – 12 points (postural category C),
- **serious postural disorders** – 13 points or more (postural category D).

In 2020, based on overall score, we classified the monitored pupils into each postural category. After a year of completing the distance study, we repeated the measurement and we reclassified pupils into postural categories. Collected data from the bought examinations were statistically analysed and processed. In the order to verify the assumptions, that posture and spine will be aggravated, we used paired t-test for two mean values. We set a significance level of 0.05. We present results in graph and tables.

1.2 Study Sample

In the 2020, before pandemic restriction, we examined 95 children. As pandemic restriction persists until we finished study and children did not attend school, we evaluated posture and spine in 45 children. The stratified sample consisted of 45 schoolchildren aged 6 to 9 years. Average children's age was 7.97 ± 0.71 . The monitored children were free of neurological, orthopaedic, vestibular and other congenital or acquired disorders. There were pupils without diagnosed disorders of the musculoskeletal system – potentially healthy population. We compared these results before the pandemic with the results obtained after one year of distance education and absence of organized movements activities.

2 Results

Table 1 shows the results of the evaluation of the postural disorders and pathologic position of body segments in the monitored schoolchildren.

² KOLÁROVÁ, M.: *Poruchy postúry u detí v predškolskom veku a možnosť nápravy pomocou zdravotných cvičení*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Ružomberok : Catholic University in Ružomberok, 2019, p. 58-59.

³ BEGANOVIĆ, E., BEŠOVIĆ, M., BEŠOVIĆ, H.: Držanje tijela kod učenika šestih razreda. In *Sport Mont*, 2018, Vol. 10, No. 34, 35, 36, p. 56. [online]. [2021-03-02]. Available at: <http://www.sportmont.ucg.ac.me/clanci/SportMont_Septembar_2012_Beganovic_53-61.pdf>; MILOŠEVIĆ, Z., OBRADOVIĆ, B.: Posturalni status dece Novosadskih predškolskih ustanova uzrsta 7 godina. In *Glasnik Antropološkog društva Srbije*, 2008, Vol. 43, p. 304.

Table 1: Postural disorders and body segments evaluation (n=45)

	PD	Head	Shoulders	Blades	Chest	Pelvis	Cervical	Thoracis	Lumbar	Feet
Postural State and Position of Body Segments before Distance Education (2020)										
AVERAGE	5.66	0.77	1.09	1.23	0.25	0.45	0.05	0.36	0.61	0.84
SD	1.77	0.70	0.42	0.47	0.53	0.54	0.21	0.53	0.61	0.64
Min.	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Max.	10	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Median	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mode	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
%	71.1	62.2	95.6	97.8	2.2	42.2	4.4	35.6	53.3	68.9
Postural state and position of body segments before distance education (2021)										
AVERAGE	76.1	0.80	1.80	1.57	0.40	0.80	0.09	0.57	1.05	0.80
SD	2.95	0.76	0.40	0.58	0.68	0.73	0.29	0.62	0.74	0.66
Min.	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Max.	16	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Median	7,5	1	2	2	0	1	0	0,5	1	1
Mode	7	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	1
%	93.3	60	100	95.6	31.1	60	8.9	51.1	73.3	64.4

Source: Own processing.

As we can see from the Table 1, the average value of postural disorders (in Table “PD”) in 2020 reached the value of 5.66 ± 1.77 and in March 2021 after completing the distance study, it rose to the value of 7.61 ± 2.95 . The posture of children before the introduction of distance education was dominated by postural category B, as the mode reached the value $MODE = 5$. In March 2021, after completing distance learning began to dominate significant postural disorders – postural category C ($MODE = 7$). From the above results, we can conclude that the posture of the monitored schoolchildren deteriorated in 2021. Posture depends on the position of the body segments. In 2021, after completing distance education, the values of pathology of all monitored body segments begin to increase (apart from the position of the chest and cervical spine). This is evidenced by the value of the median, which increases from value $MEDIAN = 0.5$ to $MEDIAN = 2$. This means that more than half of the monitored schoolchildren had a pathological position 7 of the 9 monitored body segments. The most affected segment was lumbar spine. The average value of pathology position of lumbar spine rises from 0.27 to 1.05. The deterioration of the position of the body segments and the curvature of the spine were subsequently reflected in the deterioration of whole posture. A comparison of children’s posture before and after the introduction of distance education and the absence of organized physical activities is shown in the Chart 1.

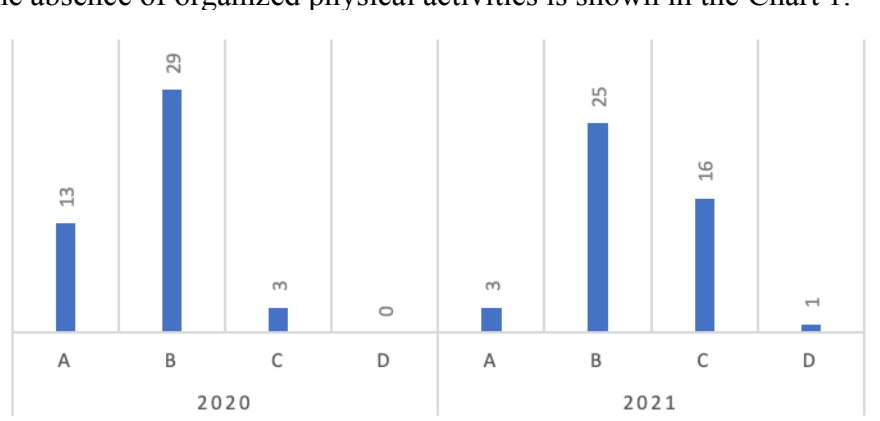


Chart 1: Postural state before and after distance education (n=45)

Source: Own processing.

The number of children with correct posture (A) decreased from 13 to 3. There was also a decrease of mild posture disorders (B). In this category, we registered 29 schoolchildren in 2020, while in 2021, 25 schoolchildren had mild postural disorders. On the contrary, during the output measurement we record an increase the number of children in postural category C and D. In 2021, the number of children with significant posture disorders (category C) increases from the original 3 to 16 children. In 2021 one child with serious posture disorders was added, while the year before we did not record any child with serious posture disorders. Based on the results obtained from the analysis of posture and spine we assume that increases postural disorders and pathologic curvatures of the spine are caused by distance education. We verified this assumption using a paired t-Test of two mean values. The results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Results of t-Test of two mean values

	PD 2020	PD 2021
Mean	5.666667	7.844444
Variance	3.136364	6.043434
Observations	45	45
Pearson Correlation	0.535947	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	44	
t Stat	-6.87671	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.67E-09	
t Critical one-tail	1.68023	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.73E-08	
t Critical two-tail	2.015368	

Source: Own processing.

A comparison of the postural disorders (PD 2020) of schoolchildren before the pandemic and after the pandemic (PD 2021) by a paired t-test of two mean values yielded the following results: $T_{stat} = -6.88 < 1.68 / 2.02 / = T_{crit}$. We took absolute values into account. Based on the two-sided hypothesis, the posture of children changed and the one-sided hypothesis confirmed the deterioration of posture in the monitored children. Distance education and the absence of organized physical activities had a negative impact on posture in the monitored schoolchildren. The posture of schoolchildren has significantly deteriorated.

3 Discussion

After the outbreak of a virus called COVID-19 in China on 17th November 2019,⁴ the coronavirus also appeared in the Slovak Republic on 6th March 2020.⁵ Subsequently, on 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic.⁶

⁴ TASR: Čína stanovila prvý prípad nákazy koronavírusom na 17. november. Released on 13th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://svet.sme.sk/c/22357855/cina-stanovila-prvy-pripad-nakazy-koronavirusom-na-17-november.html>>.

⁵ Slovensko zaznamenalo prvý potvrdený prípad ochorenia COVID-19. Released on 6th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <https://www.uvzsr.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4061:slovensko-zaznamenalo-prvy-potvrdeny-pripad-ochorenia-covid-19&catid=250:koronavirus-2019-ncov&Itemid=153>.

⁶ World Health Organization (WHO): Media Briefing on #COVID19 with @DrTedros. Released on 11th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1237777021742338049?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1237777021742338049&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.who.int%2Femergencies%2Fdiseases%2Fnovel-coronavirus-2019%2Fevents-as-theyhappen>.

The first restrictions in public life in Slovakia were on 6th March, immediately after the confirmation of the first case of infection with a new coronavirus. The crisis staff has adopted several bans and recommendations for the public. On 10th March, the Central Crisis Staff banned sporting, cultural and public events.⁷ Finally, on 16th March, schools in Slovakia were closed, border controls were introduced and train and bus traffic were restricted.⁸ Pandemic, for which none of us was prepared, forced us to adapt to new living conditions. The measures, which were introduced in March last year, remain in a modified form even today. Schools are still closed almost all over Slovakia. According to the so-called “covid vending machine” which prepared Ministry of Health, under certain conditions, the first stage of primary schools may be opened. If the epidemiological situation improves, also the second stage of primary schools, secondary schools and universities can be open. Otherwise, all schools stay close and distance education takes place in school.⁹ Anti-pandemic measures were taken in order to slow down the spread of the Sars-CoV-2 virus. But after a one year of persistence of the state of emergency in Slovakia, experts are also beginning to discuss their economic, social and health impact. Impact on children’s movement system health was followed in this study. We focused to evaluate the axial organ and posture in children. We assumed that hypokinesia caused by distance learning and the abolition of organized physical activities had negative effect on children’s spine and posture. Based on this assumption, we observed 6 body segments that directly affect the curvature of the spine and posture. We compared the condition of the spine and the posture before the introduction of the distance education and a year after its persistence.

Before starting distance learning, we evaluated the postural disorders in 71.1% of schoolers. One year after the continuation of distance education, postural disorders increase to 93.3%. We recorded negative results of the spine also. The curvature of the lumbar spine worsened the most markedly. Pathology has increased by 20%. Cervical curvature worsened in 4.5% of schoolchildren and thoracic curvature worsened in 15.1% of schoolchildren. Based on all the facts we have processed the impact of pandemic measures on the posture of children of early school age in the Slovak Republic. The data appear to be unique so far, as similar research has not been found on PubMed or the Web of Science or other scientific portals. At present, the literature is increasingly focused on the description of clinical manifestations and the natural history of pathology associated with COVID-19. There is a lack of studies with a higher level of evidence regarding the effectiveness of interventions, long-term monitoring, or new organizational models.¹⁰ That is why the results of our study can be compared only with the results of research in the times before the pandemic.

⁷ *Informácia zo zasadnutia Ústredného krízového štábu v súvislosti s COVID-19*. Released on 6th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <https://www.uvzsr.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4062:informacia-zo-zasadnutia-ustredneho-krizoveho-tabu-vnsuvislosti-sncovid-19&catid=250:koronavirus-2019-ncov&Itemid=153>.

⁸ *COVID-19: Slovensko zakazuje športové, kultúrne a verejné podujatia, hlási 7 potvrdených prípadov*. Released on 9th March 2020. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <https://www.uvzsr.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4071:covid-19-slovensko-zakazuje-portove-kulturne-a-verejne-podujatia-hlasi-7-potvrdenych-pripadov&catid=250:koronavirus-2019-ncov&Itemid=153>; GRACA, M., GRACOVÁ, S.: Effect of the Quarantine on Television Viewership. In KVETANOVÁ, Z., SOLÍK, M. (eds): *Megatrends and Media: On the Edge*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2020, p. 41. [online]. [2021-04-14]. Available at: <https://fmk.sk/download/Megatrends_and_Media_On-the-Edge.pdf#page=41&zoom=100,0,0>.

⁹ *COVID AUTOMAT: Alert systém pre monitorovanie vývoja epidémie a prijímanie protiepidemických opatrenia v závislosti od intenzity šírenia SARS-CoV2 (Covid-19)*. [online]. [2021-03-03]. Available at: <https://www.uvzsr.sk/docs/info/covid19/3_Vlastny_material_zapr_prip_1.pdf>.

¹⁰ ANDRENELLI, E. et al.: Rehabilitation and COVID-19: A Rapid Living Systematic Review 2020 by Cochrane Rehabilitation Field. In *European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*, 2020, Vol. 56, No. 6, p. 852.

Yang et. al. found the incidence of posture disorders in 595,057 Chinese children and adolescents, with an overall prevalence of poor posture in these children of up to 65.3%.¹¹ Batistao et. al. evaluated the posture of 288 children aged 6 to 15 years in Brazil. The research's found a high prevalence of postural abnormalities, with deviations such as shoulder elevation (74.3%), protruding shoulders (66.3%) and advanced head posture (53.5%) predominating in children.¹² In the Czech Republic Kratěnová et. al. evaluated the posture of 3,520 children aged 7, 11, and 15 years. Poor posture was found in 38.3% of children.¹³ In Australia children less than 18 years old are commonly managed in primary care, at a rate of 5.8 (95% CI: 5.6 – 6.1) per 100 encounters because of musculoskeletal problems. This can be extrapolated to an estimate of 880,000 musculoskeletal problems in children and adolescents managed per year in Australia.¹⁴ The American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons describes the annual occurrence of abnormalities in the musculoskeletal system in 9.6 million children under the age of 19.¹⁵ In Slovakia, Rusnák et. al. research the occurrence of postural deformities and spinal retention in 311 children aged 6 to 7 years. The results of this study show incorrect posture in more than 50%.¹⁶ According to this facts, postural disorders can be considered as a pandemic also. As early as in 2000, Janda from Cech Republic described postural disorders as a pandemic of modern society, as their incidence is recorded in almost every industrialized country in the world.¹⁷ Improper posture in children and adolescents is one of the most current, but also the most underestimated problem today. It is considered as serious problem in children in young school age, as it poses a risk for the future development of functional and morphological change of the movement system, especially of the spine in the adulthood. Therefore, prevention and treatment of postural disorders and spine deviations should be addressed as soon as the epidemiological situation allows.

We consider a small research sample to be the main limitation of the study. We propose an extension of research sample after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. In case of confirmation of a bad situation with posture in children, we propose to introduce adequate preventive and curative measures.

¹¹ YANG, L. et. al.: Prevalence of Incorrect Posture among Children and Adolescents: Finding from a Large Population-Based Study in China. In *iScience*, 2020, Vol. 23, No. 5, p. 2. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <[https://www.cell.com/iscience/fulltext/S2589-0042\(20\)30228-5?_returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Flinkinghub.elsevier.com%2Fretrieve%2Fpii%2FS2589004220302285%3Fshowall%3Dtrue](https://www.cell.com/iscience/fulltext/S2589-0042(20)30228-5?_returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Flinkinghub.elsevier.com%2Fretrieve%2Fpii%2FS2589004220302285%3Fshowall%3Dtrue)>.

¹² BATISTAO, V. et al.: Prevalence of Postural Deviations and Associated Factors in Children and Adolescents: A Cross-Sectional Study. In *Fisioterapia em Movimento*, 2016, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 782. [online]. [2021-02-07]. Available at: <<http://www.scielo.br/pdf/fm/v29n4/1980-5918-fm-29-04-00777.pdf>>.

¹³ KRATĚNOVÁ, J. et al.: Prevalence and Risk Factors of Poor Posture in School Children in the Czech Republic. In *Journal of School Health*, 2007, Vol. 77, No. 3, p. 131.

¹⁴ HENSCHKE, N. et al.: Musculoskeletal Conditions in Children and Adolescents Managed in Australian Primary Care. In *BMC Musculoskelet Disord*, 2014, Vol. 15, No. 164, p. 3. [online]. [2021-03-08]. Available at: <<https://bmc-musculoskeletdisord.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1471-2474-15-164.pdf>>.

¹⁵ *Position Statement: Children and Musculoskeletal Health*. [online]. [2021-04-07]. Available at: <<https://www.aaos.org/uploadedFiles/1170%20Children%20and%20Musculoskeletal%20Health.pdf>>.

¹⁶ See: RUSNÁK, R. et al.: Screening and Early Identification of Spinal Deformities and Posture in 311 Children: Results from 16 Districts in Slovakia. In *Rehabilitation Research and Practice*, 2019, No. 2, p. 1-9. [online]. [2021-04-07]. Available at: <<https://downloads.hindawi.com/journals/rerp/2019/4758386.pdf>>.

¹⁷ JANDA, V.: *Vadné držení těla, m. Scheuermann*. [online]. [2021-02-23]. Available at: <<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:VMiLO7xlxzEJ:https://www.cls.cz/dokumenty2/os/r110.rtf+&cd=1&hl=sk&ct=clnk&gl=sk&client=safari>>.

Conclusion

Distance education significantly affected children's lives. Not only schoolchildren, but also their parents and teachers had to adapt this new education conditions. However, the locomotor system and children's spine react negatively to this sudden and lasting changes. This is shown by the results of this study, where after a year of distance education the prevalence of postural disorders increased by 22.2% and spinal disorders increased by 35.5%. So, the situation does not get worse, given the persistent unfavourable epidemiological situation at the time of completion of this article, we must appeal to parents to spend more time with their children in nature (walking, hiking, cycling, etc.) and to place children to so called telerehabilitation. These days are a lot of online exercises with physiotherapist for children and their parents so they can do healthy exercises in home conditions. We recommend to follow web site the "Zdrava chrbtica" or "SNOP", where children and parents from Slovakia can find videos with health exercises beneficial for their spine and posture.

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THE IDENTIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH ONLINE TEACHING IN THE SECOND WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

Not only in Europe did education systems undergo enforced adaptation in the area of the provision of knowledge in 2020 as a result of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions had to shift to remote forms of online teaching as a result of the government's epidemiological measures within a relatively short period of time and without the opportunity to prepare. The goal of this paper is to provide an empirical assessment of the online education situation in the so-called second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic using the example of the University of Finance and Administration in Prague. The specific goal is to use a questionnaire survey to ascertain the degree to which the students identify with selected elements of online education and to ascertain their attitudes to the overall significance, benefit and effectiveness of the online form of academic education. It will be shown that the introduction of online teaching in the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only been accepted by the student population as an effective alternative form of education, but that it also enables the more flexible harmonisation of studies and work. At the same time, opinions will also be heard that promote the possible wider and more permanent introduction of online teaching, which may constitute strategic information for the further development of the university and the strengthening of its position in the education market.

Key words:

COVID-19. Education. Online Teaching. Pandemic. Sociological Research. University Students.

Introduction

The world underwent a global change in 2020. COVID-19 endangered the health of entire populations and became a serious threat to civilisation. The risk of devastation is apparent not only with regard to the economic system, but also in relation to cultural aspects of life, the erosion of interpersonal relationships and, last but not least, the pathological manifestations of mental experiences at the level of individual lives in a socially closed and culturally limited environment. The lives of the populations affected by the pandemic have thus undergone dramatic quantitative (and qualitative) changes at the macro and micro levels of their existence. The governments of individual countries have issued a variety of epidemiological measures and associated legislative statutes that have dramatically limited social contact and the physical mobility of inhabitants. In the Czech Republic, as in other European countries, the first government measures regulating the readily apparent and rapidly worsening state of the pandemic situation arose during the course of March. The government measures of the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic were also applied to the education system in the first half of March. Not only universities were forced to transform their standard in-person teaching based on intensive regular personal meetings between teachers and students into remote forms of online teaching in a rapid sequence of events and without the opportunity to prepare any systemic changes to the organisation of lessons. As such, universities underwent a radical change in their system of providing lectures and seminars, consultations and examinations, including changes in the other associated services provided to students (library services, study department services and so on) in the middle of the 2020 summer semester during the so-called first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Based on the mutual, somewhat informal sharing of the experiences to date, it has been possible to assess the adaptation of schools to these changes as being extremely varied, displaying unequal levels of creativity during the introduction of any innovative elements and systemic approaches and with varied levels of application of communication platforms and distance learning tools. Students at

different types of schools were therefore exposed to the diverse nature of distance learning during the rapid onset of changes and without the option of preparation, including at those schools which had previously had minimum or even no experience of these forms of education. Some schools therefore preferred to place a much greater emphasis on self-study and have communicated with their students within differing intervals by setting tasks and through the presentation of lectures, other study materials and expert sources for the purposes of the students' independent study preparation. Other schools combined the regimen of self-study and the regular setting and inspection of study tasks with the parallel provision of online lectures in a variety of ways, but often only in selected course subjects due to an insufficient IT infrastructure, including technical facilities and the option of online teaching in the home office environment. It is necessary to mention the fact that IT technology was not readily available in retail networks at that time due to the rapidly increasing interest in IT equipment not only for schools, but also in companies introducing home office work, and the generally intensifying digitalisation of corporate communications which required the appropriate equipment in the form of cameras, microphones, laptops and so on.

The situation in the education process at universities was not unequivocal during the course of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and there were clear signs of improvisation, an intuitive approach and the hybridisation of lessons combining various methods of online teaching, self-study and testing. The transition to remote learning took place tentatively in the spring wave of the pandemic and served more as an involuntary trial for the preparation of schools for what many expected to occur at the beginning of the following academic year. These sceptical expectations were unfortunately met and the winter semester of the 2020/2021 academic year took place in a continual regimen of online learning at all universities in the Czech Republic without any, even temporary, possibility of in-person teaching, but with the exception of limited options for in-person testing in December 2020 and January 2021. The goal of this paper is to provide an empirical evaluation of the situation pertaining to online education in the so-called second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. in the period from September to December 2020, using the example of the private University of Finance and Administration in Prague. The goal is to use the performed questionnaire survey to identify the attitudes and opinions of the students with regard to selected elements of online learning and their significance, benefit and effectiveness in the process of academic education with support from the sociological data. On the basis of these empirical findings, it will be further possible to predict the interest of students in forms of online teaching at other stages of their studies to a certain extent and to simplify the strategic decision-making of school management aimed at making remote teaching a more permanent part of the standard regimen of in-person studies. At the same time, it will also be possible to further develop a rational argument as to the benefits and deficiencies of online learning based on an analysis of this empirical data and in doing so to contribute to the more general views of the solutions to this current issue affecting universities.

1 Literature Review

Gouédard, Pont and Vennet¹ have used the empirical data available from OECD countries to analyse the transformation of education institutions in the period of the coronavirus pandemic and evaluate the implementation of a wide variety of systemic measures introduced by educational institutions to enable the continuity of the education process. At the same time,

¹ See: GOUËDARD, P., PONT, B., VIENNET, R.: Education Responses to COVID-19: Implementing a Way Forward. In *OECD Education Working Papers No. 224*. Paris : OECD Publishing, 2020, p. 1-44.

they have also submitted a variety of practical recommendations aimed at strengthening the resilience of schools in the period of similar crises and ensuring that the design of strategic measures in the various dimensions of the school education system is sustainable and capable of further development on the basis of the aforementioned analyses. Son, Anh and Jaafar² have submitted an interesting case study on the effectiveness of distance education using the example of the FPT University in Vietnam. The authors of this study have confirmed that, despite the existing theories and regularly available practical methodologies for remote online teaching, the enforced conversion of standard in-person teaching to its online equivalent has been a highly complex process during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic that has required the realisation of many parallel changes within a relatively short period of time and without the option of any thorough preparation. The key roles in this are played by the factors of teacher competence, communication abilities and the practical skills needed to realise distance learning as a meaningful and adequate alternative to in-person lessons. A likewise significant circumstance involves the willingness, preparedness and motivation of the students to accept this form of education and to effectively use it for their own development. The authors ascertained a number of complications in the distance learning process based on a questionnaire survey of the opinions and attitudes of the student populace with regard to the course and contents of the distance learning. Moreover, they called into question the original research hypothesis that students would achieve worse average grades during any remote testing of their knowledge in comparison with what had been achieved during the standard testing and examination regimen in 2019.

This indicates the success of the implementation of distance learning and the suitable preparation, realisation and especially inspection of any remote examinations. Gillis and Krull³ have empirically researched the effectiveness of the instructional techniques applied during the transformation to a remote form of teaching. At the same time, the authors of the research also monitored the perception of any barriers to this transformation that the students had had to overcome based on the race, gender and socio-economic status of the students. The authors reached the conclusion that the majority of students had truly experienced these barriers and that they perceived the transition to remote learning as a complication in many respects. The feedback from the students clearly referred to an increase in feelings of anxiety, loss of concentration, mental distraction and reduced motivation to study. These negative experiences were most frequently identified in the population of non-white women and students in their initial years of study. Huber and Helm⁴ have presented the more extensive School Barometer international study involving sociological research. This questionnaire survey monitored the rapid changes in the education system in Germany, Switzerland and Austria during the spring of 2020. This empirical research is not only unique due to its scope, but also due to the expansion of the groups of respondents to include academic employees, students, parents, school managers, school employees and many other individuals who support the functioning of schools and participate in educational activities. The authors are aware of certain limits in the required results and also point to the methodological limitations of this quantitative research, but for all that they have submitted a series of findings that can

² See: SON, T. N. et al.: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Emergency Distance Learning under COVID-19. In *Proceedings of 2020 International Conference on Control, Robotics and Intelligent System (CCRIS 2020)*. New York : ACM, 2020, p. 136-143.

³ GILLIS, A., KRULL, M. L.: COVID-19 Remote Learning Transition in Spring 2020: Class Structures, Student Perceptions, and Inequality in College Courses. In *Teaching Sociology*, 2020, Vol. 48, No. 4, p. 286-287.

⁴ HUBER, G. S., HELM, C.: COVID-19 and Schooling: Evaluation, Assessment and Accountability in Times of Crises-Reacting Quickly to Explore Key Issues for Policy, Practice and Research with the School Barometer. In *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 2020, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 240-241.

be applied in the areas of educational policy, teaching practice and other similar research projects.

The most significant sociological research activities of 2020 in the Czech Republic included those of the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University that participated in an international research initiative of Antwerp University called the COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study (C19 ISWS).⁵ A total of 27 European countries were involved in this initiative aimed at empirically monitoring the student populations at universities with the aim of identifying the consequences of the pandemic measures not only in the areas of study, but also with regard to mental health and other indicators of quality of life and everyday experience. The participation in this research initiative was confirmed by 7 Czech universities, as a result of which it was possible to acquire and assess a total of 6,497 questionnaires. A significant sociological investigation of the student population in Slovakia was undertaken, for example, at Comenius University in Bratislava during the period of the first coronavirus wave.⁶ It corresponded to the research design of the questionnaire survey undertaken at the University of Finance and Administration in Prague both with regard to the extent of its research sample and the focus of its content.

2 Distance Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Online learning may be used to a far greater degree and intensity at universities in the future, regardless of any epidemiological measures that limit in-person teaching. It may become a preferred (albeit not the only) platform for sharing and testing knowledge in the academic environment and among the student population. It can be anticipated that some schools, which had their first experience of the introduction of cross-the-board online teaching during the first and especially the second waves of the coronavirus pandemic, will be motivated to further strengthen and apply it in their study plans. This may also lead (and this is already the case at a number of schools) to greater efforts to expand the offer of remote education study programs and to applications for them to be accredited. Online lectures enable teaching without the personal presence of teachers at various regional branches of schools, which means a resulting fall in the costs associated with transporting the teachers and possibly accommodating them, while at the same time there are also apparent non-economic benefits in the form of time saved from not having to transfer between educational centres. The lectures are held centrally for a larger number of students assigned to study groups which means reduced pressure on teaching loads and a partial reduction in financial costs for the realised lessons. An associated benefit involves lesson options (including examinations) in the home office regimen (more than 90% of the academic employees at the University of Finance and Administration Prague used this teaching option from October to December 2020), which many teachers saw as a significant benefit and many of them would also prefer for the future.

We can also expect elements of positive attitudes towards online teaching among the student population as in the case of academic employees and school managers. The students are relieved of the necessity of regularly travelling to school, whereby they not only save on

⁵ *COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study*. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/centre-population-family-health/research2/covid-19-international/>>.

⁶ *Vyhodnotenie prieskumu o dištančnej výučbe 2020 – študenti*. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <https://uniba.sk/fileadmin/ruk/cit/e-learning/20200615_distancne_vzdelavanie_anketa_studenti.pdf>.

transport costs, but also on accommodation which will especially be appreciated by international students, as well as those domestic students whose homes are sufficiently distant from the location of their school so that they are forced to seek out paid accommodation nearby. Likewise, remote study students can access online lectures from their workplace without having to travel to school, which enables them to more flexibly complete their study obligations and their employment commitments. Some students at the University of Finance and Administration in Prague indicated and expressed, albeit informally and somewhat spontaneously, a certain degree of responsiveness to the regimen of online (hybrid) lessons as early as during the spring months. At the same time, it can also be anticipated that the attitudes to online teaching here will be varied and less unequivocal and that they will also contain other assessment components and more differing perspectives, including less positive ones. It can be anticipated that academic employees, like students, will express critical attitudes, for example, to the absence of personal contact and the not easily replaced “live” interactions. As such, we did not want our university to merely rely on incomplete and informal responses from the spring months that moreover came from a limited number of students and we therefore decided to perform an extensive questionnaire survey at the University of Finance and Administration in Prague during the 2020 winter semester aimed at ascertaining the attitudes and opinions of students to online teaching. During November and December, we contacted almost 3,000 Bachelor’s and Master’s students in eight courses at two faculties with an online questionnaire. A parallel questionnaire survey of the school managers and teachers is being prepared for the 2021 summer semester and it will enable a subsequent comparison with the results of the empirical monitoring of the opinions and attitudes of the students.

Current publications are far from saturated with empirical records monitoring the attitudes of the population of university students towards online teaching during the period of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. It can, however, be anticipated that there will be a quantitative increase in published findings in the form of magazine studies and research reports during the course of this year and that this research potential will be gradually met in the coming years. Publication activities with this focus will most probably be oriented towards scientific magazines abroad, in which a number of interesting studies have appeared in recent years which are bound to form the basis for further studies developing the acquired level of knowledge based on the unprecedented events of 2020. In this regard, it is possible to recommend the following scientific magazines: *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, the Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, Learning Environments Research, Educational Policy, Die Deutsche Schule, Learning and Instruction, Interactive Learning, Teaching Sociology, Education Administration Quarterly, the Journal of Educational Psychology, the College Student Journal, the Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching and the Internet and Higher Education*. In addition, there are also bound to be many book publications and conference papers. For all that, we can refer to a number of international studies from the end of 2020 that have analysed the situation at universities during the introduction of online teaching from various research perspectives and usually also include more general problems associated with the limitations to university life in a whole range of educational areas and accompanying services.

3 Methods

The University Research Centre at the University of Finance and Administration Prague performed an exhaustive questionnaire survey at the University during the course of November and December 2020 with the objective of identifying the attitudes and opinions of the students towards the online teaching that had been introduced across-the-board and realised during the winter semester of the same year.

3.1 The Characteristics of the Research Sample

The anonymous questionnaire survey was designed for all students and it therefore pertained to members of the student population involved in full-time and combined forms of study in a total of 8 courses at the Faculty of Economic Studies and the Faculty of Legal and Administrative Studies. A total of 2,865 students from the Marketing Communication, Economics and Management, Finance, Applied Informatics, Security and Legal Studies, Criminal Studies and Forensic Disciplines, Business Law and Regional Studies and Public Administration courses were given the option of completing the questionnaire. Moreover, the Marketing Communication and Economics and Management courses are also taught in English and the Finance course also includes a doctorate course. The questionnaire was opened by a total of 1,181 students (i.e., 41.2% of the basic sample) and we received the fully completed questionnaire from 684 of them (i.e., 23.8% of the basic sample). Partially completed questionnaires were also used when processing the data, meaning that a total of 723 questionnaires were processed in the statistical analysis (i.e., 25.2% of the basic sample).

3.2 The Data Collection Technique

The research questionnaire contains a total of 25 substantive questions and several identifying questions. 21 questions were closed, a further 4 questions were open and this was followed by opinions on the best and worst lectures of subjects and performances by teachers. The validation of the questionnaire took place at the beginning of November using a sample of 30 respondents, after which the questionnaire was further modified and some questions were further elaborated and supplemented.

3.3 The Distribution of the Questionnaire

The link to the questionnaire was sent with an accompanying letter to all the university's students on two dates (initially on 24th November and in the second phase on 15th November) for the purpose of increasing the response and the additional initiation of the students to fill it out.

3.4 Processing the Data and the Use Thereof

The data was processed in the SPSS program and the open questions were then extracted from the system file and recorded on a total of 47 standard pages. This sociological research has resulted in a detailed research report designated for the university management and the faculty and department heads for an assessment of the quality of the online teaching in the winter semester and for further strategic decision-making in the following period, in which online teaching will no doubt be strongly reflected with regard to the current pandemic situation. The acquired information is not only used for the internal purposes of university management policy and decision-making or for the self-reflection of the teachers, but also as valuable research material involving empirical research into students' attitudes towards the exceptional situation at schools which had had to relatively quickly transform their education and study support systems in the previous months of their operations. We can anticipate that the current effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will also leave a mark on the nature of the education system in the future.

4 Results

In this section, we will focus on an analysis of several selected questions from the questionnaire survey that explicitly focused on acquiring the students' opinions on the effectiveness of online teaching and the use of distance teaching tools. We measured this empirically using the extent to which the respondents agreed with the various statements. We monitored the fundamental attitude of the students to online teaching using their level of agreement with the statement “*online teaching generally reduces the quality of tertiary studies*”.

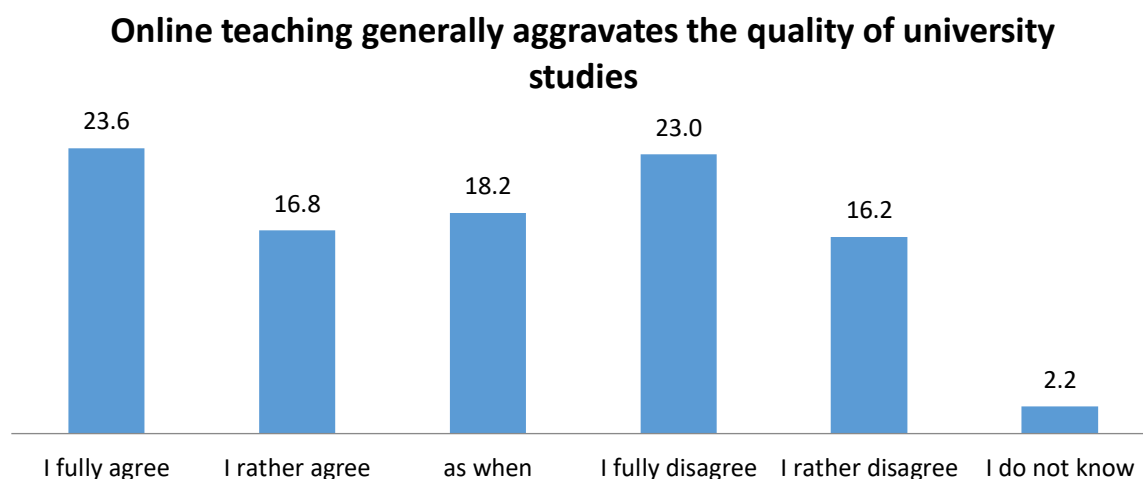


Figure 1: “Online teaching generally reduces the quality of tertiary studies”, the overall response frequency in %

Source: Own processing.

Figure 1 clearly shows the equal distribution of the response data expressing the degree of agreement with the statement that online teaching reduces the quality of tertiary studies. The student population is not at all of one mind in its response to this question, but is rather divided to a roughly equal extent between those in favour of and those sceptical of online teaching with a share amounting to approximately 40% of students on each side of these polarities. Every fifth student answer was oriented towards the central response of “I don’t know”. It is useful to analyse this statement in greater depth according to the type of study (full-time and combined). As we can see in Figure 2, students involved in the combined form of study assessed online teaching significantly more positively than their colleagues from full-time study courses. They are much less convinced of the fact that online teaching reduces the quality of their tertiary studies. This fact can also be partially explained by the fact that students involved in combined studies consider distance learning and less intensive personal interaction with teachers to be a more natural situation which they have reckoned with during their careers and which they consider to be of benefit. On the other hand, the students from full-time formal studies are more likely to reject online teaching or to express a greater degree of scepticism towards it, because their tertiary studies usually follow directly after their studies at secondary school where mutual interaction between the students and the teachers was the everyday practice. From this point of view, the transformation of in-person teaching into online studies may seem more dramatic and less reliable. Moreover, their expectations when coming to university did not include such a large share of impersonal teaching as in the case of students involved in the combined form of study where a reduced frequency of ‘live’ interaction has to be reckoned with.

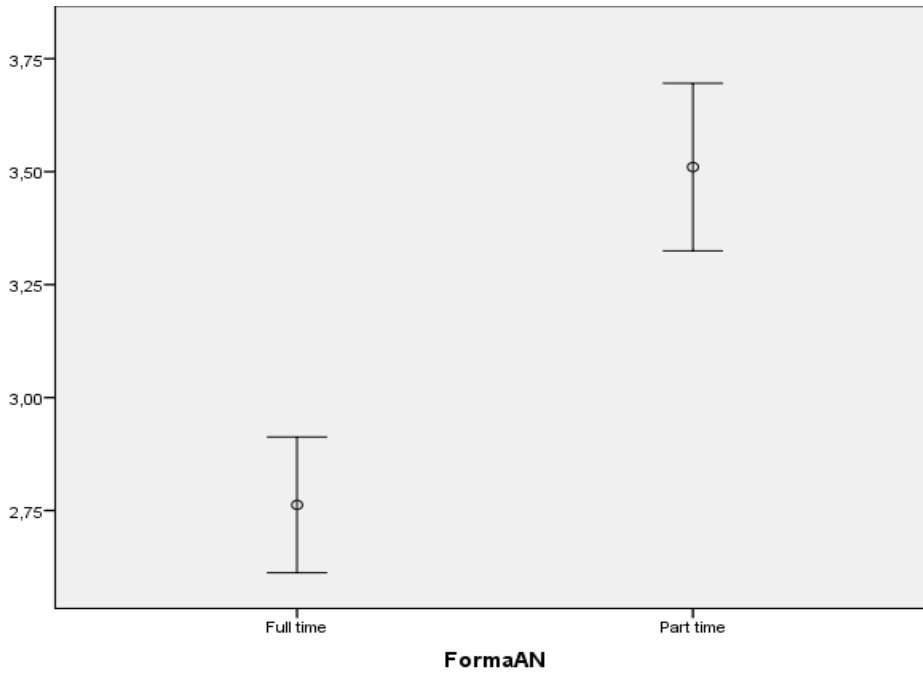


Figure 2: “Online teaching generally reduces the quality of tertiary studies”, the overall average according to the form of study, (the higher the diameter, the stronger the degree of disagreement with the claim)
Source: Own processing.

An important part of the research also included ascertaining the future preferences for forms of teaching. We were therefore also interested in the level of agreement with the statement “*I would prefer online learning to in-person teaching in the following semesters*”.

I would prefer online teaching to in-class in the following semesters

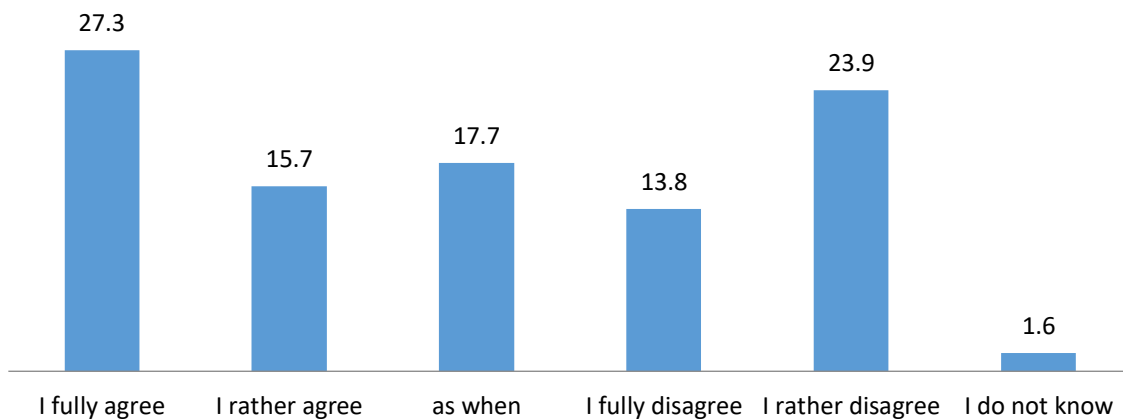


Figure 3: “I would prefer online teaching to in-person teaching in the following semesters”, the overall response frequency as a %
Source: Own processing.

As can be seen in Figure 3, this question also did not result in any distinct tendency in the students’ opinions towards one of the possible polarities that differentiate students as fans of online teaching on the one hand and sceptics on the other hand. The data distribution in this case is similar to the distribution of the responses to the question as to their feelings on the relationship between the quality of their tertiary studies and remote online learning. Despite

that, a slight note of optimism is apparent here and there is a greater degree of acceptance of the possibility of the introduction of online lessons at the expense of in-person lessons, which not only implies a certain degree of tolerance for online lessons, but also their acceptance as a fully-fledged form of university knowledge sharing in other study periods.

I would prefer online teaching to in-class the following semesters

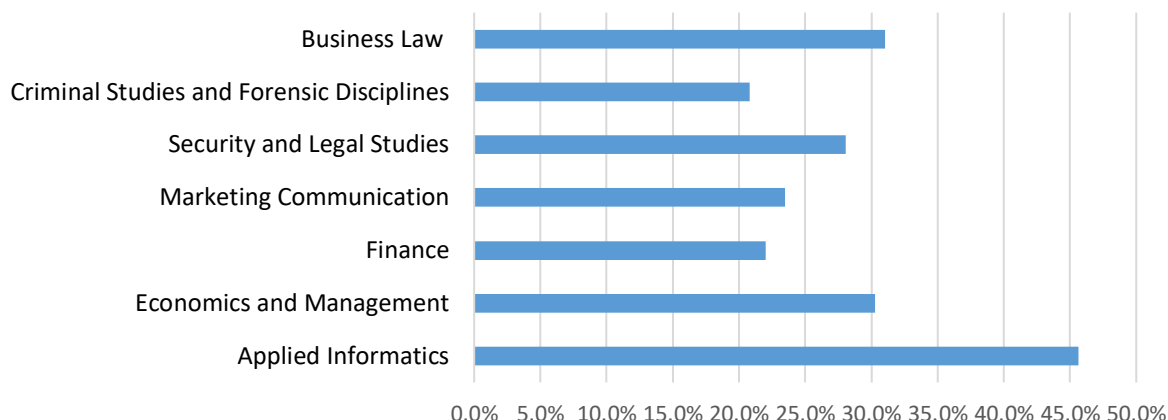


Figure 4: “I would prefer online teaching to in-person teaching in the following semesters”, the overall response frequency - according to the type of study programme
Source: Own processing.

We can also show in greater detail the degree to which various courses displayed their willingness to prefer online teaching over standard in-person teaching in the future. These findings can assist us during any decision-making on the future introduction of remote learning to various courses. Figure 4 shows that the preferences for online teaching are associated with the course orientation. Future studies in the online regimen are an especially attractive variant for students of Applied Informatics, Economics and Management and Business Law. On the other hand, the least interest in distant learning was shown by students in courses where the orientation of the individual subjects presupposes some personal interaction between the students and the teachers. The Marketing Communication course includes the training of soft skills, communication abilities and other competencies based on the face-to-face sharing of knowledge. Similarly, students of criminal science and the forensic disciplines are far from in agreement with the idea that in-person lessons should make way for remote learning, which would preclude the teaching of practical criminal science practices such as searching the scene of the crime and analysing the traces of any criminal activity.

Conclusion

2020 saw the first sociological studies from the area of tertiary education that referred to the changes in the way that universities function and the involuntary transformation of interactive in-person teaching into forms of remote education in online courses. In line with expectations, these studies agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected the university environment significantly, but has also led to the dramatic and equivocal adaptation of schools to forms of remote learning. This currently also heralds changes for the future nature of schools, teaching forms and content, teaching competencies, the forms of the transformation of educational policy and the strategic plans of individual schools. It is

therefore important to follow the attitudes of the student population which will be directly affected by any current and future changes in the teaching methods and content. Using the example of the University of Finance and Administration in Prague, we have illustrated the students' general assessment of online teaching during the 2020 winter semester using current empirical findings. When also taking into account other findings from our sociological research, it is apparent that the students' relationship to online teaching is ambivalent and differentiated according to the nature of their course and the form of full-time or combined studies. Somewhat positive tendencies have been shown among the students in relation to the wider future implementation of distance learning, including in favour of a certain decline in interactive in-person teaching. Similar sociological research monitoring the profile of the student population can simplify the strategic decision-making at schools and their preparedness for remote forms of teaching.

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MEDIA PLATFORMS OF DISCUSSION ABOUT THE AESTHETICS OF THE 1920S PHOTOGRAPHY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITHIN THE CONTEXTS OF EUROPE

Jozef Sedlák – Petra Cepková

Abstract:

The objective of the article is to analyse the background of dramatic discussions about the aesthetics of academic naturalism and the programme of New Objectivity in photography and possibilities of their media reflection. This turbulent opinion period was primarily accompanied by attempts on separation from the academism of *fin de siècle*, mainly through reflection in professional journals of the interwar period of the 20th century that discussed the visual language of the photographic medium within amateur photography, the retreating influence of the impressionist and naturalistic photography, and the ever-growing dominant programme of New Objectivity that combined elements of expressionism, dadaism, and surrealism. The study compares disputes in Czechoslovak journals to disputes within Europe (England, Germany). However, to a certain extent, these aesthetic disputes also stemmed from personal preferences of a programme that individual authors professed. The main objective of the article is to clarify and examine the principles of the disputes, as well as the period in question, which was significantly affected by technological progress of the press and especially by the arrival of the cheap and new system cameras.

Key words:

Academic Pictorialism and Naturalism. Aesthetics. Association of Photo Amateurs. Modernism. New Objectivity. YMCA.

Introduction

Dramatic discussions about the aesthetics of academic naturalism and the New Objectivity programme in photography and possibilities of their media reflection had not been held only in world centres of photography (England, Germany), but, after a certain delay, they also reached pages of the Czechoslovak magazines. Strong polemics about the subsiding naturalism were led by Peter Henry Emerson and George Davison. The English photographer, representant of the new wave of naturalistic photography George Davison, had separated himself from academic naturalism professed by Peter Henry Emerson by his experimentation with a pinhole lens. Davison held a principle that no object of interpretation should be focused to such an extent that prevents the pinhole lens from conveying the *fuzzy* effect that accepts the real original but simultaneously transforms it into a painting. The Onion Field has become a monumental photograph that is still considered the first impressionist photograph. He presented the photograph, printed by ennobling processes on rough paper, in 1890 at the Photographic Society annual exhibition. The English Times wrote: “*Perhaps no more beautiful landscape has ever been produced by photographic methods than The Old Farmstead (The Onion Field).*”¹

George Davison’s impressionist photographs aroused strong reactions. The most bitter attacks came from Peter Henry Emerson, because Davison’s interpretation of naturalistic photography had not respected Emerson’s experience and rules. Peter Henry Emerson claimed that George Davison dared to lecture on Impressionism and photography without crediting Emerson’s research and knowledge. On the other hand, Davison was outraged the most by Emerson’s surprising reversal of opinions on photography as a legitimate means of creating art in his pamphlet *The Death of Naturalistic Photography* (published in January 1891). In his

¹ GERNSHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 122-123.

lectures and books (*Naturalistic Photography*, 1899), Peter Henry Emerson continued to fanatically accuse Davison's visuality as the "*the lowest of all the arts*".² The dispute on the content of terminology of naturalistic photography did not jeopardise the myth of pictorial photography. The technique remained justifiable and acceptable as a photographic technique at all contemporary salons. Popularity of pictorial photography was not even harmed by the criticism of the academic Photographic Society. Throughout its history, photography has never been held in such high esteem by painters as at the end of "*fin de siècle – years of decadence*".³

1 Desire for Artistic Impressionist Photography and Searching for the Ideal

Munich (1898) and Vienna (1902) had succumbed to the Impressionist movement in photography relatively easily. In Berlin, the first exhibition of artistic photography took place at the Royal Academy of Art in February – March 1899. The used gum print was accepted as the most suitable technology that allowed these changes. "*Since the introduction of the gum print, the development of amateur photography has taken a surprising turn; indeed their results have no longer anything in common with what used to be known as photography. For that reason one could proudly say these photographers have broken the tradition of the artificial reproduction of Nature. They have freed themselves from photography. They have sought the ideal in the works of artists. They have done away with photographic sharpness, the clear and disturbing representation of details, so that they can achieve simple broad effects.*"⁴

George Bernard Shaw understood the essence of mystification. As a staunch advocate of photography as an art, he could not deny that impressionist photographs were fascinating, yet he realized that he must condemn the stance of photography theoreticians, who welcomed this deception: "*The critics, being professional connoisseurs of the shiftest of the old makeshifts, come to the galleries where the forgeries are exhibited. They find to their relief that here, instead of a new business for them to learn, is a row of monochromes which their old jargon fits like a glove. Forthwith they proclaim that photography has become an art.*"⁵

Influence of Hamburg and other German cities was especially marked in portraiture. The period brought together brothers Theodor and Oscar Hofmeister and the professionals, who became the leaders of the aesthetic movement of pictorialism (Rudolf Dührkoop of Hamburg, Hugo Erfurth, Dresden, Nicola Perscheid, Leipzig or Wilhelm Weimer-Darmstadt). Within a few years, their exhibitions raised the standard of professional and amateur photography to an unprecedented level, which led to official recognition in the highest circles. In the Reichstag building in 1896, the Empress Frederick opened a big international exhibition of artistic photography and, three years later, the Royal Academy of Art in Berlin opened its gates to a similar exhibition.⁶ "*After the distinctive footprint left by pictorialists, the photography of the 1920s is characterized by pragmatism, everyday commonness, and the poeticism of banal reality. Nowadays, it is the virtual reality that evokes a strong memory of the theory of "communicating vessels" represented by French surrealist André Breton. According to him,*

² GERNSEHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 122-124.

³ Ibidem, p. 126.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 127-130.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 130.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 138-139.

there is a strong connection between reality and the ghost of memory of reality, where being awake and dreaming flow from one shoulder to another and vice versa."⁷

2 Photography without Tricks and Manipulation

*"Creative process and the moment of touch that ensures the present – the connection between the image and reality, is thus a natural concept of vision as a combination of touching and seeing the notion of the symbol of the inner reality and the processes of materialization and dematerialization, construction and deconstruction of reality."*⁸ Considering all the aesthetic turns in the history of photography, there are very few photographers who, within the context of interpretation of reality, attribute all images their real significance. One of such photographers was Paul Strand, who has created a direct art devoid of trickery and any 'ism', devoid of any attempts on mystification of an ignorant public including the photographers. His photographs were a direct expression of the reality of the times. Strand brought a new vision to photography, discovered significant forms full of aesthetic beauty within the most ordinary objects. In an almost abstract design, he demonstrated the efficiency of a rhythmical repetition of a pattern: *"I was trying to apply abstract principles to photography in order to understand them. I have never returned to pure abstraction, as it had no further meaning for me in itself. On the other hand, subject matter all around me seemed inexhaustible. I began to explore the close-up. The portraits of New York street characters represent another trend in experimentation. This was to photograph people without their being conscious of being photographed."*⁹ *"This objectivity is of the very essence of photography, its contribution and at the same time its limitation. The photographer's problem is to see clearly the limitations and at the same time the potential qualities of his medium, for it is precisely here that honesty no less than intensity of vision is the pre-requisite of a living expression. The fullest realization of this is accomplished without tricks of process or manipulation, through the use of straight photographic methods."*¹⁰

2.1 New Objectivity and the Boundaries of Photography

In 1923, the architect Walter Gropius invited the photographer and painter László Moholy-Nagy to join the teachers of the experimental art school Bauhaus that he founded in 1919 in Weimar. The aim was to restore the unity of all arts in the services of architecture and return to the idea of the medieval cathedral, on which architects, sculptors, stained-glass artists, painters, woodcarvers, metal-workers and other craftsmen had worked together. László Moholy-Nagy had thus joined renowned avantgarde artists – Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, Herbert Bayer, Oskar Schlemmer, and others. Paradoxically, in the 1920s, the community of German photographers settled on a collective title *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*New Objectivity, New Realism*). Surprisingly, the initiative influenced the aesthetic development of photography more than the Bauhaus experiments in the dark room. The term *Neue Sachlichkeit* was originally used by Gustav Hartlaub, director of the Mannheim Art Gallery, to present painters who had adopted a new realistic style as a reaction against Expressionism.

⁷ CEPKOVÁ, P., LANČARIČ, P., SEDLÁK, J.: Empiricism of the Medium of Photography and the Interflow of Realities of Vision. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie) – International Scientific Journal*, 2021, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 39.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 37-38.

⁹ Remark by the authors: Extract from a letter of Paul Strand to Helmut Gernsheim, 15th December 1960. Published in: GERNSHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 138-139.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 152.

Later, it was used to denote a new objective approach to the theme in photography and film. The first significant exhibition of this new realistic image entitled *Neue Sachlichkeit* took place in the Mannheim Kunsthale in the summer of 1925. The first exposition of the movement was presented by the art critic Franz Roh in his book *Nach Expressionismus*, Leipzig, 1925.¹¹

The main representative of this movement in photography was Albert Renger-Patzsch. In 1922, fascinated by the beauty of nature and artificial objects, he introduced a series of close-ups, and by isolating an object from external relationships in its surroundings, he discovered forms and motifs that would normally be overlooked. The photographer remained an objective observer, managing the rate of intervention of their personality to the reality in the process of photographing, in order to present the object – reality in the most realistic way: i.e., within the boundaries of the terminology *New Objectivity* or *New Realism*. Daniela Mrázková characterizes Albert Renger-Patzsch as a non-revolutionary: “*He was no revolutionary and still significantly contributed to optical revolution as a photographer. A hundred photographs in the book The World is Beautiful of natural material and industrial objects devoid of any manipulation, were not impressive only at the time as a fashionable novelty, but have remained strongly impressive until today. The reason is logical. The book, as well as the shots presented at the Stuttgart exhibition (Film and Foto Exhibition in 1929) secured a deserved position for New Objectivity in photography. They confirmed that attempts on new style expressing life ideals of technically oriented civilization are generally valid; that beauty of construction design is not an end in itself, as it has its equivalents in the objects of nature.*”¹²

Both László Moholy-Nagy and Albert Renger-Patzsch published their very different goals in the same annual, *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* (1927). Unlike his teacher from Bauhaus, Renger-Patzsch did not feel the need to extend the boundaries of photography. On the contrary, he believed that within its limitations there will be enough space for the creative spirit. Medium of photography was meant to be used in its recording authenticity, not by appropriating painting effects or such means of expression that inevitably led photography to abandon unique characteristics of its creator and medium: “*The secret of a good photograph, one that possesses aesthetic quality, lies in its realism.*” Within this imperative, Renger-Patzsch repeated the ideas of Paul Strand, although his work was unknown to him. Renger-Patzsch accentuated that way too little value is given to the possibility of showing the beauty of materials. The texture of wood, stone, metal, cloth, etc. can be reproduced by photography with their characteristic features in a way that cannot be compared to any other medium. In the exceptional fine gradation of tones from the brightest lights to the darkest shadows, in the analysis and depiction of fast movement, and in the reproduction of form, photography is better than all the other arts. “*Let us, therefore, leave art to artists and let us try by means of photography to create photographs that can stand alone on account of their photographic quality – without borrowing from art,*” concluded Renger-Patzsch.¹³ However, in the conventional photographic circles, the book *The World is Beautiful* (*Die Welt ist schön*) encountered a hostile reception. The official representative of the Royal Photographic Society in London complained: “*In its stark realism and entire devotion to finding patterns in unexpected directions, in other words ‘stunts’, it failed to recommend itself to British taste as*

¹¹ Remark by the authors: Extract from a letter of Paul Strand to Helmut Gernsheim, 15th December 1960. Published in: GERNSHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 139, 165.

¹² MRÁZKOVÁ, D.: *Příběh fotografie*. Prague : Mladá Fronta, 1985, p. 82-83.

¹³ GERNSHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 172-173.

reaching the highest ideals of photography.” Without any perception, he dismissed Renger-Patzsch’s work as “photographic exercises” and “a waste of effort and good photographic material”, and added: “We would recommend the volume to those wishing to study the elementary principles on which Nature has evolved order out of chaos, but we cannot imagine that the results shown would have any other appeal.” The reviewer and author of this article was an ‘old school’ photographer chosen by the editor as “the most fitted” to provide a sensible and acceptable judgment from the British viewpoint.¹⁴

2.2 Walter Benjamin and Putative Objectivity

New Objectivity was a reaction against everything that characterized the Royal Photographic Society – sentimentality, romanticism, artificiality, stubbornness in production of meaningless portraits and falsification of the photographic medium. For the New Objectivity followers, “pictorialism” belonged to the obsolete photographic salons: “beauty and beauty” in the traditional, postcard, sense of the word. Albert Renger-Patzsch’s book *The World Is Beautiful* (1928) had not escaped a critical analysis by the left-wing philosopher Walter Benjamin. The use of photographs seen by the traditional distrust of mimesis meant a return to the struggle for the reproduction of the world of *appearances* that is repudiated for being a deceptive veil cast upon the true essence of things. Objects are animated by the knowledge that the potential of photography does not lie in its ability to reproduce the appearance in an exact way. On the contrary, insisting that this ability is a path to the truth leads to ideological distortion. In his essay *The Author as Producer* (1934), Walter Benjamin berated the “rosy-eyed agenda” of some New Objectivity photographers for their tendency to authorize photography through its ability to be exact (precise), so that even abject poverty could be turned into an object of enjoyment available for consumption and entertainment. Walter Benjamin has especially mentioned the successful project of Albert Renger-Patzsch’s book *The World Is Beautiful*. He highlighted the compilation of stunning photographs of both the natural world and contemporary industrial society that documented Renger-Patzsch’s belief in the ability of photography to transform objects by reproducing them with complete fidelity.¹⁵ He opposed Renger-Patzsch’s ideas, while regarding the fidelity of photography as an obstacle, as its putative objectivity could be used as a mystifying tool of confirming dominant stories about experiences. Therefore, he critically formulated captions as an antidote to manipulative claim to objectivity. Walter Benjamin described the topic of truthfulness at the end of his *Little History of Photography* (1931), where he confirmed the shattering of automatized associations related to reproducible images. In his opinion, it was possible to take control and change the naturalized narratives in which the images have been inserted; he exposed photography as a part of participation on what he, drawing on Brecht, called “the literalization of the conditions of life”. It entailed owning a powerful tool in “weaving the stories” that validate contemporary material and social relationships. Benjamin’s final notes in the *Photography* essay imply that excellently reproducible, although temporarily extensionless, exactness of photography is an explosive power that needs to be used in the militant construction of truth, even if it itself should not be mistaken for objectivity or truthfulness. For Benjamin, it was the structuring principle of this construction – montage (photomontage), a strategy for creating novel records of experience that change materials discarded from everyday life and thus unsettle its dominant narratives.¹⁶

¹⁴ GERNSHEIM, H.: *Creative Photography, Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960, Lecture at the (Royal) Society of Arts, December 1890*. New York : Dover Publications, 1991, p. 172-173.

¹⁵ MCBRIDE, C. P.: *Narrative Resemblance and the Modernist Photobook*. Michigan : University of Michigan Press, 2016, p. 115-116.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

However, the concept of vision (touch) has over time balanced the one-sided line by complementarity of genres and super-quality of subgenre hybridization. *“Contemporary photographic concepts represent a program of communication with the historical time, people, objects, while the historical methodology of vision (observation) is not only the basis for materialization of an archive, but also generates abilities (of the medium of photography – the mediator of reality) to enter – as a significant nonverbal means of communication – into intergenre and intermediary relationships, with a capability of clear vision with the so-called naked eye, in an ever-existent diction of anthropomorphization of the photographic apparatus. The character and its features give a clear assumption of international comprehensibility.”*¹⁷

3 Insurmountable Aporia and the Legend of Truthfulness

In the universe of Czechoslovak photo-amateurs who had also been attracted by the world of pictorialist photography as well as the world of New Objectivity, questions of who is right occurred as well. It is confirmed by the contemporary articles and photographs presented at international salons that have, according to the national professional artistic community, always represented the opinion of the given community, country, and state. Photographic image was an even more ever-present and flexible tool of visual transmission due to an unprecedented circulation of newspapers and illustrated magazines. Contemporary discussions about the use of photography had naturally gone through levels of conventional aesthetic discourse aimed at the question of whether photography should be a part of art or whether it should rather be regarded just as technology. Discussions about this putative and insurmountable ‘aporia’ have remained topical until today. On the one hand, photography has become a medium that has ‘beaten’ the painting due to its trait of verism. On the other hand, this exactness has proved to be a deep scar that has been passed on all kinds of ideological manipulation. This position is not inherent to photography itself; it has been created by the obsolete conceptual terms that compared mimesis – a faithful representation of the experienced world – to probability and illusionism, and have placed the legend of truthfulness into a balanced equation.

In 1933, an essay in *Fotografický obzor* critically formulated the position of objective photography: *“It is hard to comprehend that the proponents of this style, from an infinite number of possible motifs, choose those that are the least aesthetical and proclaim them prototypes. Such images are made only in pursuit of originality at all costs. Even the most primitive person has at least a little aesthetic sense, and I wonder how calm an author of still lifes of dirty chipped dishes would be, if he were invited to the table and served his meal in such crockery, or an author of still lifes of shoes with holes, if he were to run around in them in slush out of admiration for objectivity. (...) The latter contradiction to the laws of nature, i.e., the impossibly leaning walls, recently appears readily in this ‘objectivity’. The so-called objective photography will only reach the heights when it evenly encompasses all areas of human and natural happenings and when it stops declaring the fraction of inaesthetic motifs as its core. (...) Therefore, dictating the photographic Salons and exhibitions to display exclusively images with motifs of today's objectivity (largely constructed and staged) would be as absurd as wanting the art dealers and painters to throw away all their works and offer only those well-known smudges of colour, which nobody would know what they are supposed*

¹⁷ CEPKOVÁ, P., LANČARIČ, P., SEDLÁK, J.: Empiricism of the Medium of Photography and the Interflow of Realities of Vision. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie) – International Scientific Journal*, 2021, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 38.

*to represent without a catalogue.” The strategy of New Objectivity did not confirm the dominance of existential openness of a photo-amateur. Inner identification with the philosophy, thinking, and terminology had not occurred in a deep-educational way. Ideas about mechanical recording as the highest artistic form by L. Moholy-Nagy had not found the necessary linear acceptance. Success at salons and exhibitions was still earned by authors with an expressive and emotional presentation of reality in a form of ennobling print. It was specifically the cliché of imitating painting motifs of pictorialist photography that had found revitalized artistic platforms for topics of ethnographical folklore and national revival in Slovakia in the second half of the 1930s and in the 1940s. The main contributors to this polarization were the mentality of the time, the crisis of conservative political parties, and the rise of national socialism. The situation in the CSR was structured by the term ‘photo-bolshevism’ that had been used in the review *Another Opinion on Modern Photography* in relation to the intersection of left-wing ideology and New Objectivity. “We don’t realize that our photography has found itself in the shallows. Mechanisation of methods leads to an alarming intellectual poorness. (...) Nowadays, the only allure is found in going out with a sophisticated machine to hunt and to shoot. As this is something almost anybody can do, standards have fallen. Those who cannot do more than operate a device mechanism, lack any inner connection to photography. (...) The main error of these ‘photo-bolsheviks’ is their assumption that a dealer – a non-concerned person who, however, does what they can, will be able to pick something pretty out of those random shots. (...) Mechanization of the technical process and personal thoughtlessness have caused a monotony in the mass production; uniqueness and attempts on a great aesthetic goal are missing. (...) Images unchecked in regards of composition are merely a reportage, and they constitute the majority today, as the convenience of just ‘clicking’ is too enticing. (...) It is clear what is going on. It must finally be realized that a machine itself isn’t capable of producing an infinite number of perfect pictures; that a thinking human being must intervene here with their sense, knowledge, and ability to decide what is worth being captured by photography.”¹⁸*

German influence of the radical socially critical photography represented at exhibitions in Czechia by the *Left Front Group* (*Sociofoto* in Slovakia) was reviewed by *Fotografický obzor*: “(...) the third of the exhibitions was the international exhibition of social photography in the Metro Palace. It was organized by the Film-photo group of the Left Front. The reporter of the photographic magazine finds it difficult to present an opinion about an exhibition of this kind, where photography is not the end, but the means. This is confirmed by foreword of the catalogue, where it is stated: ‘It is time to put an end to photographic entertainment! It is time for systematic artistic work that places photographic apparatus in the centre of the class struggle as a weapon of every photographer as an active fighter for socially just human society!’ (...) If we look at this exhibition just from the photographic point of view, we can find several exceptional images; however, unwelcome uniformity due to strict direction prevails. Visitor coming to the exhibition purely out of photographic interest leaves with an impression that it is a venue that imposes class hatred, rather than instils love for a suffering fellow-man.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Výňatky z cizí literatury: Jiný soud o moderní fotografii. In *Fotografický obzor*, 1937, Vol. XLV, No. 12, p. 238-239.

¹⁹ Fotorubrika: II. Mezinárodní výstava sociální fotografie. In *Fotografický obzor*, 1934, Vol. XLII, No. 10, p. 110.

4 Controversies of Defending the Old and New Aesthetics or Struggle for a New Global Medium

We regard discussions and controversies concerning the defence of the old and new aesthetics at the beginning of the 20th century as legitimate, as they enlighten the struggle for a relatively new medium. Within the contemporary glaze of the theory of art, they point at the natural research of the medium of photography in the historical time, with all personal animosities and national pride, as well as the consequences of mistakes made by too impatient personalities of amateur photography. It is necessary to see and accept fragments of history through the *period eye*, including the important contexts of photography as an incoming global medium. Creative chaos of the New Objectivity 'sujet' in the community of Czechoslovak photo-amateurs is documented by a citation from Ján Lauschmann's article *What We'll Be Photographing This Year* published in *Fotografický obzor*: *"The impressionistic idyll of the old, so-called artistic, photography is slowly but surely becoming outdated, and a modern photographer has learnt to look at the surrounding objects and the world as a whole with more sober eyes. Subjective impressions that used to be the main factor of image creation have been replaced by the realistic opinion on an object and its characteristics. (...) However, by abandoning the old grounds, a photographer-amateur is facing considerable confusion, as the novel avantgarde styles are very foreign to them, outside the common tradition that they have been taught in clubs and magazines. It was clearly a mistake, not only here but also abroad, that the majority of the teaching work has been aimed at providing aesthetic recipes for making good 'artistic' images, while the foundations for success – the technical perfection, lagged behind. (...) Why has it been possible for so long to stay in this half-hearted not amateurism but literally dilettantism? Only because the main thing the photographer amateur wanted to achieve at the time was that their 'artwork' resembled as little as possible the simple (perhaps in his mind also 'silly') photography. We can admit blankly that this behaviour is one of the reasons why photography thus far couldn't be recognized as new art. (...) Although this type of photography known as 'New Objectivity' mustn't be the sole goal of modern photography, its mastery is a prerequisite for success for photographs of larger size motifs, such as landscapes, scenes of street genres, etc. Just as in music it is necessary to compile from the simplest elements – tones and chords, in photography I wouldn't be able to create a perfect image of a larger motif unless I am capable of depicting exactly, naturally, but still aesthetically impressively its particularities. (...) There is absolutely no need to photograph only the beauty queens, white-haired oldsters with a long full beard or, again, ragged beggars, maybe even with a bottle of rum in their hand for better effect (and exhibit it with a title *Demon Alcohol*). (...) Let the understanding that it is actually possible to photograph everything around us and that the beauty of photography does not depend as much on the beauty of the object itself as on a sharp eye of the photographer be our encouragement not to limit ourselves only to the 'proven' motifs, but rather to show others what we have spotted so perfectly lit that we felt the need to capture it. Such need should, however, stem from a certain logical proportion to the photographed object and not from an emotional notion that would make the object extraneous. It is interesting that, by this requirement of modern photography, we are yet again drawing on the tradition of pre-impressionist photography that had to give way to impressionism more than thirty years ago. This had not happened without sensible protests of those who actually understood the true meaning of photography, as proved by the article of our dear senior Karel Dvořák in the May issue of the *Fotografický obzor*, 1889, entitled 'Impressionism'. The fact that we have returned there to once again start building real photography is surely not a coincidence and we can only hope that the current approach will bring photography a more dignified status than it had at the time when its outward form*

wanted to imitate some other fine arts and wanted to make a painter out of a photographer. This is unnecessary, if it is certain that through photography itself, its creator is able to express themselves artistically.”²⁰

Instead of Conclusion

The paradigm of the views of photography is also reflected by an essay in *Slovenský magazín* published in 1941: “The first commandment of a good photograph is the technological perfection of the negative and positive. (...) Those times when the photographing staff dealt with ennobling processes are long gone. (...) What is the purpose of modern photography? (...) Firstly, we must know the reasons for photographing. 1. By personal avocation, 2. to preserve a certain event as a memento, 3. to document a certain event or people, architecture, landscape, etc. – but mainly to create an exact documentation that would remain an indisputable witness of events that take place right now and usually do not happen again; or to capture an appearance of a person that usually changes as years go by. (...) Dr. Funke says: ‘A photograph is an evidence of us.’ This means that a photograph made today is not only for us, but is also a documentation of us for the future. (...) The road to good vision comes with an enhancement of personal culture. A good photographer must visit art exhibitions and cultural events. Knowledge of visual arts, especially painting and sculpture, undoubtedly improves a sense of photographic treatment of the motif. This, however, doesn’t mean that a photographer should imitate; instruments used by visual artists and photographers are completely contrary, because a photographer handles a motif that they can either enhance or devalue by their intellect. In this case, it is important that the cultural purpose of photography stays within the limits of their craft and that their photographic instinct and sense work reliably in the interest of the best possible handling of the motif. (...) This is also the right place for photographic experiment, which, by emphasizing the photographic craft, demonstrates before our eyes the extraordinary persuasiveness and black-and-white scales. Such abstract photography is also a documentation about us, especially about the author. (...) Photography is a never-ending process of studying and searching.”²¹ To photograph means to open a dialogue, share the seen, communicate unconditionally with the touch of causality and idea. “These are the historical standard-setting elements of the story of photography consisting of several interconnected hypotheses related to the identification of mutual relationships between the reality, truth, and vision that have been formed within the Western epistemological tradition (‘Western visualism’) informed by science and converted into the direct photographic theory.”²²

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²⁰ LAUSCHMANN, J.: Co budeme letos fotografovať? In *Fotografický obzor*, 1932, Vol. XL, No. 5, p. 64-66.

²¹ Rubrika Fotoamatér: Fotografia a jej účel. In *Slovenský magazín*, 1943, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 28.

²² CEPKOVÁ, P., LANČARIČ, P., SEDLÁK, J.: Empiricism of the Medium of Photography and the Interflow of Realities of Vision. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie) – International Scientific Journal*, 2021, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 38.

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CLUBHOUSE APPLICATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR MEDIA STUDENTS

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Abstract:

The paper deals with a new phenomenon among social networks - Clubhouse. The application experienced its rise and increased user interest at the turn of the years 2020/2021. The paper provides basic information about this social network and a short research that represents the view of students of mass media communication on functioning. It discusses their view that this new social network can increase their media competencies and skills but it also reflects a demonstrable decline in interest from young users. Whether the Clubhouse manages to complete the “revolution” it has begun or not, we can say with certainty that as we refer to the pandemic period as the period of silence and loneliness we all sought to get through, we will remember the Clubhouse as a flash that tore us out of the fear and silence and allowed us to talk. Not just about the pandemic, but everything we ever wanted to talk about with people who, like us, sat at home alone and finally found a mate in clubhouse.

Key words:

Clubhouse. Media Skills. Social Media. Social Network. Students of Media and Communication Studies.

Introduction

“When we think about conversation and communication, voice is a natural extension of that conversation.”¹

Nikkia Reveillac

Social networks in the run-up to the new coronavirus pandemic have been complementing our daily lives for several years. Following news, both from the media environment and from the lives of our friends, we are able to continue and anywhere. But our interaction was defined by text. At least from the point of view of someone who wanted to say anything in public. In fact, social networks are changing very quickly from an environment where our friends let us know what kind of movie they are watching, to a place where we are watched by friends, family, colleagues, boss, or fans. With the advent of podcasts, the number of hours a day spent on social networks increased even more. New players came on the market and the situation has been stabilized for some time. We can claim that, apart from Instagram, no other social network has tried to catch up with the competition as immediately as it was with the arrival of the Clubhouse. For a long time, Facebook wanted to remove the reason why its users would spend time on Snapchat, for example, they came up with feature called Stories, which secured Facebook its first place for the next few years. With the arrival of the Clubhouse, however, even Twitter and Spotify are also starting to develop their alternatives. Today except Facebook and Instagram, as they responded immediately, at least by expanding their existing functionalities. The Clubhouse thus brought an unexpected, but even stronger wind into the environment, in which users sometimes ask themselves the question ‘What else is coming?’. All the while, however, forget about the most important thing - talking. Respect until they were forced to stay at home, they talked, of course, in person. With the advent of the coronavirus, a new social network came along that ‘allowed’ podcasts to be even closer to people. And again, the rule applied - unknown, it is all the more interesting. While podcasts could be listened to offline and group calls had a limited number of participants, they could

¹ BYERS, D.: *The Meteoric Rise of Clubhouse – And Why Big Tech Is Taking Notice*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/social-audio-fire-who-owns-its-future-n1258944>>.

suddenly be in the same "room" with Elon Musk or Oprah Winfrey. And if you were lucky, you could ask them what you thought. Just from the comfort of your own living room.

1 Clubhouse

Clubhouse is a new social network that can be used with the help of a mobile phone that uses the iOS platform and its principle is based on the audio chat format. This social network was founded by Paul Davison and Rhan Seth, graduates of Stanford who had many years of experience in the field of IT, and its rapid spread and growth began at the turn of late 2020 and early 2021. In simplicity, it can be defined as a live podcast, because discussions on different topics from different people that you can follow are interactive and you can actively participate in them. Thus, users do not have to actively watch the phone screen, just listen to them and the application works even after it is minimized. An important and interesting factor is that the application is by invitation only, which means that if you want to download, install and activate the application, you must receive an invitation from another user who has your mobile phone number. However, the number of invitations is also limited and you as a new user have only two. Others will be added to you based on activity in the application. This exclusivity was explained by the creators very simply, the application is only in test mode (beta mode).² If you log in as a user, you can choose areas of interest at the beginning and based on the options you choose, Clubhouse will generate specific content for you and will recommend you to follow this special content for you and its creators. The debates take place in conversation rooms, where usually a few talking and are active and the others are inactive listeners. As soon as the conversation in the room ends, it is not possible to find it, so the created content is unique at that time of the active room. Clubhouse also does not recommend and in some way does not support recording in rooms, but of course creative users have also dealt with this option, where they streamed the debate on another platform.³ Interestingly, in its inception, the Clubhouse was a huge success in China. Despite the complex and strict rules for using the Internet, the application managed to circumvent these rules and experienced a huge boom. *"Chinese users, largely tech investors and professionals, are using the space to talk about topics that would otherwise be censored back home, such as democracy."*⁴ Also some Chinese merchants have taken advantage of this and sold invitations that are free but limited as we wrote above.

2 Methodology

From the available scientific methods, we chose a quantitative method and its tool questionnaire for this paper. It was distributed with the help of the social network Facebook, where we shared a link in the student groups of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, asking whether the students concerned have knowledge of their colleagues and friends who use the Clubhouse application and would be interested in sending the link to them. In terms of active participation, we do not expect the

² Welcoming More Voices. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <<https://www.joinclubhouse.com/blog/welcoming-more-voices>>.

³ TOUMA R.: *Clubhouse App: What Is It and How Do You Get an Invite to the Exclusive Audio App?* [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/feb/17/clubhouse-app-invite-what-is-it-how-to-get-audio-chat-elon-musk>>.

⁴ Ibidem.

involvement of a wider audience, as the application is very specific and at the time of sharing the questionnaire, it was noticeable that the activity in it is declining.

- The basic questions are determinative and focus on *gender, age and inclusion of respondents*. Here we assume that the dominant will be students of universities and specifically the Faculty of Mass Media Communication due to our work and specific experience with the use of the application and work with it.
- *How often do you currently use CLUBHOUSE?* In this question, we will focus on the frequency of application use at the time of the query, as the popularity and activity of use has declined considerably according to personal experience, we added the word currently to this frequency question to map the current state after the peak of popularity.
- *Is your activity currently rising, falling, or unable to judge?* In this question, we asked the respondents' current activity that their application usage time is shortening or increasing. We have also added the option "I cannot judge" for the undecided.
- *State a reason if it is declining.* We added a supplement to the previous question, where the respondents had to explain the possibility of choosing a decline in order to find out their relevant reasons.
- *How would you define your role in the application?* In the following question, we asked the role of users whether they are active or passive in terms of engaging in discussions. The result will be interesting, as students of mass media communication should consult as active because they have experience in the media environment.
- *What content do you watch most often?* We were interested in the monitored content due to the fact that Clubhouse offers professional discussions as well as free debates on various relaxed topics. We were interested in the answers because the application is a place for education or a priority place for rest.
- *How long did it take you to learn to use the application?* The question is asked because of the speed of adaptation to the new environment in applications that try to be very intuitive and responsive.
- *What was your reason for installing/using the application?* We also asked this question from the point of view of the new phenomenon FOMO (fear of missing out), where active users of not only applications are afraid that if they miss current trends, it will exclude them from the possibility of being In. And, of course, we were interested in the current reason for choosing this application.
- *In your opinion, is this application a good platform for improving your media competencies and skills?* In this question, we also followed one of the main ideas of this article and that whether Clubhouse helps to improve media skills of recipients who are engaged in mass media communication. That is, whether the application offers them enough space for self-realization and education.
- *What do you think are the benefits of Clubhouse? What do you think are the disadvantages of Clubhouse?* In the last evaluation questions, we focused on the verbal evaluation of respondents, where they had the opportunity to express their personal opinion through a short statement.

3 Discussion and Results

25 respondents actively participated in the questionnaire. In terms of participation, we predicted this number due to visibly lower activity among users in general. Of the 25 respondents, 76% were female and 24% male.

Gender
25 answers

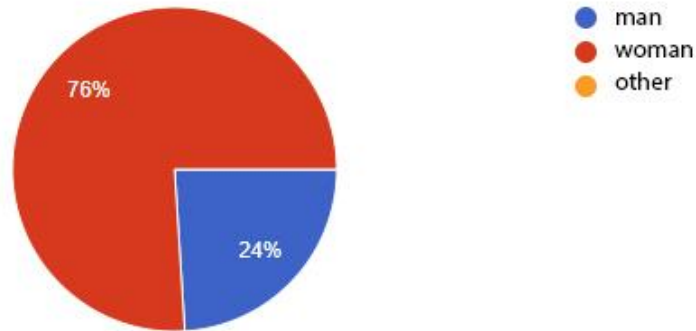


Chart 1: Gender

Source: Own processing.

In terms of age composition, a substantial majority of 88% were representatives of the range of 19 – 24 years and the ‘older’ generation was represented in the proportion of 12%. No one was under 18.

Age
25 answers

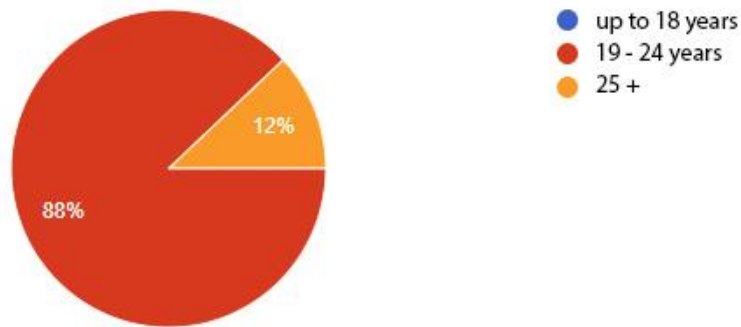


Chart 2: Age

Source: Own processing.

Finally, the sample of respondents narrowed down to the majority of students from the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, which is ultimately good because they have a larger and more professional approach and overview of applications related to communication and social networks. Only one respondent comes from outside the university area.

Status
25 answers

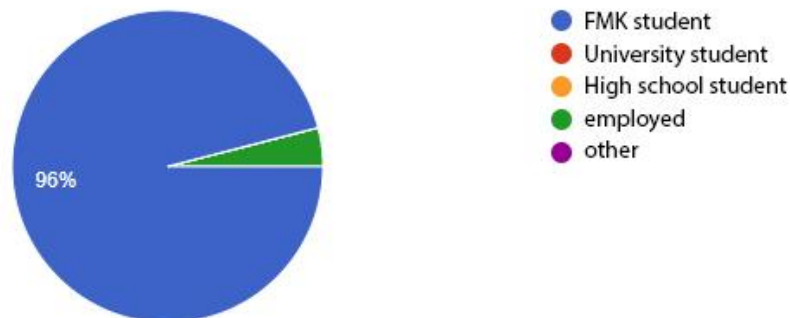


Chart 3: Occupation

Source: Own processing.

In the question on the frequency of use, we assumed a large representation of the time span once a week, but the respondents finally chose the category irregularly, which has the largest proportional representation. Once a week or several times a week, only a small number of respondents chose. Nobody uses it every day, which was a relatively surprising result.

How often you use the application CLUBHOUSE?
25 answers

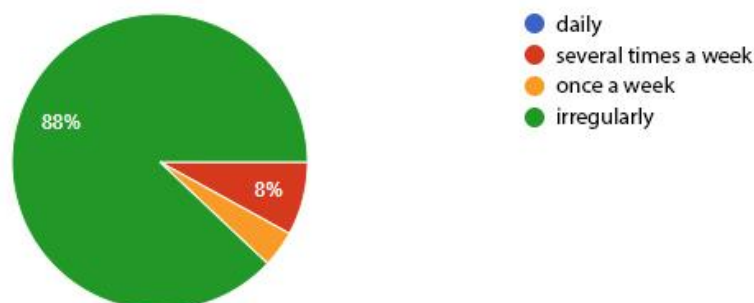


Chart 4: Usage
Source: Own processing.

When asked about the frequency of use, a large number of respondents stated that their activity was declining and a significant part could not classify their time spent in any category, and thus stated that they could not assess. The frequency of use does not increase for any user of the application.

Your activity or frequency of use at this time?
25 answers

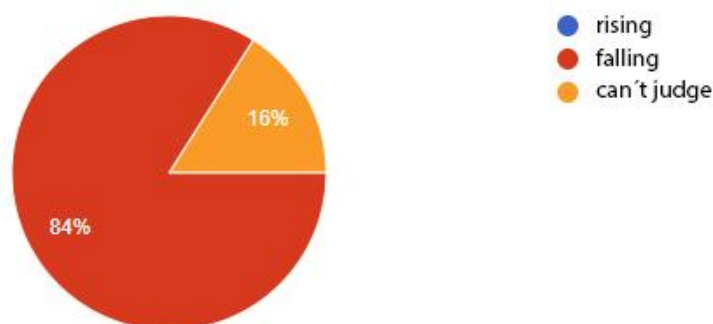


Chart 5: Frequency of use
Source: Own processing.

If the respondents stated that their activity was declining, they had the opportunity to describe their reason in the supplementary question. Many said that there were not enough interesting topics for discussion and therefore that it did not generate interesting content. Some said they were interested in the pandemic situation and that they spent a lot of time at home, and as the curfew was lifted, the frequency of use also decreased due to movement. Many users said that in the beginning they enjoyed getting to know the environment, as the application was very popular and used by well-known people from the show business environment, but they soon found that their created content was shallow and poor quality and their fans who watched them they just tried to like it in a certain way. Other respondents gave confusing notifications of events and a simple reason they were no longer interested. Regarding the selected role of respondents, we assumed that a significant part of the respondents will be active, but this assumption was not fulfilled and most respondents chose the possibility that they are only passive recipients of the created content. The active user, i.e., admin or creator, was only asked.

How would you define your role in the application?
25 answers



Chart 6: Role
Source: Own processing.

In terms of content, a significant proportion of respondents said that they monitor both professional and leisure topics. Some users use Clubhouse purely for professional discussions.

What content you watched most often?
25 answers

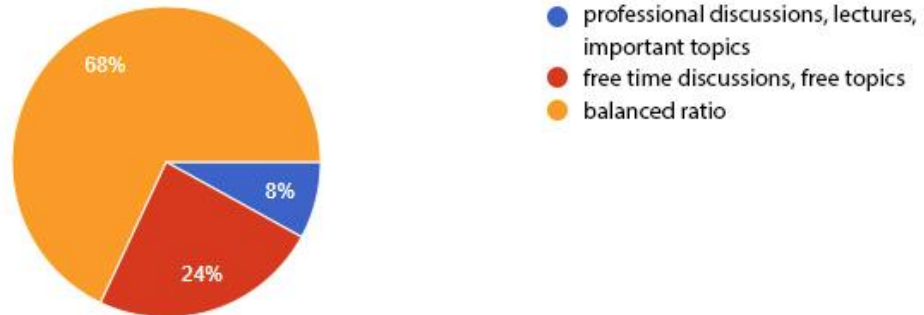


Chart 7: Content
Source: Own processing.

As for the question of the speed of orientation in the Clubhouse environment and the speed of learning to control it, the vast majority were inclined to know that they could use it immediately. It should be added here that the application accompanies you on the first launch and explains how certain functionalities work.

How long did it take you to learn to use the app?
25 answers

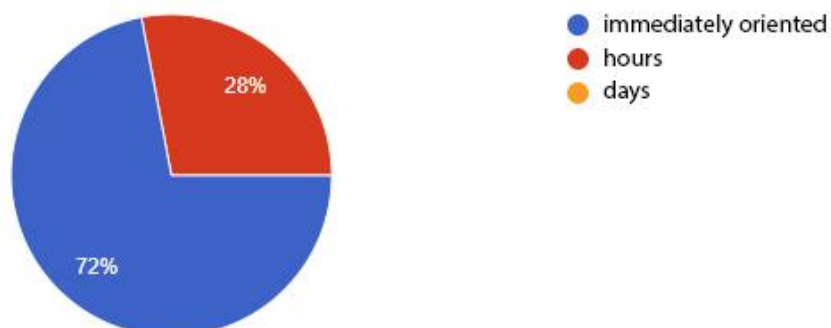


Chart 8: Learning to use the app
Source: Own processing.

An important question about the reason for using or installing the application had a clear answer curiosity and a test of a new trend. The possibility of boredom and FOMO was also clicked by several users, so this psychological phenomenon already has a crowd in our territory.

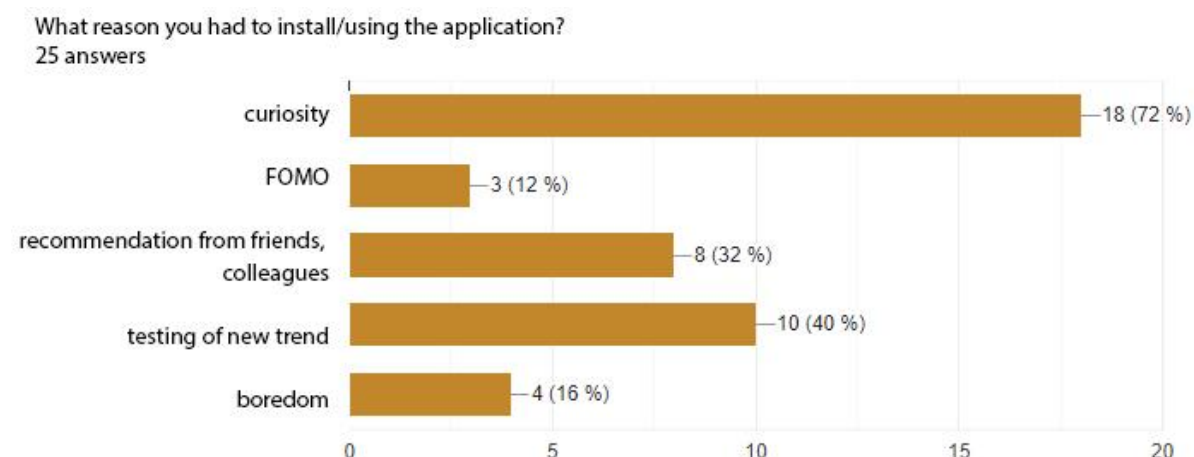


Chart 9: Reason

Source: Own processing.

We consider Clubhouse to be a good platform for improving media skills and in a way the application can be a suitable tool for education in the media space. Recipients are also set in a similar direction, although much of them have said they cannot judge this view.

In your opinion, is this application a good platform for improving your media competencies and skills?
25 answers

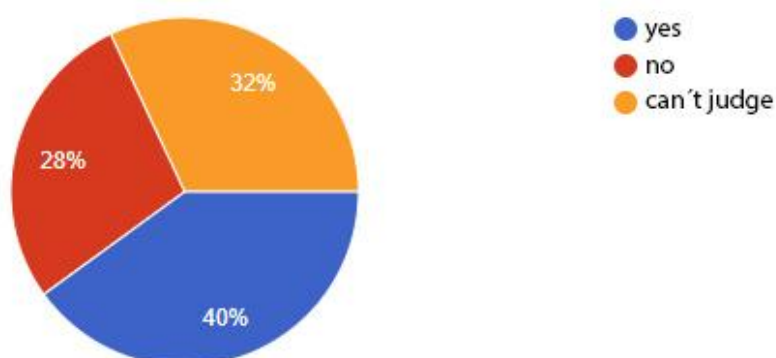


Chart 10: Media competencies

Source: Own processing.

Recipients commented verbally on the benefits of the application and we interpret them. According to them, the only great advantage is the audio possibility that they may not be visible during communication and that the audio is less demanding on the quality of the Internet. It is also an opportunity to listen to debates in common activities such as driving or fitness. The main advantage was also the increased possibility of communication during the pandemic, where people could become more socialized and engage in debates on serious but also relaxed topics. It was also interesting to note that the fact that Slovak users are not in such a large number that the contact and connection options were very fast. If they wanted to engage in debates with popular creators who are not so accessible on other social networks. Among the advantages we can mention the openness of the discussion, the positive message

of most of the content, easy access to professional topics interpreted by experts and from an educational point of view the opportunity to learn to better formulate ideas and at the same time learn to react promptly. Our respondents also commented on the negatives of the application, which we interpret in the following text. The main problem is the use of the application only for users of the iOS operating system, Android is still under development, or at the time of writing the article was not accurate information for this operating system. This makes it possible to follow up on the number of users, that not all experts or people with the potential for this application have the opportunity to use it, and thus the content created is limited. Because it is just an audio form, it is very difficult to react to speakers, as it is not possible to see and perceive their gestures or facial expressions. So overall, the interactivity is limited. And the pandemic situation is also mentioned in the negatives, as many users think that this application attracted attention only because of social distancing. An interesting finding is the observation that anonymity and only the audio form can quickly grow into cyberbullying.

Conclusion

Clubhouse managed to capture the need in a pandemic time to be in touch in other ways than during classic calls or Internet meetings through tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft teams and so on. And it was this COVID-19 time and form of exclusivity that meant that the application became a big hit and many social network users wanted to try it. Wadim Strielkowski⁵ says that even with the help of this application, it was found that people lack an ordinary conversation about simple as well as professional things during the lockdown, and Clubhouse offered them this very simply and clearly. However, the real goal of the authors of this social network is to define more difficult, both and the other team of people worked for large IT corporations, so their goal will certainly not just connect people in different ways during a pandemic. W. Strielkowski also claims that “*one of the possibilities might be a testing site for speech recognition. Artificial Intelligence is increasingly used in speech recognition and mimicking conversations. In the recent years, virtual voice assistants such as Siri, Google, or Alexa became ubiquitous. However more work is required on voice and speech processing and lots of Big Data is needed to accomplish it. Clubhouse might offer lots of testing material for the advancement of this technology*”.⁶ This is a very interesting opinion and time will certainly show whether the W. Strielkowski theory is confirmed and whether a few months' boom will suffice with regard to the collected data. We are left with the statement that the application is a very suitable tool for testing media competencies and can still serve as a teaching and training process for students of mass media communication. For example, students can practice performing in front of people, leading a discussion, arguing, dramaturgy and passing on their skills, and much more.

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⁵ STRIELKOWSKI, W.: *The Clubhouse Phenomenon: Do We Need Another Social Network?* [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350281906_The_Clubhouse_Phenomenon_Do_We_Need_Another_Social_Network>.

⁶ Ibidem.

STRIELKOWSKI, W.: *The Clubhouse Phenomenon: Do We Need Another Social Network?* [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350281906_The_Clubhouse_Phenomenon_Do_We_Need_Another_Social_Network>.

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MEGATRENDS
AND MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: IMPLEMENTATION OF GUERRILLA MARKETING AMONG INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS

Iva Buljubašić – Ivana Nobilo – Ena Jambrečina

Abstract:

Creativity, unconventionality, rebellion, innovation and imagination are some of the closest terms we can associate with guerilla marketing. The purpose of the paper *Social Media Marketing: Implementation of Guerrilla Marketing among Instagram Influencers* is to present influencer marketing as a necessary marketing strategy that makes company brands more visible to a large number of people and allows their products and services to be placed on the mass market. Numerous companies are increasingly resorting to this way of advertising where they enter into partnerships with influencers whose profiles are widely visited and who will best present and display their name and their products. Doing business with influencers on *Instagram* has proven to be a great way to sell and promote a brand, and the closeness that influencers achieve with their followers significantly affects the way potential customers perceive a brand.

Key words:

Guerilla Marketing. Influencer Marketing. Instagram. Social Media. Unconventionality.

Introduction

Nowadays, social media are the proof that we exist, not only as individual, but also as a company. In the 21st century consumer society became more widespread and common with the help of social media and the Internet.¹ The digital revolution has affected all aspects of our lives.² Urban society has a certain tendency to use online systems for daily needs³ and the modern market environment implies new marketing paradigms and the businesses have recognized influencers as a communication channel with significant potential.⁴ The introduction of this paper presents the purpose, aim, research objects and structure. The purpose of the paper *Social Media Marketing: Implementation of Guerrilla Marketing among Instagram Influencers* is to present influencer marketing as a necessary marketing strategy that makes the company's brands visible to a large number of people that allows their products and services to be placed on the mass market and to pointed out the need for companies to follow new trends and identify opportunities to create new customers through new forms of marketing. The aim of the paper is to present the current state of awareness and attitudes that customers and influencers have towards influencer marketing but also marketing in general. It indicates the need of the company to meet the marketing needs of the audience, i.e., potential customers, that true, authentic advertising is the most important for a successful company. This paper also aims to show the impact that influencers have today on the creation of potential customers. The objects of the research are guerrilla marketing, influencer marketing, *Instagram*.

¹ BARATASHVILI, T.: *The Message of Street Art. Street Art as Commodity and Communications Tool*. [Paper Presented as a Partial Fulfillment of Subject]. Ankara : Gazi University, 2013. No pagination. [online]. [2021-01-03]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/4747660/The_Message_of_Street_Art_Street_Art_as_Commodity_and_Communications_Tool?auto=download>.

² CHOPRA, A., AVHAD, V., JAJU, S.: Influencer Marketing: An Exploratory Study to Identify Antecedents of Consumer Behavior of Millennial. In *Business Perspectives and Research*, 2020, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 77.

³ MURWONUGROHO, W., YUDARWATI, G. A.: Exposure to Unconventional Outdoor Media Advertising. In *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 2020, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 3421.

⁴ KOSTIĆ STANKOVIĆ, M., ĆORIĆ, N., BIJAŠKIĆ, S.: Influencer Marketing as a Way of Promoting a Brand via Social Media. In *CroDiM: International Journal of Marketing Science*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 157.

1 Defining Unconventional (Guerrilla) Marketing

The term “guerrilla” originates from the military tactics of the famous revolutionary Che Guevara. Specifically, it is derived from the Spanish word for “war” and denotes an irregular form of warfare in which small and independent groups use military tactics to fight larger and less mobile armies.⁵ The word “guerrilla” originates from Spanish and means small war⁶ or war fought by small independent armed groups outside of the regular army.⁷ According to Schulte, the word “guerrilla” represents a group that uses aggression to implement their beliefs and ideologies.⁸ In 1983, with the release of *Guerrilla Marketing* by Jay Conrad Levinson, the ‘father’ of guerrilla marketing, the public was introduced to a new revolution in marketing, a revolution that presented two ideas: a) marketing does not have to be expensive to be successful, and b) selling is the easiest job in the world.⁹ Also, more forward to nowadays, the same author claims that guerrilla marketing is about low costs¹⁰ and that guerrilla marketing is based on human psychology.¹¹ According to Ahmed et al. guerrilla marketing “*is non-conventional and inexpensive kind of marketing strategies in which high energy and imagination are dominant*”.¹² Also, the authors, Gutiérrez et al.¹³ and Borgave and Ningule¹⁴ are referring the importance of low costs in guerrilla marketing.

Today, guerrilla marketing is the subject of interest for many scientists (and practitioners such as entrepreneurs, managers, etc.), but Hutter et al.¹⁵ and Kuttelwascher¹⁶ find that it has not yet been sufficiently analyzed scientifically. According to Anlager and Engel¹⁷ and Baack et al.,¹⁸ guerrilla marketing is a synonym for unconventional marketing. Also, according to Soomro et al. “*the significance of guerrilla marketing research is increasing daily*”.¹⁹

⁵ HAEREID, M. B., INDREGARD, S.: *Guerrilla Marketing: A Low-Cost Strategy for Startups*. Trondheim : Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2015, p. 57.

⁶ HUTTER, K., HOFFMANN, S.: *Professionelles Guerilla – Marketing – Grundlagen – Instrumente – Controlling*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2013, p. 73.

⁷ ANIĆ, V., GOLDSTEIN, I.: *Rječnik stranih riječi*. Zagreb : Novi Liber, 2000, p. 103.

⁸ SCHULTE, T.: *Guerilla Marketing für Unternehmertypen: Das Kompendium, Wissenschaft & Praxis*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2007, p. 35.

⁹ LEVINSON, C. J.: *Guerrilla Marketing: Secrets of Making Big Profit from Your Small Business*. Boston : HMC, 1984, p. 55.

¹⁰ LEVINSON, C. J., KHAN, S.: *Guerrilla Marketing and Joint Ventures*. New York : Morgan James Publishing, 2019, p. 75.

¹¹ LEVINSON, C. J., KEVIN, L. K. M.: *Guerrilla Facebook Marketing*. New York : Morgan James Publishing, 2013, p. 15.

¹² AHMED, R. R. et al.: Guerrilla Marketing Trends for Sustainable Solutions: Evidence from Sem-Based Multivariate and Conditional Process Approaches. In *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 2020, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 852.

¹³ GUTIERREZ, J. S., DIAZ, R. V., GUTIERREZ-SALCEDO, M.: The Effect of Guerrilla Marketing Strategies on Competitiveness: Restaurant sin Guadalajara, Mexico. In *Journal of Competiveness Studies*, 2019, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 18.

¹⁴ BORGAVE, S., NINGULE, N. S.: To Understand the Effectiveness of Guerrilla Marketing to Increase the Awareness of Chronic Diseases in Society. In *Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 2019, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 175.

¹⁵ KLUG, K., HOFFMANN, S.: Guerilla-Marketing – Eine nüchterne Betrachtung einer vieldiskutierten Werbeform. In *International Journal of Marketing*, 2011, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 123.

¹⁶ KUTTELWASCHER, F.: Mao für Kapitalisten. In *Absatzwirtschaft: Zeitschrift für Marketing*, 2006, Vol. 49, No. 7, p. 31.

¹⁷ ANLAGER, R., ENGEL, A. W.: *Trojanisches marketing II – Mit unkonventionellen Methoden und kleinen Budgets zum Erfolg*. Freiburg : Hauffe Gruppe, 2013, p. 63.

¹⁸ BAACK, D. W., WILSON, R. T., TILL, B.: Creativity and Memory Effects: Recall, Recognition, and Exploration of Nontraditional Media. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2008, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 87.

¹⁹ SOOMRO, A. Y. et al.: The Impact of Guerrilla Marketing on Brand Image: Evidence from Millennial Consumers in Pakistan. In *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 2021, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 918.

Mentioned change of the marketing paradigm through efficiency and effectiveness in the absence of a significant sum of capital and empowered small businesses as well as those that have already established their market dominance. Guerrilla marketing has penetrated all fields and spheres of marketing activities, including culture. Nowadays, guerrilla marketing is also considered to be an art and is based not only on a grand idea, but also on the fact that it is capable of connecting with a well-defined target market. Guerrilla marketing is based on creative marketing, and the key to creative marketing is an intelligent and cunning strategy.²⁰ Typical guerrilla marketing strategies are influential,²¹ unexpected²² and rebellious.²³ According to Buljubašić et al.,²⁴ when it comes to guerrilla marketing prior to a large budget comes a large amount of energy and imagination. Also, when it comes to the connection between digitalization and guerrilla marketing, according to Gregorić and Marić,²⁵ the development of the Internet has greatly contributed to the development of guerrilla marketing because it furthers emphasizes the characteristics of guerrilla marketing where the primary is a good idea, creativity and good preparation of a marketing plan. And, also according to Gökerik et al.,²⁶ the influence of guerrilla marketing in social media are influential on both functional and symbolic brand image. Definitions of guerrilla marketing by all the above authors are obviously similar, defining it as unexpected, personalized marketing and the opposite of traditional marketing. Such marketing seeks to achieve and maximize conventional goals by using unconventional methods and a smaller budget.

Influencer marketing is a form of advertising that does not focus on the entire market, but on the individuals. Thus, influencer marketing focuses on the individual, the influencer who advertises and presents a product or service with his ads or posts on the social network. Given the popularity of influencers whose *Instagram* profile is followed by a large number of followers, and the posts that influencers publish reach a large number of people, thus advertising certain products and services reaches potential customers. As influencers are the people their followers look up to, value them and their opinion and the products they buy but also the way they live and lead their lifestyle, so when the influencer advertises a product automatically affects the awareness of their followers about what they advertise. *Instagram* is full of influencers, some of them are eager for any form of fame, while some influencers are really dedicated themselves to their work, and contribute to increasing the sales of the companies or products they advertise. According to Pale, “consumers like the fact that they do not feel that someone is imposing a product on them, but they consider such content a sincere recommendation from someone they trust. In addition, since it is content created by

²⁰ LEVINSON, C. J.: *Gerilski marketing*. Zagreb : Algoritam, 2008, p. 15.

²¹ TAM, D. D., KHOUNG, M. N.: The Effects of Guerilla Marketing on Gen Y’s Purchase Intention – A Study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 195.

²² SCHWARZBAUER, F.: *Modernes Marketing für das Bankgeschäft: Mit Kreativität und kleinem Budget zu mehr Verkaufserfolg*. Wiesbaden : Gabler Verlag, 2009, p. 35.

²³ MEIER, N. C.: *Eine Präzisierung des Begriffs Guerrilla Marketing mit besonderem Fokus auf Sensation Marketing*. Joanneum : University of Applied Science Joanneum, 2014. No pagination. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://docplayer.org/60098507-Eine-praezisierung-des-begriffs-guerrilla-marketing-mit-besonderem-fokus-auf-sensation-marketing.html>>.

²⁴ BULJUBAŠIĆ, I., MIJOČ, J., JOBST, I.: An Empirical Examination of Promotional Activities in Croatian Theatres. In ILEŠ, T. (ed.): *Movements European Realites: New Developing Trends*. Osijek : Academy of Arts and Culture, 2021, p. 15. [online]. [2021-03-05]. Available at: <http://www.uaos.unios.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ENG-zbornik-prijelom-2021_02_15.pdf>.

²⁵ GREGORIĆ, M., MARIĆ, V.: Guerrilla Marketing in Small Enterprises Business Activities. In *Obrazovanje za poduzetništvo – E4E: Znanstveno stručni časopis o obrazovanju za poduzetništvo*, 2017, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 101.

²⁶ GÖKERIK, M. et al.: Surprise Me with Your Ads! The Impacts of Guerrilla Marketing in Social Media on Brand Image. In *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistic*, 2018, Vol. 30, No. 5, p. 1233.

the influencer himself, not the company, such content fits perfectly into the rest of the feed of an average consumer”.²⁷ In influencer marketing, consumers get the impression that the products advertised are in principle recommendations, i.e., the approval of the product by the people they imitate or they trust.

2 Instagram Users in Croatia

Instagram profile has today become a ‘window’ that gives an insight into the life of an individual. Its use is extremely simple, and one hashtag is the easiest way to get what we are looking for and want to see. Instagram is an ideal visibility tool, it is free to use, and its popularity is reaching global proportions so it is an ideal way to reach a large number of people. One of the strategies and goals of marketing is to make the product visible to as many people as possible, i.e., to place the product on as large a market as possible. Instagram is therefore, an ideal way to present products, services, brands and images. Nowadays, in year 2021 in Croatia, according to Cvitanović, the potential of social media, including also Instagram, is to reach a large number of users.²⁸ Chart 1 shows the number of Instagram users in Croatia in years 2019 and 2020 from January to June.

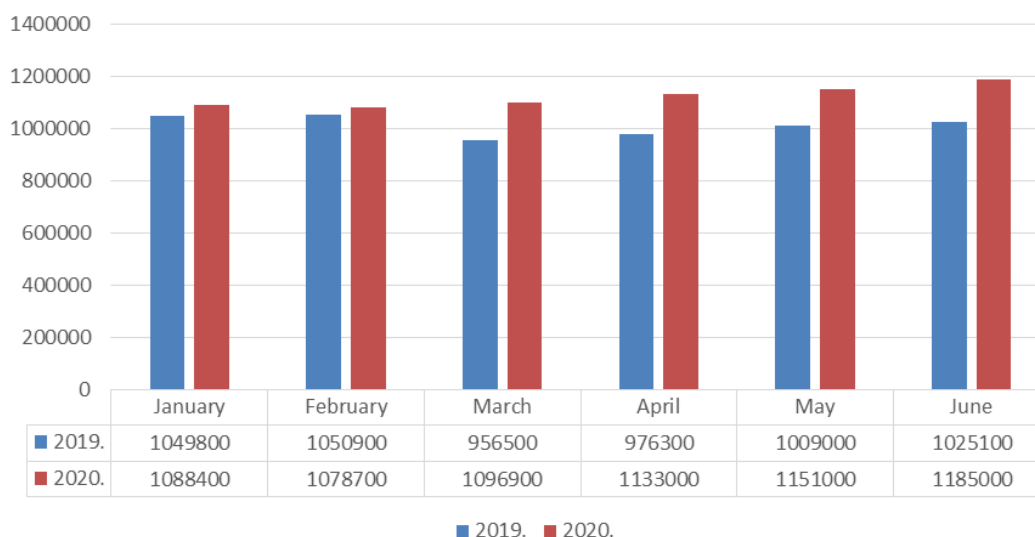


Chart 1: Number of Instagram users in Croatia during 2019 and 2020

Source: *NapoleonCat*. [online]. [2021-03-05]. Available at: <<https://napoleoncat.com/>>.

The chart shows the trend of growth of Instagram users in 2020 compared to 2019 from January to June. According to the chart, there is a steady increase in the number of users in the first 6 months of 2020 compared to the previous year. Thus, in January 2019, 1,049,800 Instagram users were recorded, while in the same period in 2020, 1,088,400 Instagram users were recorded in January. In February, 1,050,900 Instagram users were recorded in 2019, and in 2020, 1,078,700 Instagram users. Instagram had 956,500 users in March 2019, while in March 2020 it had 1,096,900 users. In April 2019, there were 976,300 active users, and in the same month in 2020, 1,133,000 users. In May 2019, 1,009,000 Instagram users were registered, and in 2020 the number increased by 142,000 users and the number of active Instagram users was 1,151,000. According to the chart, the largest increase was recorded in

²⁷ PALE, D.: *Influencer marketing kao moćan alat promocije brenda*. Zagreb : Visoko učilište Algebra, 2019, p. 19.

²⁸ CVITANOVIĆ, P. L.: The Analysis of Digital Marketing Tactics of Selected Insurance Companies in Croatia. In *EFZG Working Paper Series*, 2021, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 21.

June, where the number of users increased in 2019 for 159,900 users. Thus, in June 2019, there were 1,025,100 users, and in 2020, 1,185,000 users.²⁹ Moving forward, Chart 2 shows the numbers of *Instagram* users in June 2020.

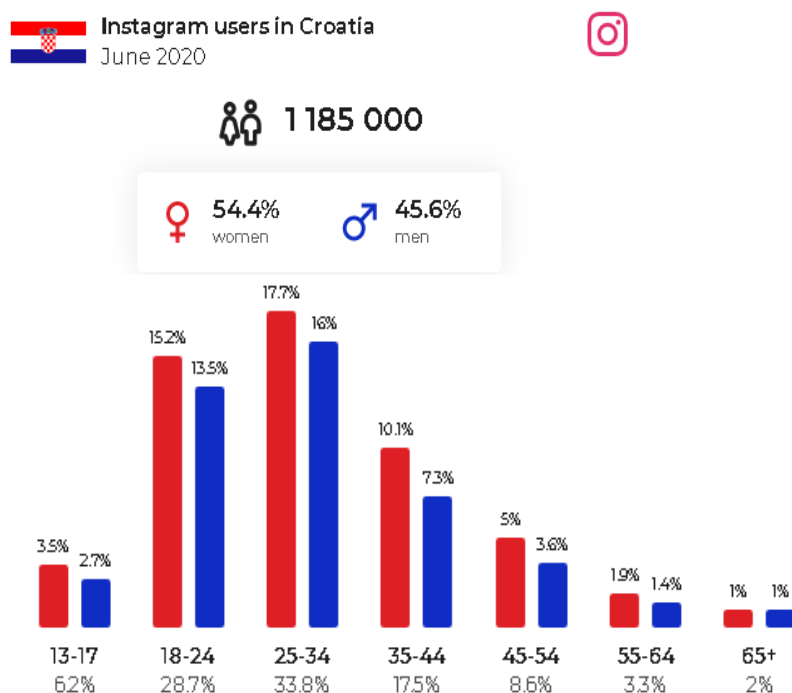


Chart 2: Number of *Instagram* users in Croatia in June 2020

Source: *NapoleonCat*. [online]. [2021-03-05]. Available at: <<https://napoleoncat.com/>>.

According to statistics from the *NapoleonCat* website for June 2020, there were 1,185,000 registered users of the *Instagram* platform in Croatia. Of which the most users are aged 25 to 34, in percentages 33.8%, the least *Instagram* users were recorded aged 65+, in a percentage of 2%. According to the chart, it can also be seen that there is a higher representation of women as *Instagram* users compared to men, so 54.4% of them are women and 45.6% of them are men.³⁰ According to the constant trend of growth in the number of active users on *Instagram*, which can be seen in the charts shown, it is very easy to conclude why *Instagram* is the most attractive social network when it comes to marketing and advertising.

3 Empirical Study

The empirical study was implemented in July 2020 and contained a survey questionnaire and two in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with two Croatian *Instagram* influencers, and a survey questionnaire with 85 examinees (mostly Generation Z) on topic satisfaction on *Instagram* influencer marketing. The authors of this paper formulate three hypotheses based on earlier studies:

- Hypothesis I: Today, influencer marketing is becoming a necessary strategy for achieving brand visibility and contributing to increasing sales.
- Hypothesis II: *Instagram* is the leading platform in influencer marketing.
- Hypothesis III: Customers are increasingly choosing products and brands based on research reviews and recommendations.

²⁹ *NapoleonCat*. [online]. [2021-03-05]. Available at: <<https://napoleoncat.com/>>.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

The results of testing the research hypothesis will be shown in the part of the paper, called an analysis of the hypothesis. Scientific methods used in the paper: method of analysis, method of synthesis, method of deduction, method of description, method of compilation and statistical method.

3.1 In-Depth Interviews

The first in-depth interview examines Croatian *Instagram* and *YouTube* influencer Lorin Nukić, followed by 73,200 followers on *Instagram* and on *YouTube* by 43,800 followers, who says about her beginnings as an influencer that it all started with recording for a *YouTube* channel when she was 18 years old, and thus her popularity on the *Instagram* profile began to grow, where there were more and more followers every day. In this way, she met and connected with people who also recorded *YouTube* posts and show their presents on social networks. In the interview, she states that she did not have a certain moment in which she thought she wanted to be an influencer. Nukić says that everything happened completely unplanned, and also when it started, influencers were not as popular in Croatia and she was not as influential as she is today. She thinks that the market recognized her because she published everything completely spontaneously and the way she liked it, so everything somehow coincided, although she never even thought that her life would start in that direction. She claims: *“I believe the turning point was when companies recognized that I fit into their brand or what they represent. Honestly, I don’t remember how many followers I had when I had my first paid collaboration – maybe around 10,000.”* The first business offer was with brand Fore, and the first profit from influencer marketing was 50 €. Nukić states that the job of an influencer is great because it can be done whenever and wherever. Sometimes it takes her 5 – 6 hours a day, and sometimes 2 hours. It all depends, of course, on how much work there is that day, what kind of collaborations are involved and what season it is, so she states that the holidays are always the craziest and busiest time. In states: *“Most often, companies call me who think that what I represent and my way of life fits into their image – there is everything from hotels, make-up, clothes, cosmetics. I advertise everything I use myself, and I’m really happy to have the opportunity to advertise something I’ve bought and enjoyed for years, and now I’m working with them.”*

In the interview, Nukić also says that she would never present a product or service on her profile without being 100% behind the quality of the same and which do not fit into her lifestyle. She claims: *“I would not! I believe that sounds a cliché, but I really wouldn’t. We are all different and some cream may suit me, and someone who follows me may not. But if something suits me and it turned out great for me, only then I choose to stand behind it and work with them. The trust of the people who follow me is the most important thing, and without that, this job makes no sense.”* She communicates with her followers on a daily basis, and always tries to be active on *Instagram* at least a little – sometimes there is no post on the feed, but through *Instagram Stories*, she always passes on part of her day to followers and provides them with some content to follow. Nukić also argues that the number of followers is not crucial and does not significantly affect earnings in influencer marketing: *“The number of followers is not crucial! Brands look at the person they will be working with, how much they like his or her way of publishing and presenting on the networks and of course, whether they as a brand can stand behind that person they are working with. The numbers used to be crucial, now they are not. But, of course, with a bigger platform you have more credibility to charge more for your service.”* She believes that to be recognizable, the most important thing is to be who you are. When asked how much freedom and creativity there is in creating content for companies, Nukić answers: *“I always choose to work with those who leave me free as a creator, of course there are guidelines that the brand wants, but I always have room*

for my stamp in it.” She believes that *Instagram* has become a great platform for influencer marketing because the population, and especially young people, spend time only on social networks, and watch posts and spend more time on *Instagram* than in front of the TV. In the interview, Nukić states that influencer marketing is a necessary strategy for achieving brand visibility and that it contributes to sales, of course it all depends on who the target group of the brand or product is, but investing in influencer marketing is definitely a good move. Nukić believes that her advertising and recommendations for companies and their products and services affect the sale of these products because she has always had positive feedback and evaluation from the companies she worked with and contacted her for re-cooperation. Sometimes followers also ask additional questions about the products they advertise and provide them with additional information about the brand. Nukić also believes that influencer marketing opens up a number of creative advertising opportunities, but of course it is all about how much influencer or brand there is in creativity. However, I always honestly present everything so that I can easily fit it into my posts. In the last question: What do you think is the key to becoming an influencer, or what advice would you give to future influencers who will become one? Nukić answers: *“As I said at the beginning, it all happened to me by accident. So, I don’t have any particular answer to this question. But I always say, whatever we do, we should be 100% our own and stand behind what we do.”*

The second in-depth interview is conducted with Croatian *Instagram* influencer Jona Tonković with 14,200 followers. Namely, Tonković mostly advertises travel services, but she also cooperates with numerous fashion brands. The influencer states that from the very beginning, she posted photos of her travels on *Instagram* and creative photos as she still publishes now. In the beginning, of course, she was less active than she is today. The influencer states that from the very beginning on *Instagram*, she realized that she wanted to progress in the direction of influencers and felt it was her calling. The first business collaboration was with watches, which and she believes companies have recognized over time. She says: *“I just did what I’m doing now. I think it came with time like everything in life because nothing can be done in a hurry. I think that if you want someone to notice you, you have to fight for it in some way, when I say fight, I mean investing time and effort. The job of an influencer sometimes takes me more and sometimes less time, but I always put in enough effort to make each post different from the previous one. Sometimes 1 minute, sometimes 3 hours.”* The announcement itself in order to make it well takes time to design it, perform it, i.e., take photos/recordings, then edit and come up with descriptions and tags. Tonković states that companies often contact her with requests for cooperation, most often brands of products and only then services, but she would never advertise what she does not believe in, and states that she does not even need it. She also strives to continuously maintain communication with her followers and always responds to them in both comments and direct messages. Recognition, she says, can only be achieved through effort, work and learning. In the interview, Tonković says that in influencer marketing, the number of followers is not the only condition for successful advertising. *“I think that in Croatia a lot of brands only watch the number of followers, which is not good at all because followers can be bought. All Croatian companies should be educated about the importance of engagement and the style of influencers, not just the number of followers.”*

When asked about *Instagram* as the most successful platform for influencer marketing, Tonković answered: *“It is better for brands to invest money in influencer marketing than in their own Facebook/Instagram page because at least they know they communicate with a real person, not a with robot, and they know exactly where they invest. Also, people who follow a person trust the person more than a sponsored advertisement that pops up at the bottom of the*

screen on *Instagram* or *Facebook*.” In the interview, the influencer also states that influencer marketing contributes to sales, which she knows first hand because her publications also encourage an increase in sales, in which she often receives feedback from companies. According to her, her posts are mostly travel and creative content, and she believes that influencer marketing opens up numerous opportunities for coming up with new ideas in terms of creating and advertising products and services. Also, her followers often ask her additional questions about the products or services she advertises, and she believes that this instills confidence and that the followers will trust influencers rather than classic advertisements. Tonković’s advice to anyone who intends to pursue influencer and make money from influencer marketing: “*Be what you are, don’t give up, learn and progress!*”

3.2 Survey

This research analyzes the satisfaction of *Instagram* users on influencer marketing, and the research aims to examine the attitudes of *Instagram* users about the importance of influencer marketing and the attitude they have towards such a way of advertising. The questionnaire also shows how influencer marketing brings benefits to consumers themselves, because they discover new products. The research collects data by respondents, i.e., *Instagram* users, and determines their satisfaction with influencer marketing, their recognition of the importance of influencer marketing, and also finds out how many respondents as social network users are involved in influencer marketing activities on *Instagram*. When it comes to the demographic data, a total of 83 examinees who are also *Instagram* users participated in completing the survey questionnaire for the purpose of this paper, with 69.90% of them are female and 30.10% male. Most of the respondents who participated in the study were in the age group 18 – 24 years, which is 54.90%. 37.80% of respondents belong to the age group 25 – 30 years. It is an interesting fact that 86.70% of respondents follow an influencer on their *Instagram* profile. Given that these influencers have advertised, or recommended a product, service, or brand at least once, it is clear that a higher percentage of these respondents were exposed to some kind of advertising influence. This data also indicates the growing popularity of influencers and why influencer marketing is important. 13.30% of respondents answered that they do not follow any influencers on their *Instagram* profile. Most respondents, 50.70% of them, answered that they bought the recommended product and were ultimately satisfied with its quality. 29.60% of respondents answered that they won a product through the Giveaway announcement, and 14.10% of respondents won a coupon or discount for a product. 33.80% of respondents chose the best option. These statistics indicate the exceptional visibility achieved by influencer marketing and the positive results it brings. The results of the research, which show that a larger number of respondents even bought a product based on recommendations, indicate the importance of influencer marketing, which affects the dissemination of product information, and ultimately increases sales and creates new customers. 53% of respondents answered that they bought a product or used a certain service based on the recommendation and praise of influencers. 47% of respondents answered that they did not buy the product or use the service recommended by the influencer. This high percentage of positive answers, once again proves how consumers look up to the opinion of influencers.

Important and relevant data for this research shows that as many as 80.70% of social network users follow the reviews of the product before buying it. Namely, this advantage is reflected in influencer marketing. Influencer marketing company gives the opportunity to present its products through the emphasis on quality and benefits by a real person who will inform the public in the most honest and natural way possible. Therefore, companies must ensure that their products and services are visible, transparent and that they are advertised through

influencers who will present their company in the most effective way. Since it is important for potential customers to check and see the characteristics of products or services before buying, and also to find out information from a real person whom they will trust more, it is important to make efforts in quality influencer marketing. 81.90% of respondents answered that the credibility and truthfulness of marketing is extremely important to them. Namely, the most important thing for the customer is that the product is presented to him as it really is, without false qualities and magnification. If a product is beautified and misrepresented, customers will very quickly discover that it is fake marketing, which will ultimately harm the company. The principle is the same in influencer marketing, if not with worse consequences for the company, and in this case for the influencer's reputation. Information through social networks is rapidly spreading from person to person, and negative comments will quickly surface. Therefore, the truthfulness, credibility and authenticity of advertising in influencer marketing is extremely important. It is very important that the influencer really recommends and advertises the product based on his own experience and product approval in order to honestly present the product to his followers, i.e., potential customers as it really is. Otherwise, fake advertising and unverified quality could very easily get on the head of both the influencer and the company. For 15.70% of respondents, it does not matter whether the marketing is true or credible, while for 2.40% of respondents the truth and credibility of marketing is not important at all.

As the main disadvantage of influencer marketing, respondents see distrust among influencers who advertise everything that is offered to them, which was chosen by 81.70% of respondents. Namely, some influencers agree to advertise everything that is offered to them in order to make extra money. In influencer marketing, this can have a counter-effect for companies because followers as potential buyers wonder if the influencer really approves of what she/he is advertising, whether they are familiar with that product and whether the influencer knows what she/he is advertising at all. Therefore, with such influencers, the profiles can also show advertising from fitness products to fast food, advertising of competing brands, etc., which ultimately shows that the influencers do not really care what they will advertise. Companies must therefore research and select the influencers who match their values and someone who does not advertise exactly everything that is offered to them. The next thing which examines chose was sponsorship, which was chosen by 67.70% of them. This leads to the conclusion that more organic posts and ads that fit into the nature of the influencer profile are still a better choice than obvious advertising and publicity. 58.50% of respondents choose negative comments as the main disadvantage of influencer marketing as the possibility of great harm because the information reaches a large number of people. 50% of respondents believe that the main disadvantage is the choice of the wrong influencer, while 26.80% of respondents believe that the main drawback is insufficient knowledge of influencers. 13.40% of respondents chose that controversies related to the chosen influencer are the main drawback, while 4.90% of respondents believe that the main disadvantage of influencer marketing is timeliness and constant availability to maintain interest among consumers. When it comes to most influential social media for influence marketing, the largest percentage of respondents, 95.20%, answered that they believe that *Instagram* is the most important social network in influencer marketing, which confirms the hypothesis presented in the paper on the importance of *Instagram* for influencer marketing. 4.80% of respondents answered that *Facebook* is the most important social network for influencer marketing, while *Twitter*, *Snapchat* and *TikTok* did not select any of the respondents.

3.3 Analysis of the Hypotheses

As mentioned earlier, this part of the paper will be used as an analysis and discussion of the hypothesis.

- Hypothesis I: Today, influencer marketing is becoming a necessary strategy for achieving brand visibility and contributing to increasing the sales. Global networking, simplicity, accessibility, free use, have led to the enormous popularity of new forms of communication taking place through social networks. Numerous companies are increasingly resorting to this way of advertising where they enter into partnerships with influencers whose profiles are widely visited and who will best present and display their name and their services or products.
- Hypothesis II: *Instagram* is the leading platform in influencer marketing. This hypothesis is also accepted. The popularity of *Instagram* is continuously and unstopably growing, and thus the popularity of influencers and their self-promotion and then the marketing influencer. *Instagram* thus provides companies with the opportunity to strengthen their influence through influencer marketing on the most popular and influential virtual social network. Doing business with influencers on *Instagram* has proven to be a great way to sell and promote a brand, and the closeness that influencers achieve with their followers significantly affects the way potential customers perceive a brand.
- Hypothesis III: Customers are increasingly choosing products and brands based on research reviews and recommendations. Followers perceive influencers as real people who, based on their own experience with a particular brand and its product, recommend its benefits. Publications of influencers in which they advertise certain products are increasingly focused on highlighting the benefits and advantages of this product through real life situations, followers identify with the influencer and perceive the ad not as an advertisement but as a recommendation and thus decide to buy the product. The results of the research conducted in this thesis on respondents, whereas many as 80.7% of *Instagram* users state that they followed reviews about its quality before buying the product, and a large number of respondents confirmed that they bought the product recommended by the influencer. The presented hypothesis was also confirmed by the answers of both influencers in the interview, where they state that their followers also come forward to find out their experiences about the products, but also the positive feedback they receive from the companies they work with. All hypotheses are accepted.

Conclusion

Although guerrilla marketing is the new future of marketing, traditional marketing should not be neglected. Guerrilla marketing encourages human creativity and imagination, energy and creates a challenge for each individual to prove and stand out in the crowd. Nowadays, guerrilla marketing is not only profit-oriented, but aims to achieve a friendly and warm relationship with customers and keep them and understand his needs so that he gains confidence in a particular brand. Guerrilla marketing is characterized by innovation, unconventionality and a large number of opportunities. It is precise because of these characteristics of guerrilla marketing that it is important to highlight the benefits that influencer marketing brings in creating new opportunities for advertising and customer creation. The planetary popularity of social networks and global networking make influencer marketing one of the key forms of advertising, which is used by a growing number of companies that see it as an opportunity to reach a larger audience, i.e., potential customers. The greatest strength and power of *Instagram* in the context of influencer marketing lies in the

fact that influencer followers identify with the real life and natural environment of the person they follow, so even their ad is not perceived as another advertisement.

Social networks that record a steady increase provide an opportunity for companies to present their products, with different methods of advertising with low financial investment. Companies are becoming increasingly aware that influencers are a great opportunity to promote their products and their work, and are increasingly turning to new ways of advertising through various social networks. This paper provides a basis for future research on:

- the comparison of Croatian *Instagram* influencers to *Instagram* influencers in the EU countries;
- identifying important influences for better understanding of social media advertising;
- identifying the development of guerrilla marketing on *Instagram*;
- the comparison of *Instagram* influencers to influencers on other social media platforms.

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INEVITABLE CHANGES IN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES DURING CORONA CRISIS

Martin Halmo – Andrea Tománková

Abstract:

The global pandemic related to the spread of COVID-19 virus has affected not only the aspects of everyday life of the population but also the aspects of running the government at various levels of the state. At present the Government of the Slovak Republic is able to influence the difficult situation mainly with unpopular decisions and measures which are often presented by contradictory communication not only between individual bodies of public administration but also with the public. In this context the role of local governments is often mentioned. Despite their busy agenda they have been able to take preventive measures to help prevent the spread of the virus even sooner than the state itself. The authors of the paper point out the most significant changes that the extraordinary situation has brought to the field of self-government both in terms of internal and external communication and production process of the communication message.

Key words:

Changes in Communication. Communication Means. COVID-19. Marketing Communication. Self-Government.

Introduction

During the situation associated with the corona crisis, self-governments are forced to change their communication channels, or rather they have to transform their communication to an online space to a large extent. However, especially in smaller types of self-governments, it encounters shortcomings and problems associated with low equipment of information and technical facilities. The removal of these obstacles in communication between the citizen and the self-government is also one of the goals of the Slovak government not only in previous years, but especially now that most public institutions communicate online. The way to achieve this goal is the use of modern information systems and reference data from databases, which are built and operated by the responsible ministries or public institutions with the support of national and European funds. From this point of view, the article aims to introduce the reader to the communication of the regional self-government, its traditional tools and techniques, and at the same time to point out the necessary changes caused by the corona crisis.

1 Regional Self-Government and Its Tasks

Regional self-government in the conditions of the Slovak Republic consists of eight self-governing regions resp. higher territorial units. Individual regions have their own territorial district, they are legal entities that manage their property, their own income and at the same time strive to ensure the services, interests and rights of their inhabitants.¹ The self-governing region thus represents the second level of territorial self-government, while its inhabitants also participate in its self-government. This means that the inhabitants of a self-governing region are allowed to elect the chairman of the self-governing region as well as deputies to the council within this territory, who also represent the two main bodies of regional self-government.² In all areas of regional self-government, it is essential that it has quality and

¹ VRABKO, M. et al.: *Správne právo hmotné. Všeobecná časť*. Bratislava : C. H. Beck, 2012, p. 120.

² POSLUCH, M., CIBUĽKA, Ľ.: *Štátne právo Slovenskej republiky*. Šamorín : Heuréka, 2009, p. 217.

educated human capital, which is a guarantee of expertise, openness and human approach. These qualities should be available in particular to top officials and public relations, as their positions represent regional self-government externally, whether in relation to state bodies or citizens. The issue of communication is an area that has a specific position within the organizational structures. Not only is it an important management factor in which procedures and methods of communication are clearly defined and formally established, but it is also a factor where the human factor plays an important role and its skills and abilities associated with it, which can of course be used in every single regional office differentiate and thus influence the communication process itself. Each of the offices has its spokesperson or communication manager, whose role is not only to cover the appearance of communication in public but also to ensure the creation and implementation of a communication strategy that should reflect the specifics of a particular office. The municipality should communicate in particular for the following reasons:

- obtaining public support in solving public affairs,
- arousing public interest in the development of the city,
- means of mutual agreement,
- public awareness,
- obtaining opinions and feedback.³

The communication of the self-government on the basis of the direction of its communication message towards specific subjects can be divided into internal and external communication. Internal communication is the direction of the message inside the organization. Which means, for example, that it can take place between the employees of the office, its organizational levels or individual departments in order to coordinate certain activities, etc. On the contrary, external communication enables the connection of the Office with the external environment, which in this case is formed by citizens, state authorities or other interested entities. The goal of external communication is to inform and create good relations with the public.⁴ Each separate body operating at any level in public administration uses many individualized tools to distinguish communication from other bodies. For this purpose, letterheads, logos, business cards, websites, or other Internet tools in the form of social networks that can be adapted to current trends and the current generation are used.⁵ Within the regional self-government, communication has the main task of arousing public interest or public support. Through well-established communication, it is possible to significantly increase public awareness of public affairs. Attractive communication even has the potential to arouse increased public interest and at the same time motivate it to develop a certain region. The communication of regional self-government is thus able to build and develop relations with the public. In some cases, it is even possible to attract new investors or tourists and at the same time activate some of its inhabitants for the benefit of the public good and interest. Linking individual communication tools, for example with informatization tools, can bring a modern perspective on new possibilities in the field of communication of regional self-government bodies.⁶ Communication in regional self-government is constantly evolving, thus achieving a better level. The Internet and information technology provide it with a wide range of possibilities. Compared to the past, it is possible to observe a significant difference in the quality and quantity of information provided. Communication with regional authorities thus becomes

³ WEISOVÁ, D., BERNÁTOVÁ, M.: *Strategické plánovanie samosprávy*. Žilina : MUNICIPALIA, 2012, p. 46.

⁴ KOUBEK, J.: *Řízení lidských zdrojů. Základy moderní personalistiky*. Prague : Management Press, 2010, p. 149.

⁵ MIKULÁŠTÍK, M.: *Komunikační dovednosti v praxi: 2., doplněné a přepracované vydání*. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2010, p. 58.

⁶ ADAIR, J.: *Efektivní komunikace*. Prague : Alfa Publishing, 2004, p. 84.

easier and to a large extent also contributes to increasing efficiency in the provision of services to the population as well as to business entities. At the same time, there is a saving in costs, providing equal access for the benefit of every citizen. Last but not least, the availability of services is increasing, universal access to information is being provided, conditions for corruption are being reduced, processes are becoming more efficient, and a knowledge-based society is being created.

2 Traditional Tools and Techniques of Marketing Communication within Local Governments

A characteristic feature of marketing communication is the fact that it is defined as primary communication, which means that its purpose is primarily to communicate and provide information, promote sales of products and services and also act in accordance with other tools of marketing and communication mix. Marketing communication also serves to strengthen long-term relationships with customers and the general public. In any case, it has its differences in different directions of use, which may subsequently necessitate greater emphasis on some communication elements, or their different application. In connection with the problem, we can characterize the essence of marketing communication as the city's ability to assert itself as a product on the market to target groups, active communication, creating a good image of the site and strengthening relations between citizens and local government officials, improving citizens' identification with the city and creating optimal platforms for citizen participation in local development. The aim of these activities is to address possible problems related to the provision of services and integrated products through cooperation with all actors involved in the development.⁷

Promotion and advertising are relatively well used in all types of self-governing units. Printed materials of self-governments are one of the forms of their marketing promotion. These include, in particular, own newspapers, leaflets, brochures and publications. Cities, municipalities or regions also tend to issue in cooperation with tourist and information centres a package of so-called tourist information, which contains specific information about the area or region. As far as advertising is concerned, there is a lack of information materials that visitors can get for free, and it is important that cities, towns, regions have their own logo, visual style and principles of use. Public relations are the most elaborate, most used and at the same time the most effective component of the communication mix. The internal ones include circulars, internal newspapers, minutes and guidelines, promotional boards, elaboration of a code of ethics, etc. Internal communication in the offices takes place through an internal information system. External relations include press articles, press conferences, sponsorship, seminars and conferences. An important place of communication of citizens are mainly in cities, urban information centres. Among the elements that significantly contribute to the creation of the image of the city or municipality are events such as competitions, open days, social gatherings, celebrations of various anniversaries, events for children, etc. There are regional differences in the use of PR, where e.g., some towns and villages organize a craft market, historical processions, theatrical performances and thus focus mainly on attracting tourists, others prepare events that are traditional for them and have their own peculiarities. Personal communication is realized through group communication – public meetings, conferences, presentations at exhibitions, fairs, press and professional conferences, various individual meetings, e.g., with pensioners, meetings of local government representatives, site

⁷ JANEČKOVÁ, L., VAŠTIKOVÁ, M.: *Marketing měst a obcí*. Prague : Grada Publishing, 1999, p. 57.

equipment, etc. In larger cities, first contact offices have already been set up in the entrance areas of the offices, where the citizen can obtain basic information. There are also web pages on which are published e.g., generally binding regulations, self-government budget, zoning plan, but also forms necessary for handling various administrative tasks, telephone lines, etc. Sales promotion is still the least used form of communication. Although cities and municipalities have their own websites, sales support tools are lacking. To attract investors, it would be appropriate to have a catalogue of investment opportunities, which should be published not only on the website but also in the print media published by the municipality. These activities are gradually increasing, e.g., construction of rental apartments for young families, developing active cooperation with other regions, etc.⁸ The pandemic had an impact on the creative and content of communication, we also noticed a change in the use of various forms of communication. We will talk about these in the next chapter.

3 The Most Significant Changes in Internal and External Communication during Corona Crisis

Due to the epidemiological situation, self-governments preferred to work from home for their employees, mainly due to the reduction in the number of contacts of office employees with citizens. Domestic work is a specific type of work that is not tied to the employer's workplace, but to another agreed place of work, most often the employee's residence/household. Work from home, so called home office has become one of the most significant trends in internal communication. It also represents a certain non-financial benefit for self-government employees and was even legislatively amended in 2020, while these changes were reflected in the amendment to the Labour Code No. 66/2020 Coll., which introduced several changes in connection with the coronavirus. According to the results of the SITA agency, from May 2020, up to 50.2% of self-government employees preferred to work from home. The results of the agency further informed that 24.5% of self-government employees did not prefer the possibility of working from home and 17.8% of respondents did not prefer it at all. Online calls or online meetings via Skype, MS Teams and other means have become part of the home office. According to a survey by the agency, 8.9% of employees preferred this method of communication.⁹

Several cities, municipalities or higher territorial units have adopted restrictive measures of various kinds. It is a matter of preventing the possible economic impacts and consequences of the corona crisis, steps must be taken to overcome this situation. Here it is also important to rely on the generally applicable rules for crisis management, the crisis communication plan, which are helpful regardless of whether it is a small municipality or a large city. At present, it is necessary for self-governments to implement and update elements of their communication process and communication as such. It is through the implementation of new communication tools into the primary communication processes of regional self-government that acts as the so-called catalyst to support communication. Electronic communication is a common part

⁸ HORVÁTHOVÁ, M.: *Prínos marketingovej komunikácie pre samosprávu*. [online]. [2021-02-22]. Available at: <http://eprogres.biznisweb.sk/domain/eprogres/files/temy_foto/mktg/horvathova_miriam_prinosy_marketingovej_komunikacie_pre_samospravu.pdf>.

⁹ See: *Samosprávy podľa prieskumu v čase pandémie preferovali mailovú a telefonickú komunikáciu*. [online]. [2021-03-16]. Available at: <<https://www.vsonline.sk/33/samospravy-podla-prieskumu-v-case-pandemie-preferovali-mailovu-a-telefonicku-komunikaciju-uniqueiduchxzASYZNYU-nr8QpN7fcaZWfZ3Jm9u1UWBS0tlgLw/>>; KALIŇÁK, M.: *Samosprávy počas pandémie preferovali mailovú a telefonickú komunikáciu*. [online]. [2021-03-16]. Available at: <<https://www.zmos.sk/samospravy-pocas-pandemie-preferovali-mailovu-a-telefonicku-komunikaciju--oznam/mid/405616.html>>.

of the work of municipal, municipal and regional authorities. Municipalities, including the organizations they set up, ensure that the obligations arising from the electronic communication of public authorities are fulfilled in various ways. These, of course, differ in the number of documents, but also in the size of self-governments. As part of the municipality's communication, they expanded their portfolio or tried to transform it altogether. During the pandemic, they preferred e-mail and telephone communication, 77.9% of local governments did not prefer the personal way of communication between citizens and employees of self-governments. As many as 98.3% of them preferred communication via e-mail, and 97.7% would prefer telephone over personal and e-mail communication. This follows from a survey conducted by the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia (ZMOS) in the period from 16th April 2020 to 29th May 2020 on a sample of 499 respondents.¹⁰

The crisis associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused the necessary changes not only in the way citizens and the general public communicate, but also in the individual bodies and institutions of public administration at all its levels. The increase in the volume of communication in the online space has caught most self-governments technically unprepared. From their point of view, it is therefore necessary to follow the trends of marketing strategies in the future, which are affected by a significant shift in technology, as their pandemic has significantly shifted to the digital world. Gradual modernization and development with the introduction of information technologies bring new possibilities as information from the original 'tangible' forms becomes more and more electronic, thus expanding the possibilities of distribution and their accessibility. The transformation of information into electronic form created the so-called digital content, which is still undergoing development and is gradually significantly increasing its scope and possibilities, even at the level of self-governments. The website remains an important means of communication, not only for self-governments, but also for cities, municipalities and higher territorial units, through which they are competent to inform citizens about news from various areas of public and social events. An important role is played by social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or other channels, where current information is added in duplicate, or other innovations in the form of podcasts, short videos, etc.

According to the ZMOS survey, 44.4% of self-governments have an official profile on Facebook, 0.7% of cities and municipalities use twitter, and 2% of cities and municipalities have a profile on another social network. A total of 10.9% of self-governments stated that they use unofficial profiles of local government on the social network to present self-government and inform the population, such as various fan profiles, profiles of civic associations of the municipality, etc. Another 10.2% stated that the self-government does not have a profile on any social network, but they plan to set it up. In the case of 30.2% of self-governments, respondents stated that their self-government does not have an official profile on any social network and does not even consider it.¹¹ Due to the measures, online and video began to be used more often in the organization of workshops, events and conferences, in external communication. The DataCentre of Electrification of the Territorial Self-Government of Slovakia (DEUS) was also prepared for the communication change, which prepared

¹⁰ KALIŇÁK, M.: *Samosprávy počas pandémie preferovali mailovú a telefonickú komunikáciu*. [online]. [2021-03-16]. Available at: <<https://www.zmos.sk/samospravy-pocas-pandemie-preferovali-mailovu-a-telefonicku-komunikaciju--oznam/mid/405616/.html>>.

¹¹ KALIŇÁK, M.: *ZMOS vie koľko samospráv pri komunikácii využíva sociálne siete*. [online]. [2021-02-22]. Available at: <<https://www.zmos.sk/zmos-vie-kolko-samosprav-pri-komunikacii-vyuziva-socialne-siete--oznam/mid/405616/.html>>.

a package of practical tools for the period of the coronary crisis. They sought to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by enabling municipalities to function more efficiently and making it easier for citizens to recall the necessary agenda from the comfort of their own homes. These are in particular the following four steps by DEUS. These communication activities take place through the DCOM information system operated by DEUS. It is currently used by more than 70% of all self-governments in Slovakia:

- More than 10,000 self-government employees can work from home without any problems, thus limiting the spread of the disease;
- Almost 2,100 municipalities and towns were given the opportunity to deliver their decisions electronically to citizens who do not have an activated electronic mailbox on slovensko.sk;
- More than 2.25 million inhabitants of Slovakia can pay local taxes without having to meet someone in person;
- Citizens can use a mobile application to communicate with public authorities, which can replace an activated electronic ID card and card reader.¹²

4 Changes in the Content of the Communication Message

The global pandemic in connection with the spread of the COVID-19 virus, which has affected all aspects of public administration and the communication associated with it, is also responsible for a change in the content of the communication message. In the area of communication of public administration bodies, institutions at individual levels were able to deal with this situation more or less by strengthening their communication channels within the online space as well as a certain change in the above-mentioned communication message. An important task of communication departments is therefore to create short and simple messages that can be communicated to selected target groups. Among the most used communication messages during the crown of the crisis are the following terms:

- Health – massive promotion of citizens' health protection, through newsletters. A call for adherence to the measures, responsibilities, and principles of ROR, (hand-gap-distance), promoted not only by politicians but also by personalities from culture, sports, and the arts.
- Vaccination – regardless of the current attitude to vaccination, we all have one thing in common, a pandemic has taken each of us out of personal liberty. Because the vaccine is the only effective way to overcome Covid-19, it is the only way to deliver freedom, in whatever form. The Vaccine is Freedom campaign and the symbol of victory in the letter 'V' carry the message that united people in extremely difficult historical moments.
- Security – before the crisis, it was a word that began to disappear from ordinary communication, because thanks to technological progress, people perceived this concept as a common standard and part of their lives. Using neuromarketing tools to determine word preferences, it was found during the crisis that words like safety and safe elicited much

¹² *Prinášame Vám praktické riešenia pre obdobie koronakrízy. Aj vďaka nim to spoločne zvládneme!* [online]. [2021-02-23]. Available at: <https://www.dcom.sk/oznamy-obec/-/asset_publisher/TansOWSRx517/content/prinasame-vam-prakticke-riesenia-pre-obdobie-koronakrizy-aj-vdaka-nim-to-spolocne-zvladneme-?_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_TansOWSRx517_assetEntryId=45577034&_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_TansOWSRx517_redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dcom.sk%2Foznamy-obec%3Fp_p_id%3Dcom_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_TansOWSRx517%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_TansOWSRx517_cur%3D0%26p_r_p_resetCur%3Dfalse%26_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_TansOWSRx517_assetEntryId%3D45577034>.

greater emotional responses to respondents' brains. Based on these findings, the institutions adjusted their campaigns, as well as the communication process itself.

- Public and cooperation – at present, it may be difficult to stay positive, but one of the undisputed positives of the coronavirus pandemic has been the scale and speed of the various joint cooperation initiatives that have emerged in response to this situation. They include new and, in some cases, unimaginable ways in which people come together in a period of isolation.
- Humanity – the longer a pandemic last and the longer global measures of social isolation are in place, the more people seek connections and contact with people, as well as a human approach to communication.¹³

Conclusion

The crisis associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused the necessary changes not only in the way citizens and the general public communicate, but also in the individual bodies and institutions of public administration at all its levels. The increase in the volume of communication in the online space has caught most self-governments technically unprepared. From their point of view, it is therefore necessary to follow the trends of marketing strategies in the future, which are affected by a significant shift in technology, as their pandemic has significantly shifted to the digital world. Gradual modernization and development with the introduction of information technologies bring new possibilities as information from the original 'tangible' forms becomes more and more electronic, thus expanding the possibilities of distribution and their accessibility. The transformation of information into electronic form created the so-called digital content, which is still undergoing development and is gradually significantly increasing its scope and possibilities, even at the level of self-governments.

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¹³ FECKO, P.: *Komunikačné trendy počas pandémie COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-03-18]. Available at: <<https://strategie.hnonline.sk/blogy/2145755-komunikacne-trendy-pocas-pandemie-covid-19>>.

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ANALYTICAL VIEW OF CONSUMER PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR IN SEARCHING THROUGH MOBILE COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS IN E-COMMERCE CONDITIONS

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Abstract:

COVID-19 has changed life as we know it – and as we do everything, we can keep each other safe, our routines have fundamentally shifted. The necessary measures taken to manage the pandemic have disrupted the global economy and altered consumers' expectations, habits, and purchasing behaviour. This has resulted in new challenges to supply chains, fulfilment, physical stores, and for employees and customers. On a global scale can be seen businesses around the globe – including our own – adapt to these new realities. While these are unprecedented times, we have seen businesses start to think about the path to economic recovery in three stages – respond, rebuild, and reframe – each with distinct priorities. Businesses, industry verticals, and markets are affected differently by each stage – with some moving faster than others – but we have observed that the vast majority remain focused on responding. The aim of this paper is to identify patterns and changes in consumer search behaviour in the context of the global coronavirus pandemic and to suggest a way to adapt the digital marketing strategy to these changes and prepare for what's next.

Key words:

Consumer Behavior. Corona Crisis. E-Commerce. Mobile Communication. Searching.

Introduction

The external information retrieval construct means a motivated retrieval of information from the environment.¹ It follows that external retrieval precedes many consumer decisions. The consumer purchase decision-making process usually takes place in three phases: the pre-purchase phase, the purchase phase and the post-purchase phase. The pre-purchase phase focuses on identifying needs, finding information, evaluating alternatives and selecting products, and implementing selection.² The sources of information used by consumers in the preliminary search for information are an interesting topic from an academic and practical point of view. At present, a number of different sources are available to consumers. Conventional sources, such as advertising, newspapers and magazines, radio and television advertisements and brochures have been supplemented in the last decade by information sources implemented using Internet technology.³ For many people, searching the Internet and shopping online is an increasingly common everyday behaviour. The Internet has made a huge amount of information available to consumers. Although the total amount of information available to consumers increases their ability to absorb it, it still remains limited, leading many consumers to abandon their purchasing decisions.⁴ Searching is often related to purchases,⁵ but even so, consumers tend to limit their search to a few products and retailers, as searching takes time and effort and is therefore costly. The study of consumer selection and decision-making processes has been

¹ ENGEL, J., BLACKWELL, R. D.: *Consumer Behavior*. New York: Dryden Press, 1982, p. 112.

² See: SCHMIDT, J. B., SPRENG, R. A.: A Proposed Model of External Consumer Information Search. In *Academy of Marketing Science Journal*, 1996, Vol. 24, No. 3, p. 246-256.

³ See also: ŠTEFKO, R., POLLÁK, F., GAVUROVÁ, B.: Offline and Online Approaches to Quality Perception of Slovak University Hospitals. In *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 2018, Vol. 4, p. 107-115.

⁴ See, for example: BETTMAN, J. R., PARK, C. W.: Effects of Prior Knowledge, Exposure, and Phase of the Choice Process on Consumer Decision Processes: A Protocol Analysis. In *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1980, Vol. 7, p. 234-248.

⁵ For more information, see: ÖÖRNI, A.: Consumer Search in Electronic Markets: An Experimental Analysis of Travel Services. In *European Journal of Information Systems*, 2003, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 30-40.

an active topic in consumer behaviour research for more than 50 years.⁶ Although the pre-purchase has received considerable academic attention over the decades, it is still a high-priority topic and has recently become increasingly important as the increasing Internet penetration dramatically expands to many markets and allows consumers to change their search behaviour. In a digital environment, the pre-purchase behaviour and the search for information differs from traditional search behaviour. Öörni states that consumers who search for information via the Internet use different search characteristics than traditional search engines.⁷ Elliot and Fowell state that general web queries are short, with most users entering two to three terms for a query and two to three queries per search. Scope of search is an important topic, as consumer search is one of the most important mechanisms that control market prices. Searching is costly and therefore consumers do not have to undergo an extensive search if the uncertainty negatively affects their perception of the search result. These search costs are usually expressed in terms of the time spent searching: time is more valuable for the “rich” than for the “poor”. Therefore, it is said that “rich” customers have a “high price” and “poor” customers are called “cheap”.⁸ According to Alba and Hutchinson, the total cost of search activities is “monetary and non-monetary expenditure”.⁹ Cash costs depend on the consumer’s income. Thus, different consumers will assign different costs to the search activity, regardless of the absolute financial costs of the search. Non-monetary costs include time, inconvenience and difficulties in performing search activities. In general, you can expect lower Internet search costs for most products.¹⁰

A sponsored search engine is important to fund the ability of search engines to offer free searches. Search costs are affected by variables such as the consumer's experience or knowledge and the uncertainty or perceived risks faced by the consumer. The exponential growth in the use of the Internet and smartphones has been the most important development in the field of information and communication technologies over the last decade. Initially, much of e-commerce was limited to online stores and services that were accessible through a web browser. The consumer could search for a specific product using a browser, and then purchase it by simply entering a valid credit card number.¹¹ More sophisticated tools for accompanying consumers through search, comparison and purchase are now common on the Internet. The Internet Purchasing Agent (ISA) is used by a large number of consumers on a daily basis. Online shopping tools allow consumers to search the Internet for a very specific product, showing the place where they can buy the product along with the price. Consumers are able to use tools to help with the comparison shopping. In general, these agents are only sources of information – customers must visit the retailer’s website to make a purchase.¹² Other authors report a shift in web search topics from entertainment to business, travel, employment, the economy, people, places and things. Search topics have shifted from entertainment to e-commerce as web content

⁶ HOWARD, J. A., SHETH, J. N.: *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*. New York : John Wiley, 1969, p. 83.

⁷ See: ÖÖRNI, A.: Consumer Search in Electronic Markets: An Experimental Analysis of Travel Services. In *European Journal of Information Systems*, 2003, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 30-40.

⁸ For more information, see: ELLIOT, S., FOWELL, S.: Expectations Versus Reality: A Snapshot of Consumer Experience with Internet Retailing. In *International Journal of Information Management*, 2000, Vol. 20, No. 5, p. 323-336.

⁹ See: ALBA, J. W., HUTCHINSON, J. W.: Dimensions of Consumer Expertise. In *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1987, Vol. 13, p. 411-443.

¹⁰ See, for example: ŠTARCHOŇ, P. et al.: Introduction of a New Mobile Player App Store in Selected Countries of Southeast Asia. In *Social Sciences*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 9, p. 1-15.

¹¹ See also: JAP, S. D., ANDERSON, E.: Safeguarding Interorganizational Performance and Continuity under Ex Post Opportunism. In *Management Science*, 2003, Vol. 49, No. 12, p. 1684-1701.

¹² See, for example: DORČÁK, P., MUDRÍK, M., NASTIŠIN, L.: Marketing Analysis – What Will Attract Potential Tourists to Visit the Destination. In *Journal of Management and Business: Research and Practice*, 2014, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 66-75.

has shifted more toward businesses and people's daily needs. Some studies have examined the difference between offline and online shopping.¹³ It has been found that for some product categories, the brand is more important than in a traditional shopping environment, but this may depend on the information available. Brand loyalty is lower for online compared to offline shopping, but online shoppers choose from a smaller group of brands, leaving them loyal to fewer brands. A useful way to explain the role of a brand in the online environment is to use the classification of search attributes and consumer experiences in the decision-making process.¹⁴

1 The Current State of the Issue

The timeline of economic recovery remains fluid – but there are things companies can do during each of these stages to act with more certainty. The intention of this guide is to help the companies prioritize what to do next and take action. That includes ways to utilize the latest consumer and industry insights, how to evaluate the situation facing their business, and next steps to shift their digital marketing strategies to meet customer needs. The nature of this crisis requires them to go beyond business as usual. For marketers, it can be a chance to try new strategies, think outside of the box, and reinvent the way we connect with audiences. And when they get through this, the innovative and compassionate approaches they put in place have the potential to bring them closer with their customers and communities.¹⁵ Based on an overview of significant research and tools in this area carried out in 2020 by portals and companies such as Barrons, Nielsen, App Annie, Ipsos, Google Trends and Think with Google, this paper provides an overview of changes in customer behaviour and describes changes in search patterns during the global coronavirus pandemic. Subsequently, this paper provides guidance on how to take action and helps through three strategies to help shift the companies digital marketing. The paper also offers three strategies through which companies can prepare for what is to come.

2 Consumer Insights to Drive Your Approach

If companies want to engage their audience, they need to meet them where they are. And with more than four billion people staying at home around the world, consumer behaviour and media habits are changing rapidly. Although we do not currently know how and when the crisis will be resolved, there is timely information on how people's needs and behaviours may develop as they struggle to regain a sense of balance. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, three search patterns have been identified: Shock, Step-change, and Speed Up.¹⁶

¹³ See: ŠTEFKO, R., ŠTEFFEK, V.: A Study of Creative Industry Entrepreneurial Incubation. In *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 2017, Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 250-261.

¹⁴ See also: JAP, S. D., ANDERSON, E.: Safeguarding Interorganizational Performance and Continuity under Ex Post Opportunism. In *Management Science*, 2003, Vol. 49, No.12, p. 1684-1701.

¹⁵ *Navigating the Road Ahead: A Guide to Help Businesses Adapt Their Digital Marketing Strategies and Prepare for What's Next.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/_qs/documents/9498/2020_covidadsplaybook_en-us.pdf>.

¹⁶ *Coronavirus: 4.5 Billion People Confined.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://www.barrons.com/news/coronavirus-4-5-billion-people-confined-01587139808?tesla=y>>.

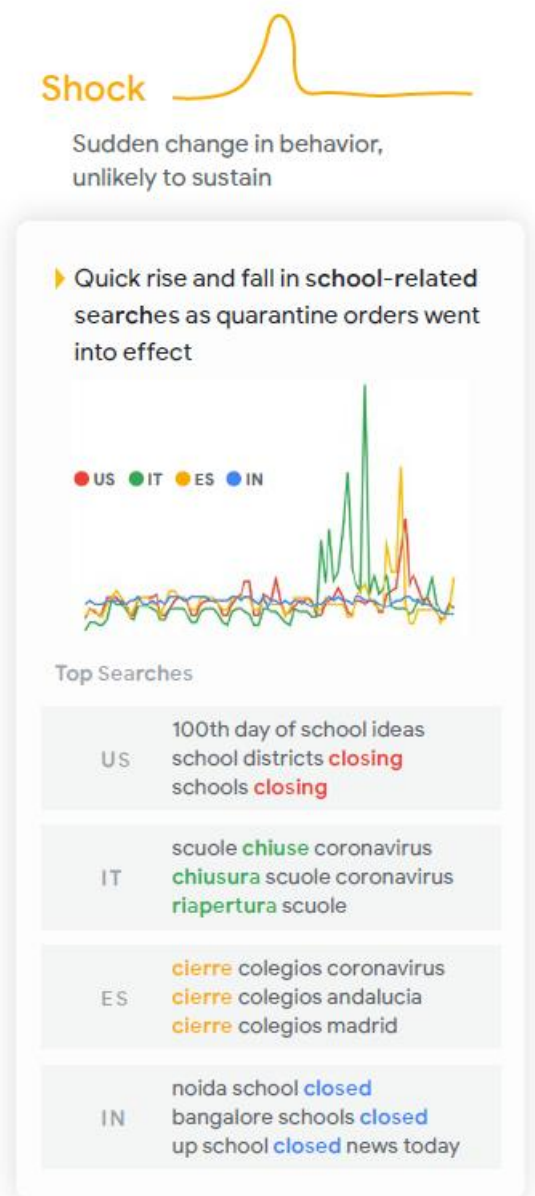


Figure 1: Shock

Source: *Navigating the Road Ahead: A Guide to Help Businesses Adapt Their Digital Marketing Strategies and Prepare for What's Next.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/_qs/documents/9498/2020_covidadsplaybook_en-us.pdf>.

The first pattern of behaviour is shock, a sudden change in behaviour, which is unlikely to be maintained by consumers. With the onset of quarantine measures, the number of school-related searches increased rapidly and then decreased.

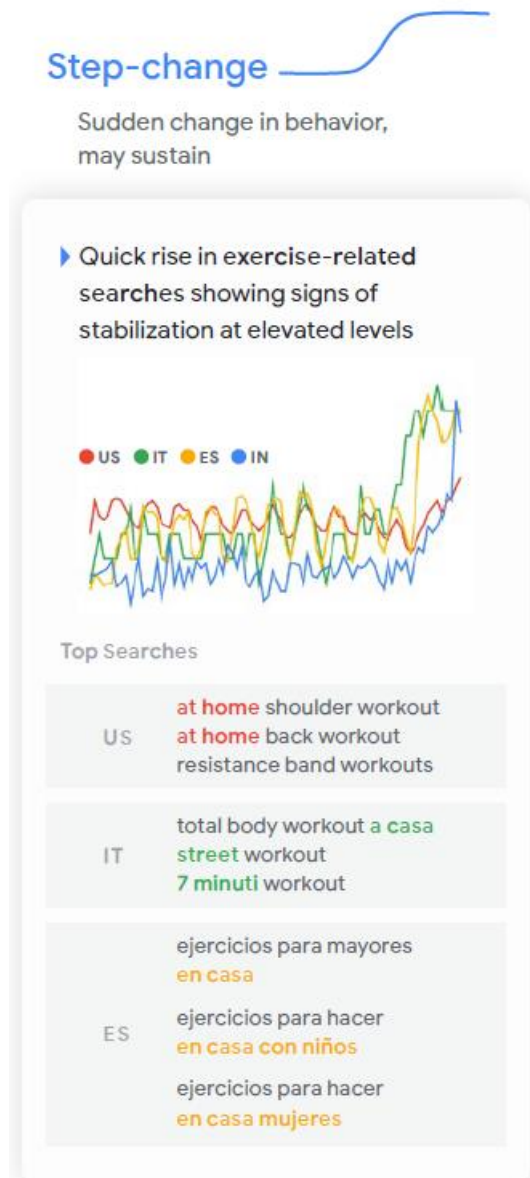


Figure 2: Step-change

Source: *Navigating the Road Ahead: A Guide to Help Businesses Adapt Their Digital Marketing Strategies and Prepare for What's Next.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/_qs/documents/9498/2020_covidadsplaybook_en-us.pdf>.

The second pattern of behaviour is a step-change, a sudden change in behaviour that can be sustained. This pattern of consumer behaviour represents a rapid increase in exercise-related searches, which show signs of stabilization at elevated levels.

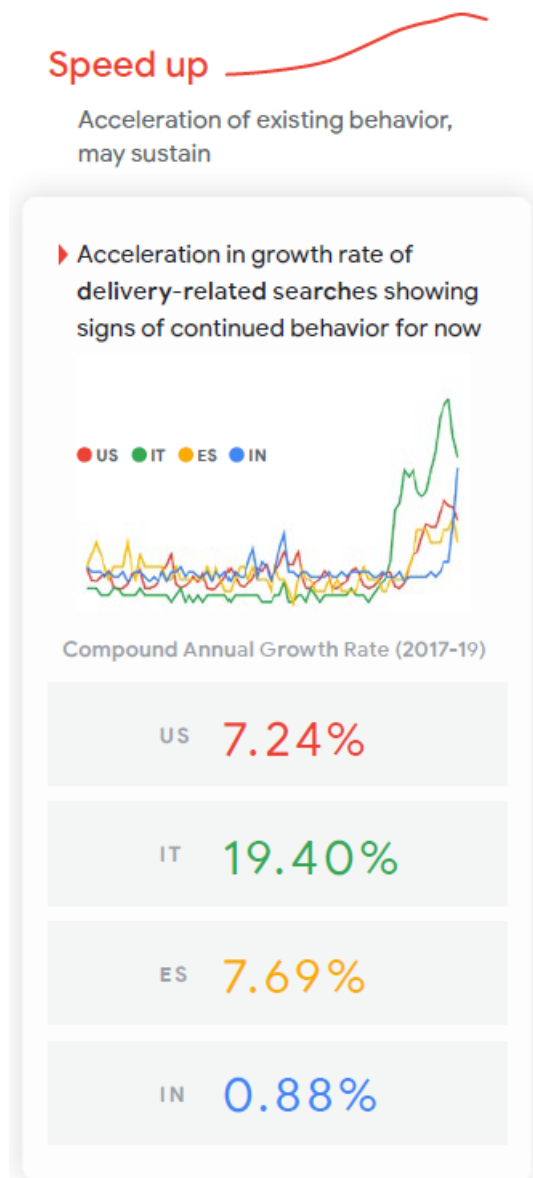


Figure 3: Speed up

Source: *Navigating the Road Ahead: A Guide to Help Businesses Adapt Their Digital Marketing Strategies and Prepare for What's Next.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/_qs/documents/9498/2020_covidadsplaybook_en-us.pdf>.

The third pattern of behaviour is acceleration - acceleration of existing behaviour that can be maintained. This is an acceleration in the growth rate of delivery-related searches, which shows signs of persistent behaviour. When developing short-term and long-term digital marketing strategies, it is important to understand the nuances of consumer patterns so that companies can best respond to this dynamic environment.

3 How Consumers Have Shifted

Here are five key consumer behaviours could be seen playing out across industries, based on how people are interacting with technology:

- **Consumers are using multiple devices to go online at unprecedented levels.** Connecting with the world online is more important than ever right now, with at-home media

consumption increasing dramatically and permeating all aspects of life. In the US, staying home has led to a 60% increase in the amount of content watched – Americans are watching roughly 12 hours of media content a day, according to Nielsen data.¹⁷ Consumers across the globe are spending 20% more time in apps than they did a year ago and app usage in China grew to five hours/day (+30% year over year), according to App Annie.¹⁸

- **Consumers are searching for critical information and content to meet essential needs.** COVID-19 has made life anything but normal. With retailers adapting to delivery or online models, people are looking for clear, specific information about where, how, and when they can get what they need. Search interest in “online grocery shopping” and “grocery delivery” grew 23% year over year in the U.S. Americans are watching videos related to recipes and cooking at a rate 31% higher than they did in March 2019. We have seen search interest in telemedicine increase 150% week-over-week in the U.S.¹⁹
- **Consumers are discovering new connections and nurturing relationships (virtually).** Even as people physically distance themselves, they are using technology in a new way to connect with others. 50% of U.S. consumers said they used video to communicate with family and friends in March. And search interest for “virtual happy hour” is rising, especially in the US. On YouTube, we have seen a rise in ‘with me’ videos, where people film themselves going about ordinary tasks like cleaning, shopping, or cooking. In the U.S, views of videos containing ‘study with me’ in the title are 54% higher compared to the same period last year.²⁰
- **Consumers are adjusting routines to be Internet-first.** As routines and schedules change to meet the demands of isolation and new realities, so have online habits. Search interest for “telecommuting” in the US reached an all-time high on Google and YouTube in mid-March and continue to grow with no sign of slowing down. Workout routines are getting an overhaul all over the world too. There is growing search interest for “stationary bicycles” worldwide, especially in Spain and France, and “dumbbell set” in the UK, for example.²¹
- **Consumers are practicing self-care – and being there for others.** As people stay home, they are focusing on taking care of their own physical and psychological needs – in addition to those of friends and loved ones. People are turning to online video for help in coping with anxiety and stress. So far in the U.S. this year, views of meditation-related videos are 51% higher than the same period in 2019. People are searching for things to do when they are bored. Searches for “bored” have spiked significantly in the month of March, and searches for “games,” “puzzles,” and “colouring books” increased considerably during the same period.²²

¹⁷ *Staying Put: Consumers Forced Indoors during Crisis Spend More Time on Media.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/staying-put-consumers-forced-indoors-during-crisis-spend-more-time-on-media/>>.

¹⁸ *Weekly Time Spent in Apps Grows 20% Year over Year as People Hunker Down at Home.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://www.appannie.com/en/insights/market-data/weekly-time-spent-in-apps-grows-20-year-over-year-as-people-hunker-down-at-home/>>.

¹⁹ *Global, Past 90 Days, Ending March 31, 2020.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?geo=US&q=Global,past%2090%20days,ending%20March%2031,2020>>.

²⁰ BROWN, J.: *Consumer Behavior in the Time of COVID-19.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/covid-19-commercial-tracker>>.

²¹ SHALAVI, G.: *5 Ways People Are Turning to YouTube to Cope While Social Distancing.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-154/marketing-strategies/video/youtube-coronavirus-trends/>>.

²² *Global, Past 90 Days, Ending March 31, 2020.* [online]. [2021-04-02]. Available at: <<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?geo=US&q=Global,past%2090%20days,ending%20March%2031,2020>>.

4 Take Action

No matter which situation companies are facing, determining their priorities is key. They should use these curated strategies and tips to quickly identify the steps they can take today to adapt their business efficiently. The response to COVID-19 has changed the way people interact with businesses, presenting supply-and-demand disruptions, as well as logistical disruptions that have made operations unpredictable. If companies are facing these challenges, they might be looking to invest in digital marketing only if it has a positive impact on their business in the next 30 days. They might also be contemplating pausing their advertising campaigns if they are experiencing severe supply-and-demand volatility. Amid these challenges, they can still be there for their customers by adapting their approach and marketing objectives. Below are some recommendations to help them rethink their advertising strategies as they navigate this time of uncertainty. There are three strategies to help shift the companies digital marketing:

1. Find ways to get better results from your digital ads – Switch to a bidding strategy like Target Cost Per Action or Target Return on Ad Spend that makes conversions more cost-effective. Set more conservative targets (lowering target for Target Cost Per Action bidding or raising target for Target Return on Ad Spend bidding). Pause ad groups and campaigns that are not cash-flow positive.
2. Focus on your most valuable customers – Adjust audiences to prioritize people who are most likely to take action. Exclude geographies where you have paused or significantly reduced operations. Adjust ad scheduling to reflect any recent changes to your operations.
3. Make sure your updated offerings show up in your creative – Use dynamic creative where applicable to drive performance with limited budgets (Dynamic Search Ads, Smart Shopping campaigns, responsive display ads, app campaigns, and so on). Update your ad extensions (Call, Location, Callout, Lead Form, Structured Snippets, Promotions) to reflect changes in your business. Update ad creatives to reflect changes in available products or services, limited hours, special terms or conditions like ‘senior hours’, etc.

Conclusion

As companies work to respond quickly to the challenges of today, they are striving to be thoughtful and strategic with how they start planning for recovery. By learning from other markets and teams, in local neighbourhoods and around the globe, they are beginning to chart a path forward to:

- Respond;
- Rebuild;
- Reframe.

As unprecedented as COVID-19 is, there are learnings they can draw from previous crises. Specifically, we know that the companies that weathered uncertain times were those that stayed close with consumers, acted quickly and with urgency, and began planning early for the recovery. Here are some thought-starters to consider as you prepare for what is next:

- **Incorporate learnings from the crisis into your long-term business strategy.** Companies should take a moment to reflect on what worked well for their business when responding to the crisis – and what did not. What can they learn from their digital-only marketing efforts that worked during this time and apply to the non-digital world, whether it is in-store marketing or out-of-home channels? By scaling successful tactics to address other gaps in their processes, they can set up a strategic approach that works for them. And if they have redefined their marketing objectives, think about how their business has changed to meet

these new goals. Finally, they should look at the recovery efforts that followed other crises or recessions to see if there are any learnings that could apply now.

- **Invest in infrastructure to measure what matters.** When it comes to measuring results, it is important to prioritize metrics that drive tangible business outcomes like profitability. Once companies have identified the right things to track, they should use them to make their measurement framework more robust. By investing in deeper marketing analytics and forecasting, they can better understand changes in consumer behaviour and anticipate when demand will return as we work toward recovery. They should identify which trends from their marketing analytics are temporary responses, which are accelerated consumer trends (like technology adoption), and which are permanent behaviour shifts. They can also implement an impact matrix, similar to this one, to measure the bottom-line impact of their campaigns.
- **Redefine your brand principles and reassess what your brand needs today.** During this crisis, we have seen consumers turning to brands they trust and engaging with new brands that have offered an innovative or compassionate response to COVID-19. Companies should evaluate what their company means to their most valuable customers today and periodically reassess whether their needs have changed. They should see this context to create flexible creative that allows them to react to fast-changing consumer behaviours – and make sure to spend some time developing, investing in, or rethinking your loyalty strategy to build brand love during recovery.

While we do not know when the disruptive shifts of this crisis will resolve, we do know that remaining flexible and adapting with agility is the key to staying connected with customers and giving them the support they need. Only time will tell if certain consumer behaviour shifts will endure, but the sum effect will be a lasting acceleration to digital. So, as we work to be there for one another, use this time to re-evaluate business priorities, test innovative approaches, and connect with customers in meaningful new ways.

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ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION OF TERRITORY TOWARDS THE POPULATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

The use of marketing communication tools in a particular territory is essential and expected from the point of view of the population. Communication within individual countries and thus territories at the pandemic towards their inhabitants is getting a new dimension. Residents are increasingly looking for information in the online space to help them find their way in the current measures ordered by the government. This paper deals with the importance of using communication tools in the operation of the territories, especially during the pandemic. It also presents and compares various tools of the communication mix used by Slovakia and other selected foreign countries towards their inhabitants during the pandemic.

Key words:

Communication. Communication Tools. Inhabitants. Pandemic. Regional and Local Media. Territory.

Introduction

Experience from abroad points to two crucial facts, which are:

1. Regional and local media develop in a very differentiated way and represent a wide range of means of spreading local and regional information and advertising. Their development and structure are conditioned by the historical, economic, cultural and political conditions of the countries in which they operate. There is no single model or generally applicable typology of these media.
2. Regional and local media are essential and dynamic elements of national media systems, contributing significantly to their changes. At the same time, these media are an essential tool for democratizing society, as they make it much easier for citizens to participate in the governance of the particular regions. In addition, they function as an essential cultural factor ensuring the preservation of cultural traditions¹ and regional (local) identity. The current development of media communication is affected by two opposing and contradictory processes.

On the one hand, due to the globalization of the economy, the functioning of international and global markets, but also due to the influence of new communication and distribution technologies, communication is globalizing. This process provides the concentration of media companies, the creation of transnational conglomerates and monopolies, controlling the distribution of communicated content. At the same time, this is causing the globalization of culture, with severe threats for smaller national and minority cultures.² On the other hand, there is a massive expansion of regional and local media of diverse nature and focus, satisfying a wide range of group and individual interests, diversify the media scene and audience,³ provide space for the pluralistic expression of views and serve as a democratic tool for citizen participation in the governance of public affairs, integration factor of regional and local communities, but also as an essential factor in the development of minority cultures. Slovakia has recently attracted the attention of foreign media, as it is used as an example of a country that reacted strictly and in a timely manner to the onset of the coronavirus epidemic.

¹ BUŠÍK, J.: *Regionálny manažment a marketing*. Bratislava : Ekonóm, 2010, p. 78.

² FORET, M.: *Marketing v regionálnom rozvoji*. Brno : Mendel University in Brno, 2013, p. 63.

³ ČÁBYOVÁ, E.: *Marketing a marketingová komunikácia v médiách*. 1st Edition. Łódź : Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy Michał Koliński, 2012, p. 58.

The role of local governments, which took precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus before the state, is often mentioned in this context.⁴ In this paper, we present the communication tools used by Slovakia and other countries and territories to share the information on measures and guidelines concerning the spreading coronavirus pandemic, with the initial phase in March 2020. We also provide examples of communication tools used during pandemics by various other countries of the world.

1 The Importance of Communication Tools in the Region

Regular regional or the local medium is press. It was local or regional by force at the very early stages, as transport and distribution options did not allow it to expand in all territories.⁵ Furthermore, although the scope of the press has expanded due to economic, technical and political factors, and the press has become a typical national medium, in many countries, it has retained its predominantly regional and local character, which persists to this day.⁶ In addition, it appears that at present, when the press is constantly losing its former position in almost all developed countries of the world, mainly due to television, regional and local press is most resisting the competitive pressure of more progressive media. Although the regional and local press has a different character and different territorial definition in different countries, its viability and attractiveness to the reader sources from its proximity to the reader and its ability to cultivate the regional or local identity of the reader, but especially to use known psychological patterns – if the event is close to the reader, the more interesting the news about this event is for the reader. Unlike the regional and local press, which, especially in the countries with the most progressive press (USA, Germany, France, etc.), played a crucial role in national media systems and several of them still plays a more critical position than the central press, regional and local electronic media are now a required tool that the region should use daily. Regional and local media deserve attention mainly from two points of view:

1. In terms of the ecology of media systems, this is a specific role played by local and regional media in the development of entire national media systems.
2. In terms of regional policy, this is the specific impact of new media (or old media in a new position) on certain regions' cultural and economic development.⁷

If we recognize that the communication system is not static, but evolving, then regional and local media are among the dynamic elements of these changes. Due to their accessibility and contactability, they create new communication expectations and needs for their customers. Radio, local not only in its impact but also in its ideology, has in some cases become an active and interesting element of regional development – one of the leading 'creators of the region' not only in the traditional cultural sense (regional awareness, cultural identity, dialect), but also in the economic sense (development of the labour market, dynamization of the local

⁴ MACKO, O.: *Platforma na sledovanie všetkého o vašej obci teraz úplne zadarmo. Aj s funkcionalitou pre COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://touchit.sk/platforma-na-sledovanie-vsetkeho-o-obci-teraz-uplne-zadarmo-aj-s-funcionalitou-pre-covid-19/316116>>.

⁵ ČÁBYOVÁ, E.: *Marketing a marketingová komunikácia v médiách*. 1st Edition. Łódź : Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy Michał Koliński, 2012, p. 112.

⁶ JÁNOŠOVÁ, D.: *Uplatňovanie marketingových aktivít v prospech regionálneho rozvoja*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2012, p. 42.

⁷ MATÚŠ, J.: Marketing – významný nástroj zvyšovania konkurencieschopnosti. In MATÚŠ, J., PETRANOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Nové trendy v marketingovej komunikácii*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2011, p. 10. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <https://fmk.sk/download/konferencie/zborniky/NTM_2011_-_Nove_trendy_v_marketingovej_komunikacii.pdf>.

market). Regional and local media are a manifestation of one of the trends in the current media development. We observe a significant shift from the mass audience to individual audience groups.⁸ Their initial phases can be understood as part of the process of segmentation of the mass audience, possible to be observed from the 1960s. The most comprehensive level of segmentation is geographic segmentation. Regional media are defined according to the territory they are active in, i.e., where newspaper prints are distributed, the signal of a radio or television broadcast is distributed. The size of this area varies – city, region, country, etc.⁹ Geographical fragmentation can be natural or artificial. It is natural if it respects the boundaries of the socio-cultural community. Artificial fragmentation is defined according to exclusively technical, administrative or commercial criteria. The second level of audience segmentation extends along cultural or sectoral lines. In this case, the local medium can be defined as a community of interest. This community may be in a field of very different cultural or linguistic traditions. In other cases, the local medium may represent linguistic, ethnic, social or other minorities in larger geographical areas.¹⁰ In this case, the type of communication is local rather than the area with the presence of a signal. Audience segmentation can also result from a commercial adaptation of the medium to market developments only to respect supply and demand rules and use all possible sources of advertising revenue at all levels. The creation of networks of local radio or television stations also serves this reason,¹¹ thanks to this network, local networks can also use it and regional and national advertising. We currently see more often that regional communication tools, such as social media, are being used in the context of regional activity. The increased visibility of the region and its attractiveness lies in addressing the broadest possible public. Moreover, that is why we can find the websites of various regional newspapers that intend to be more accessible to their online audience. However, segmentation may also result from a ‘top-down regulation’ as a result of planned decentralization measures by governments or broadcasting institutions. This can be done simply by reducing the level of activity and following the administrative division.¹² However, measures can be one of the components of more comprehensive decentralization measures for regional development. Usually, segmentation that is the result of a natural process is more successful. It can be regulated and monitored as in Scandinavia or completely spontaneous and with no barriers at all as in Italy. Successful segmentation allows regional and local media to find a suitable place in the country’s overall media system. This can be done by finding a free layer of the audience whose needs are not met by the central media. Alternatively, by choosing specific content following specific regional or local needs and expectations of the audience.¹³ Successful segmentation, in contrast to voluntary isolation, allows individual media to interact constructively with other elements of the local and regional media scene.

2 Communication Tools Used during a Pandemic

Effective communication of competent persons in local governments about the share of coronavirus could help to raise awareness and motivate the population to behave more responsibly to their health. This led local governments to communicate two basic types of

⁸ VIESTOVÁ, K.: *Regionálny a mestský marketing*. Bratislava : crr.sk, 2010, p. 57.

⁹ JÁNOŠOVÁ, D.: *Vybrané aspekty regionálneho marketingu*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 56.

¹⁰ HORVÁTHOVÁ, M.: *Marketing miest a obcí s dôrazom na marketingovú komunikáciu a vplyv informačno-komunikačných technológií na jej rozvoj*. Košice : METROPOLA TRADE, 2012, p. 41.

¹¹ STRIČÍK, M.: *Regionálny rozvoj*. Bratislava : Ekonóm, 2011, p. 85.

¹² BAJANOVÁ, Ľ.: *Marketing regiónu*. Bratislava : Progressus Slovakia, 2010, p. 117.

¹³ VYROSTKOVÁ, E.: *Regionálna ekonomika a rozvoj*. Bratislava : Iura Edition, 2010, p. 39.

messages. The first type is campaigns aimed at raising awareness in the field of public health and infection prevention. The second type of reports are local government announcements to inform the population and the general public and the current situation. In order to share these types of messages among the population and to reach the highest possible impact for the public, local governments use various combinations of communication channels. Most municipalities have chosen television and radio channels as a communication tool to address their citizens.¹⁴ Every day, public television broadcasts press conferences of various ministers and politicians, who commented on the country's new measures and current practices towards the population. The press conferences were added mainly by press briefings at which public health experts explained the epidemiological situation in the country towards its inhabitants.¹⁵ Through regional or local newspapers and magazines, people could read interviews with key players in the fight against pandemics. At the national level, television spots were broadcast to inform the population about the current epidemiological situation. Social media, especially their platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, were used by local governments to share information with the Slovaks. Using social media by the local government was the focus of specific content for young to medium-sized audiences.¹⁶ These were mainly informative articles, banners, infographics, and videos shared quickly and easily on the Internet. Local government campaigns on social media have often been accompanied by hashtags such as #ZostaňDoma (#StayHome). Social media was also used to publish live broadcasts of press conferences or press briefings. A vital communication channel also included the official websites of ministries, public health offices, local governments, etc. The official website contains sections where any country resident can check up-to-date coronavirus information. In the individual sections, it is possible to find answers to frequently asked questions, various tips on how to behave during illness, etc.

During the pandemic, local governments preferred e-mail and telephone communication. 77.9% of local governments in Slovakia did not prefer personal communication between citizens and employees of municipal authorities. As many as 98.3% preferred communication via e-mail and 97.7% would prefer telephone over personal and e-mail communication. These results from a survey conducted by the organization of Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska (Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia), realized from 16th April to 29th May 2020 on a sample of 499 respondents. The range of answers also included communication via teleconferencing tools such as Skype, MS Teams, etc. 8.9% of respondents preferred this method of communication at a specific set time. Respondents were able to state several alternative options when answering how self-government communication they preferred in that particular period. Due to the then epidemiological situation, local governments preferred to work from home for their employees to reduce the number of contacts of office employees with citizens.¹⁷ Overall, 50.2% of respondents preferred a home office. 24.5% of local governments did not prefer the home office option, 17.8% did not prefer it, and 7.8% of respondents could not express their opinion.

¹⁴ *Prístup k bezplatnej platforme na komunikáciu pre samosprávy*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <https://www.zmos.sk/pristup-k-bezplatnej-platforme-na-komunikaciu-pre-samospravy--oznam/mid/433454/.html#m_433454>.

¹⁵ *Samosprávy v čase koronakrízy*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://euractiv.sk/event/samospravy-v-case-koronakrizy/>>.

¹⁶ *Mestá a obce sa v chaotickej komunikácii vlády strácajú rovnako ako občania, tvrdí ZMOS*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/2293906-mesta-a-obce-sa-v-chaotickej-komunikacii-vlady-stracaju-rovnako-ako-obcania-tvrdi-zmos>>.

¹⁷ *Samosprávy počas pandémie preferovali mailovú a telefonickú komunikáciu*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.zmos.sk/samospravy-pocas-pandemie-preferovali-mailovu-a-telefonicku-komunikaciu--oznam/mid/405616/.html>>.

Do you prefer home office to working in the office?

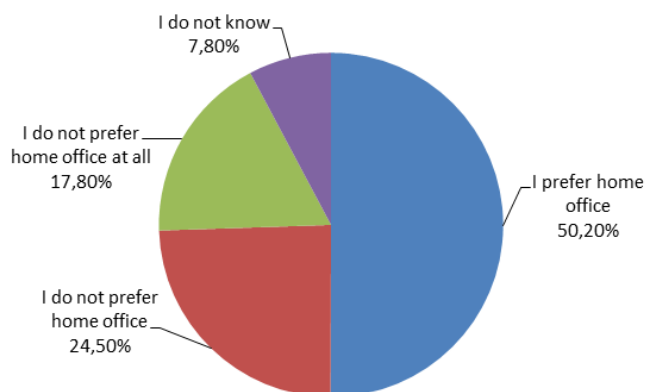


Figure 1: Home office during the pandemic

Source: *Samosprávy počas pandémie preferovali mailovú a telefonickú komunikáciu*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.zmos.sk/samospravy-pocas-pandemie-preferovali-mailovu-a-telefonicku-komunikaciju--oznam/mid/405616/.html>>.

Home office is not an unknown term among the inhabitants of Slovakia. During the pandemic, public and state employees mostly had a home office combined with regular working periods in their offices. Therefore, employees were forced to adapt their daily work responsibilities within their private space and find out how to communicate with their colleagues and customers as effectively as possible. The pandemic situation forced local government employees to start using electronic and telecommunication tools for their work daily. The coronavirus epidemic has helped to intensify communication between the state administration and local government in the online space. The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic has set up an official website for information about the virus – korona.gov.sk, on which information on the number of cases and instructions for citizens are regularly updated. Mayors of the units use several online channels to inform citizens. They publish information on websites, inform via apps (Odkaz pre starostu – Message for the Mayor), post on Facebook and the Instagram application is increasingly being used.

In regions abroad, competent persons used direct communication channels to communicate with the general public population. Among the most common and widely used were the hotlines, providing information on coronavirus and public measures. Also, they sent text messages with various health advice and alerts on Viber, WhatsApp, SMS, etc. The automation of this process took place in Bulgaria through chatbots on Viberia. It was part of the leading web portal that provides information about COVID-19. In Estonia, competent residents of the region sent e-mails and SMS with complete instructions in compliance with government-ordered measures.¹⁸ At the same time, a website was set up where Estonians could find information on the infection and recommendations on how to deal with it. In Austria, Bulgaria and Ukraine, unique online portals have been set up for health professionals. Other communication channels through which coronavirus information was shared to the others were posters, billboards, and public service announcements, mainly in healthcare facilities, public spaces, and public transport. In the United Kingdom, Poland and Ireland, governments addressed information leaflets to their citizens by delivering them to every household. Singapore is an excellent example of how rapid communication through online channels can help stop the epidemic. Competent bodies used the national WhatsApp channel

¹⁸ *Mobilizing Messages: How Six Cities Are Communicating about COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.vitalstrategies.org/vital-stories-mobilizing-messages-how-six-cities-are-communicating-about-covid-19/>>.

(more than 630,000 users), SMS and other web platforms to provide citizens with up-to-date information on the virus and appropriate prevention. On the MaskGoWhere page,¹⁹ they navigate people where they can pick up masks provided by the state. On the FluGoWhere website, they can see where the nearest hospital is dedicated to respiratory diseases.

Table 1: Communication strategies used within pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020

Health Communication Strategies
Regular press conferences and briefings by government and/or public health agencies
Public health campaigns on traditional media, such as TV, radio, and print ads
Public health campaigns on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube
Regularly updated information on COVID-19 webpages of existing official websites
Dedicated COVID-19 website as online information portal for population
COVID-19 telephone hotline for questions and/or feedback from population
Display of Information in public spaces and public transport through posters, billboards, leaflets
Individual text messages via SMS, emails, and messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram)
Information leaflets and letters via post
Chatbots for standard COVID-19 questions
Online information portals for health professionals
Webinars

■ Often used
 ■ Sometimes used
 ■ Rarely used

Source: *New Covid-19 Resources for City Communications Teams*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://bloombergcities.medium.com/new-covid-19-resources-for-city-communications-teams-4aa8bf86918e>>.

If several communication channels are used at the same time, it can be confusing for the recipients of the information. Therefore, there is a specific fragmentation and inconsistency of official reports. A good example is a piece of advice associated with the use of masks.²⁰ Several countries have distributed information on this topic through different communication channels and with different instructions. This ultimately confused the population. The discrepancies are caused by the inferior division of tasks between competent persons in public administration. They prefer to use spokespersons, various communication channels and materials to distribute information to the population, but this increases the risk of inconsistencies in current important information.²¹ We suggest a solution, for example, in the creation of a communication strategy at the national level, which would include a plan for coordinating activities related to the sending of information to specific persons in public administration. Implementing such a strategy could help to increase the consistency of

¹⁹ *What Channels Are Countries Using to Communicate with the Public and at What Frequency?* [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://analysis.covid19healthsystem.org/index.php/2020/07/03/what-channels-are-countries-using-to-communicate-with-the-public-and-at-what-frequency/>>.

²⁰ *Mobilizing Messages: How Six Cities Are Communicating about COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.vitalstrategies.org/vital-stories-mobilizing-messages-how-six-cities-are-communicating-about-covid-19/>>.

²¹ *Samosprávy v čase koronakrízy*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://euractiv.sk/event/samospravy-v-case-koronakrizy/>>.

messages distributed through different communication channels.²² Few countries have developed this strategy; one of few is Montenegro and Azerbaijan. These countries have developed an inter-ministerial plan on communication channels and share the coronavirus information with the population.

Conclusion

The application of marketing and marketing communication principles in the scope of the territory is extensive. Cities, municipalities and self-governing regions, which implement marketing communication tools into their management and leadership, also adapt to the current trend. In the regional development of cities and municipalities, it is necessary to implement marketing communication with appropriate communication tools using an optimally chosen marketing strategy, which should help build the image of cities and regions and distinguish them from the others in today's highly competitive environment. The success of marketing communication depends not only on the amount of funds planned to be spent for these marketing activities but also on the will, perseverance, time, determination, and creativity of the employees of these institutions. The future will show how these public entities can deal and succeed with marketing communication, exploit the opportunities and implement them effectively to benefit themselves, local citizens and potential investors. As the application of marketing tools is not an automatic process, it is necessary to educate future experts in this specialization. So, they would be able to quickly and effectively implement new trends in marketing and marketing communication in the practice of regional marketing.

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²² *What Channels Are Countries Using to Communicate with the Public and at What Frequency?* [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://analysis.covid19healthsystem.org/index.php/2020/07/03/what-channels-are-countries-using-to-communicate-with-the-public-and-at-what-frequency/>>.

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THE WAY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION DATA VISUALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GROUNDSWELL

Michal Kubovics – Anna Zaušková

Abstract:

Analysis, processing, and subsequent data visualization are an integral part of the processes that take place in both the private and public sectors. The concept of the bottom wave is an everyday part of most people's daily lives. At present, we know various forms of displaying data in a visual form. By applying different options, we achieve different degrees of purity of message perception in percipients. The present paper clarifies what type of visualization is most ideal in the environment of digital devices. The research methods used in the paper are the analysis of primary and secondary sources in the form of professional and scientific articles and texts supplemented by a questionnaire method to measure the speed of reaction of the percipient to the presented visual element on mobile devices. The results are translated into the conclusion that the ideal visual code is a group bar graph optimized for mobile devices. The added value is, in the theoretical level, especially in the basic explanation of the essence to choose the ideal visual element and in the practical level it helps in deciding how to visualize the data.

Key words:

Data Visualization. Groundswell. Marketing Communication. Mobile. Visualization. Visualization in Groundswell.

Introduction

Data visualization is important in every way for the correct perception of information. Coding takes place through visualization techniques. This is confirmed by the research of the leading author O'Connor.¹ This is also confirmed by the authors Chen et al., who developed a comprehensive manual for data visualization.² The historical cross-section of data visualization goes far beyond the current period and is linked to a wide period since the emergence of graphic design.³ In the following period, the development took place mainly in the analogue or offline part of data outputs and their presentation. Subsequently, in the period of computer technology development, data visualization also developed. The mentioned period brought new display possibilities and rapid development of data visualization.⁴ In 2015, the author Diehl addressed the issue, defining the past, present and predicting the future of data visualization through software solutions.⁵ García-Pérez, Hernández and Marriaga dealt with predictive analysis and data visualization.⁶ Data visualization is preceded by data collection, which is referred to as data mining. Shaw, Subramaniam, Tan and Welge have

¹ O'CONNOR, Z.: Colour, Contrast and Gestalt Theories of Perception: The Impact in Contemporary Visual Communications Design. In *Color Research & Application*, 2015, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 85-92.

² See: CHEN, C. et al.: *Handbook of Data Visualization*. Berlin : Springer, 2008.

³ See: FRIENDLY, M.: A Brief History of Data Visualization. In CHEN, C. et al.: *Handbook of Data Visualization*. Berlin, Heidelberg : Springer, 2008, p. 15-56. [online]. [2021-05-25]. Available at: <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-540-33037-0_2>.

⁴ See: BUJA, A. et al.: Interactive High-Dimensional Data Visualization. In *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics*, 1996, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 78-99.

⁵ DIEHL, S.: Past, Present, and Future of and in Software Visualization. In BATTIATO, S. et al. (eds.): *Computer Vision, Imaging and Computer Graphics – Theory and Applications*. Cham : Springer International Publishing, 2015, p. 3-11. [online]. [2021-05-25]. Available at: <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-25117-2_1>.

⁶ GARCÍA-PÉREZ, A. et al.: Predictive Analysis and Data Visualization Approach for Decision Processes in Marketing Strategies: A Case of Study. In FIGUEROA-GARCÍA, J. C. et al. (eds.): *Applied Computer Sciences in Engineering*. Cham : Springer International Publishing, 2020, p. 60-70. [online]. [2021-05-26]. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-030-61834-6_6>.

addressed systems that enable data collection in management.⁷ With the arrival of data collection, the volume of data multiplied. With the arrival of large volumes came the problem of processing the so-called big data. Leading author Keim and colleagues have researched the issue.⁸ A substantial part of big data is generated in the social media environment.⁹ Related to this is the collection of data based on groundswell, which is crucial for the company.¹⁰ The collected data are further visualized, where it is very important to follow the correct principles.¹¹ The explanations, the most common representations and the essence of data visualization are introduced by the authors Koponen and Hildén.¹²

1 Methods

The examination was based upon primary as well as secondary sources of knowledge. Secondary sources are predominant in the introduction and the review of literary sources as well as in the current diagnostics. These sources were mainly drawn from scientific, expert articles and texts. The authors were carefully selected according to their relevance, the year of publication and key words. These were mainly theoreticians and practitioners dealing with the presented topic. The theoretical part is enriched by expert studies, which contributes to significance and relevance of the paper. The research methods were also attentively selected from the scientific spectrum, such as the analysis, comparison, induction and deduction. The overall work fulfils the goals of scientific accuracy, completeness and balance. The practical part of the paper is regarded as its key element because it contains conclusions and findings from the quantitative research where the research objectives were achieved through an experimental questionnaire in a digital form. Its main aim was to assess the current state of perception and provide proper interpretation of data from a mobile visual device. The questionnaire was especially designed for research into visual perception on mobile digital devices in the form of a smart phone. The form with the questions was displayed as a website similar to digital questionnaires from the companies and corporations even though this one was exclusively limited to mobile devices and displaying on larger devices was blocked. Therefore, the results we obtained were only linked to mobile devices. Another trait of this experimental method was focus on user's perception. When coding the information from visual pictures or infographic, a recipient needs some time for perception and any subsequent decoding of a piece of information.

An ideal visual element is the one that a user is able to decode correctly without any problems and as quickly as possible. In order to avoid undesirable variables that could possibly contribute to misrepresentation of results, such as deducting a specific piece of information or sophisticated deduction processes, less complicated examples were chosen. Time measurement for specific questions starts in the visualization phase and finishes when the

⁷ See: SHAW, M. J. et al.: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Marketing. In *Decision Support Systems*, 2001, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 127-137.

⁸ KEIM, D. et al.: Big-Data Visualization. In *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, 2013, Vol. 33, No. 4, p. 20-21.

⁹ GHANI, N. A. et al.: Social Media Big Data Analytics: A Survey. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2019, Vol. 101, p. 417-428.

¹⁰ LI, C.: Groundswell. Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies. In *Strategic Direction*, 2010, Vol. 26, No. 8, p. 46.

¹¹ See: FUNCHES, V.: A Model of Consumer Anger. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2016, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 39-46. [online]. [2021-05-26]. Available at: <<http://jmm-net.com/journals/jmm/4.pdf>>.

¹² For more information, see: KOPONEN, J., HILDÉN, J.: *Data Visualization Handbook*. 1st Edition. Finland : Otavan kirjapaino, 2019.

answer is chosen. A random mixture of questions and answers was used to obtain relevant results. The questionnaire consisted of six questions. First two questions were demographic ones, focusing on the respondent’s gender and age in the form of target groups. As for the extent, we managed to cover Generations Z, Y, X and Baby Boomers. Visual communicates were selected on the basis of theoretical research. As for the charts, we opted for a grouped bar chart, a pie chart, a cone chart, and a tree map. The above mentioned visual communicates do not have the same visual basis and are not subsets of any other charts.

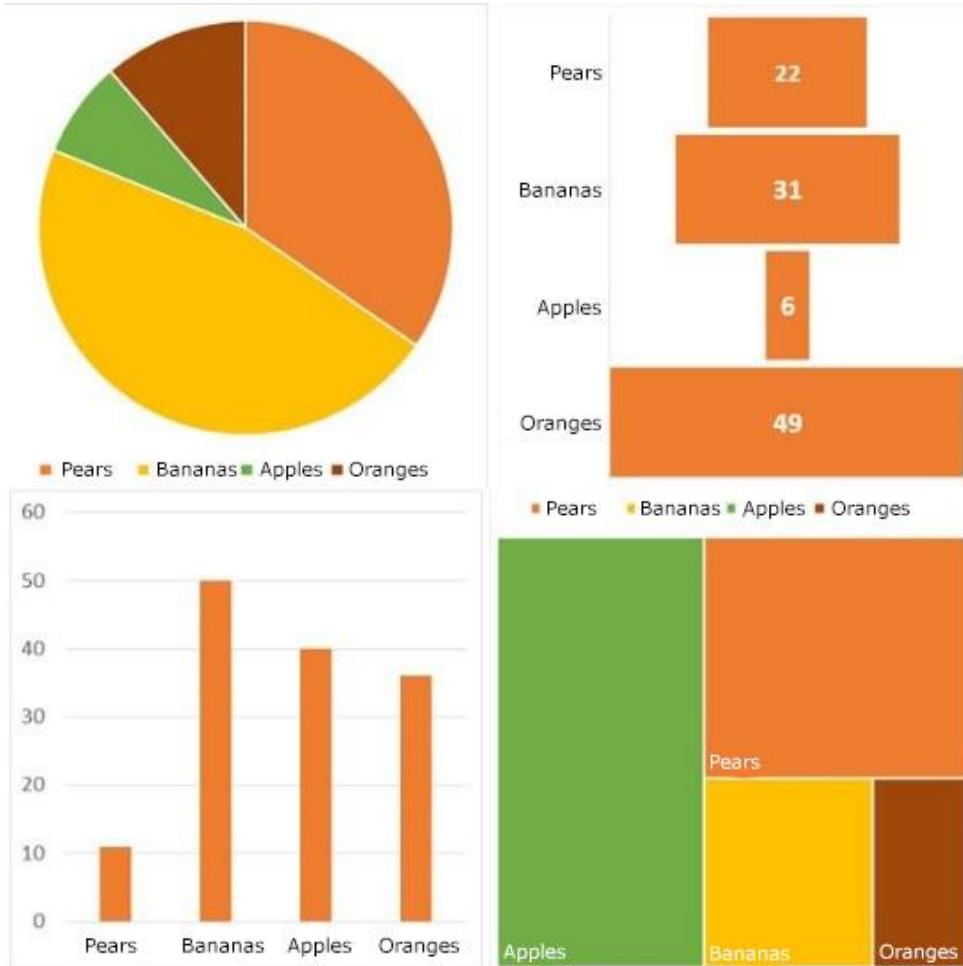


Figure 1: Selection of visual communicates – translation of questionnaire answers: pears/bananas/apples/oranges

Source: Own processing, 2020.

The questions in the questionnaire were quite simple. The respondents were invited to state which element in the chart had the largest share. The results were expressed in milliseconds, which guarantees high accuracy and even the slightest deflections could have been defined and removed. The output summarises all results from particular time spans to have been measured in the answers. The summary and comparison of particular results provide the answer to the question which visual communicate is especially suitable for displaying data on mobile devices.

The largest share has:



[Cookie Policy](#)

Figure 2: Questionnaire – translation of the questionnaire, question on the largest share and answers pears/apples /oranges/bananas

Source: Own processing, 2020.

The target group of respondents consists of wide public aged 18 to 80 years. All the respondents are domiciled in Slovakia. A control sample consisting of respondents from the Czech Republic was used to verify the obtained results or avoid any possible misrepresentation in measurement. The adapted questionnaire was modified into the Czech language in order to ensure the same conditions for both groups. As the full area was covered, broad-spectrum regions were randomly selected from the basic file. The selected sample consists of 222 men (56.345%) and 172 women (43.654%). In total there are 394 respondents in the research sample (100%). The research took place from 4th August 2020 and 12th September 2020. The outcome represents the results that were obtained from the research target group. Comparison of the results with the other country involved the sample group of 112 respondents of whom there were 53 men (47.321%) and 59 women (52.678%). The full sample consisted of 112 respondents across all regions. The main benefit of this paper, both on a practical as well as theoretical level, is specifying which chart seemed to be more comprehensible for a recipient when it came to comparison of values of specific categories of variables. The resultant may help us to select a more suitable visual communicate that is able to pass information onto the target group in the most effective way. The resultant may be applicable to other scientific studies as a basic element of ideal perception or, on a practical level, in the development of mobile apps from the categories of reporting, evaluation and visualization.

The main research objective was to clarify the current state of the studied topic in the context of collection, processing and visualization of data communicates with their subsequent perception by target groups in relation to the groundswell concept. Its partial objectives cover literary sources, current issues and primary research linked to experimental methods. Certain assumptions have been drawn from these objectives:

- H1: We assume that the grouped bar chart reported the highest perception rate on mobile phones.
- H2: We assume that the tree map reported the worst perception rate on mobile phones.
- H3: We assume a difference between the grouped bar chart and the cone chart.
- H4: We assume a slight difference in the results regarding the time for selecting a correct answer on mobile phones.
- H5: We assume that the time results will be identical in both samples.

The resultants are drawn on the basis of statistical description emphasising the description of variable objects and subsequent evaluation of the obtained information. All studied variables need to be evaluated in this manner in order to achieve the research objectives. Description and evaluation are ideal complements for this research category in order to properly evaluate relevance of the resultants. The resultants contain properly defined nominal and cardinal variables. The value structure is created by allocating the data as the proportion from the average value of the selected sample. The deducted resultants are derived from the correct answers we obtained from the questionnaire. The resultant of value frequency is shown in the time-scale chart. A descriptive analysis is used to further analyse the time-scale chart. Within the analysis, particular variables are defined and these result in the frequency of nominal and ordinal variables. The result is expressed in seconds. To express the resultant, the arithmetic mean is used, thus creating a central value: $A = S/N$ (1)

Where: A = the arithmetic mean, N = the number of expressions and S = the sum of numbers in the list.

2 Results

The second chapter interprets the results of an experimental questionnaire by means of descriptive analyses. All 394 results proved to be valid (100%).

Table 1: Results of time measurements in particular charts from the experimental questionnaire

Chart	Grouped Car Chart	Pie Chart	Cone Chart	Tree Map
Average in Seconds	6.311	11.065	8.226	16.241

Source: Own processing, 2020.

The results of the time analyses brought relevant answers to our questions. A grouped bar chart showed to have the best timing, followed by a cone chart, a pie chart and a tree map occupying the last place. The hypothesis we assumed, that a grouped bar chart was the one with the highest perception on mobile devices, had been confirmed. We also confirmed that a tree map was the chart with the worst perception observed. Therefore, we may assume that it is ideal to use a grouped bar chart whereas the least reliable perception will be observed if a tree map is used. The hypothesis that there is a difference between a grouped bar chart and a cone chart was also confirmed, yet with a slight difference at the end. There is a significant difference among the results and therefore, this hypothesis was rejected as the digression seemed to be utterly significant.

Please find below the comparison with a control sample group from a foreign country – the Slovak region was compared to a Czech one. All 112 results proved to be valid (100%).

Table 2: Comparison of time with a control sample

Chart	Grouped Bar Chart	Pie Chart	Cone Chart	Tree Map
Average in Seconds – h – SK	6.311	11.065	8.226	16.241
Average in Seconds – h – CZ	5.171	9.942	7.635	15.524

Source: Own processing, 2020.

The above results showed that the time the users needed to fulfil the given tasks was similar. The last hypothesis was then confirmed. Similarities in the measured values with another region represent the validity of measurement.

Discussion and Conclusion

The paper presented important findings about the current state of the discussed topic on both a world and a domestic scale. The conclusions will serve as a basis for further research which is so much needed in the field of data and visualization. Mobile devices are widely used and therefore, both the practice and theory are currently focusing on this type of research. The number of users of mobile devices is constantly increasing and this potential should grow in the near future as well. Data processing such as collection, storage, processing or analysing require proper visualization. Data perception serves as a basis for correct decision-making, either in the marketing, economic, financial or any other field. The added value can be seen in the form of automation or prediction across various market segments. The limits of the research are in a smaller sample and any random results need to be perceived in colours, sizes as well as in a graphic display of charts in order to remove any undesirable variables from the final results. Certain misrepresentation may also occur in data collection, as the respondents could tick random answers even though the results brought a relatively high level of heterogeneity. The current situation in Slovakia has recently shown that a grouped bar chart seemed to be the most appropriate for data visualization. Any further comparison with a different nationality, a Czech one in this case, demonstrated that the values were quite similar and therefore the results could have been regarded as relevant.

The main benefit was to discover that the best communicates should be used more frequently and the chart with the least reliable results should definitely be dismissed. The future of websites and mobile applications lies in creating statistical software specifically designed for mobile devices. Similar studies are mainly based on findings and views of designers who did not test the given issues, rather only suggested a certain problem based on their subjective perception. Then we could also see that the most similar chart as far as their visual layout was concerned – a cone chart and a grouped bar chart – showed completely different values. The difference in values was quite remarkable. Therefore, it is quite important to use proper charts to achieve proper perception. A recipient will thus be able to get a message quickly, precisely and without any further complications. In comparison with a control group, the results suggest a similar output, which only confirms the overall accuracy of these results when measuring perception of the applied charts. The research will further focus on clarifying any other possibilities for data visualization, especially in the environmental sphere.

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GENERATION Z AS A TARGET OF MOBILE APPS ADVERTISING

Patrik Lenghart – Andrea Lesková

Abstract:

Generation Z's influence on the media market remains underestimated in many regards. It is partially because of how relatively small this cohort is when compared to other active cohorts – especially since about a half of them still has not yet reached maturity and still remains in their childhood and adolescent years – and partially because the overwhelming change this cohort brings is emerging too rapidly, and therefore often does not get noticed. In our paper, we look at some of the most self-evident cases of Generation Z's influence on the media world and we explain their importance in the context of mobile-apps marketing, that takes place mainly on social media and reciprocally in other mobile apps. In our paper we look into the evolution of TikTok social network, its influence and its demography – as more than 40% of all TikTokers are actually members of the Generation Z cohort – which dictates a plethora of new socio-economic trends on the media market, but also opens several questions regarding morality and ethics of this phenomenon.

Key words:

Advertising. Generation Z. Media Market. Mobile-Apps Marketing. Social Media.

Introduction: Generation Z's Nativity to the Smart-World Shapes Its Identity

Generation Z is the first demographic group in the history of mankind that has been exposed to the influence of the Internet connection since its beginning – or respectively, the members of this demographic group and media cohort were born into times, in which the Internet had already seen widespread use. The Generation Z cohort is the demographic group of young people that were born between the years 1997 and 2012, and therefore the Internet use and its forms have been evolving steadily along with the members of the Generation Z cohort. Nowadays, the members of the Generation Z cohort make up the group of young people aged from 9 years old to 24 years old. As disparate as this group is, it covers a relatively wide range of socially and culturally differentiated features, but the use of technology, and especially the use of smartphones, is something that can be generally attributed to overwhelming majority of all of Generation Z members practically all around the world – this rule now also applies to the youngest members of the group, currently aged 9 years old. The only exceptions of this widespread smartphone use practice are individuals living in extremely poor and socially unstable areas such as today's Yemen – but even there, on average about 67 in 100 inhabitants owned a smartphone with working telecommunication subscription in 2016.¹ This number is estimated to have grown since then, as the general use of smartphones has been on a rise all around the world with poorer and more segregated areas being no exception, albeit the growth of smartphone use trends has been somewhat slower there. Generation Z has been growing up with smart devices since their early childhoods. According to studies concluded in 2019 in Great Britain, more than 50% of ten-year-old children now have their own smartphones, with the notable trend of receiving these devices between the ages of eight and ten years.² Since this age is a borderline age for passing from primary school (the first four years of elementary schooling) to secondary school, it is currently a noteworthy part of social belonging – getting to own the first smartphone is a proof of coming-of-age.

¹ O'DEA, S.: *Number of Mobile Cellular Subscriptions per 100 Inhabitants in Yemen from 2000 to 2016*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/510648/mobile-cellular-subscriptions-per-100-inhabitants-in-yemen/>>.

² *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report 2019*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/190616/children-media-use-attitudes-2019-report.pdf>.

Correlating with this data, another study concluded in India estimated that about 30% of Indian adolescents showed significant symptoms of smartphone addiction in 2014.³ Again, these numbers are estimated to have grown since, as the use and abuse of smartphones has been growing steadily in recent years. Data from all around the world suggests that Generation Z members have been using smartphones in their everyday lives, exploiting advantages of the technology, but also suffering from unexpected and often negative side-effects. One of the results of this trend is a rise in the social and economic importance of the Generation Z cohort. In fact, it has been growing with an unprecedented rate, as this generation has already surpassed all the previous generation in the level of influence they project on the world's markets – and especially the media market. Their exposure to the media market is currently so intense, this cohort alone is changing many of the media world's current trends. In 2011, UNICEF estimated that about 20% of all people were adolescents, then constituting approximately 1.2 billion of all people worldwide.⁴ Since 2011, the world's population has risen by at least 800 million people, as estimated by the United Nations and elaborated by the Worldometer.⁵ We could therefore estimate that the number of adolescents has also risen by the same margin, which would be set at the value of about 10%, which would imply there are currently approximately about 1.35 billion adolescents living in the human society worldwide. The social and economic impact of this demographic group yet remains to be evaluated, as it will probably take several decades to completely understand the changes they bring, but several trends and behavioural patterns of the Generation Z cohort have already been identified and described.

The Generation Z cohort is often compared to the cohort of Millennials, since it has been upbrought in a relatively similar social context – generally meaning favourable socio-economic situation in most of the western world, availability of education and technological advancement. Another aspect is that just like the Millennials, Generation Z members are often associated with activism, social inclusion and general openness to change in favour of minorities, which might all be a consequence of the more inter-connected world the Internet communication and rising media exposure have helped to shape. In 2018, a survey in the U.S. compared the attitudes of various cohorts towards social issues and the attitudes of the Generation Z cohort mostly mirrored the attitudes of the cohort of the Millennials – they tend to believe that raising racial and ethnic diversity is beneficial for society and that governments should be more proactive in solving social problems of their citizens. As was mentioned before, however, the Generation Z cohort also has several unique traits when compared to other generations. It is more culturally diverse and inter-connected. It also builds its values on different priorities than their predecessors – for example, Generation Z members are less inclined to identify with their regions, nations or nationalities, and tend to feel more connected to their selected social identities built upon their Internet experiences.⁶

³ See: DAVEY, S., DAVEY, A.: Assessment of Smartphone Addiction in Indian Adolescents: A Mixed Method Study by Systematic-Review and Meta-Analysis Approach. In *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2014, Vol. 5, No. 12, p. 1500-1511. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4336980/>>.

⁴ *Adolescence – An Age of Opportunity*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/the-state-of-the-worlds-children-2011-adolescents-an-age-of-opportunity/>>.

⁵ *Current World Population*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>>.

⁶ PARKER, K., GRAF, N., IGIELNIK, R.: *Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/01/17/generation-z-looks-a-lot-like-millennials-on-key-social-and-political-issues/>>.

1 TikTok: The Pioneer in Generation Z's Impact on Social Media

The first prerequisite of understanding of the Generation Z cohort's influence on to media market, especially of the Internet media market, is considering the proportion of the media market that adheres namely to the preferences and needs of the cohort. One of the available examples of this rising trend is the change in social networks and social media, that have been steadily changing to fulfil the needs of members of the Generation Z cohort. In our paper, we focused on a social media and network called TikTok, which is a relatively new and a quite successful player on the media market and has been gathering popularity in hundreds of millions of users in the recent years. When the TikTok social network launched globally in 2017, it was a start-up aiming to gather audience. Within a year, it reached 100 million users and within a six months' time it became the No. 1 recommended free application in app stores.⁷ In August 2020, the application reached the milestone of two billion downloads globally and currently is the 7th most-used social network worldwide, quickly surpassing some of the more renowned and longer-running social networks like Twitter, Reddit, Pinterest or Quora. It is available in more than 200 countries of which about 50 countries were added to TikTok's map only in the year 2020, which implies there is still much room for audience-growth in these newly-added countries. TikTok's parent company ByteDance is currently valued at approximately 100 billion USD, which makes it the most valuable start-up ever created, surpassing the long-held position of the Uber company by a margin of more than 25 billion USD.⁸

It is highly probable, however, that the biggest socio-economic importance of TikTok lies in its demography. According to surveys from June 2020, more than 41% of all users are aged between 16 years old and 24 years old – which would categorize them as Generation Z members. About 48% of all young adults in the US (aged 18-29 years old) use TikTok, while older demographic groups tend to use TikTok far less frequently – only 20% social media users aged between 30 years old and 49 years old use TikTok and only about 14% of social media users between the ages 50 years old to 64 years old use TikTok. When it comes to users aged 65 years old and more, only about 4% of them use TikTok.⁹ It is clear that TikTok is successfully gathering popularity and attention in the youngest members of the media audience, with the primary target group being the Generation Z cohort. This data indicates that the most valuable start-up company in the world, ByteDance, and its social networks TikTok (along with its Chinese version Douyin) is highly driven by the media needs preferences of Generation Z, as its members comprise of at least half its audience around the world. The rise of TikTok's value and influence is also a relatively new phenomenon, as it has occurred mostly in the years 2019 and 2020, while it keeps growing in the year 2021, albeit more slowly when compared to the previous two years.

In the years 2020 and 2021, we completed two studies of Slovakia's Generation Z media preferences – asking the same questions with a year's difference in time. In January 2020, we personally surveyed a hundred students at a single high school in western Slovakia. Their average age was 17 years old and they filled a survey asking questions regarding their media preferences. Their high school cooperated with us while we were conducting the study and we were able to personally present them with the forms during their school time. In January 2020,

⁷ GRAZIANI, T.: *How Douyin Became China's Top Short-Video App in 500 Days*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://walkthechat.com/douyin-became-chinas-top-short-video-app-500-days/>>.

⁸ SEHL, K.: *23 Important TikTok Stats Marketers Need to Know in 2021*. [online], [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://blog.hootsuite.com/tiktok-stats/>>.

⁹ AUXIER, B., ANDERSON, M.: *Social Media Use in 2021*. [online]. [2021-05-15]. Available at: <<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>>.

only two respondents of this group mentioned they were active users of TikTok (the term ‘active user’ was described as an owner of an account on the named social network, while also logging into the service at least once a month) – which means only 2% of our respondents were active TikTokers. In January 2021, we asked the same question in another survey. This time, the survey was presented online and was targeting Generation Z members – all participants had to fill out their age. At this time, 460 respondents filled out our survey, of whom most were students of high schools and colleges. The average age of the respondents was 20.78 years. In this second survey that took place exactly a year after the first, 28.9% of our respondents admitted to be regularly using TikTok as active users, which was also the biggest difference in all media-preferential results when compared to the results of the first survey from the year 2020. The use of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other known social media mostly mirrored the results from 2020, but the popularity of TikTok has risen from 2% of our respondents to 28.9% of respondents in a single year, which marks an increase of 1400% in popularity with our respondents. This data also agrees with the general data surrounding TikTok’s use in western countries, especially the EU and the USA, suggesting the results of our two survey strongly correlate with the evolution of TikTok’s popularity in the western societies. On average, an Android user with active TikTok account spends 13.3 hours on the app every month. TikTok is also ranked as the second-biggest app in financial revenue spent in the app – second only to the Tinder dating app¹⁰. Another interesting point is the fact, that all this success comes from an app suited for video-streaming – which is in fact only a secondary function of TikTok, as it is a social network that primarily connects people – and yet it is still more profitable than YouTube, Disney+ or Netflix, which are all dedicated video-streaming services.¹¹

2 Generation Z – The Practicality of Marketing and the Ethical Issues

In 2020, TikTok, the social networking site primarily used by the Generation Z, had a 500% increase in the number of advertisers from the U.S. and its U.S. penetration is estimated to be at least 27% (that is double the amount of the year 2019). Approximately 40% of Europeans aged between 18 years old to 24 years old actively use TikTok, while the average time spent on TikTok is currently at about 45 minutes a day.¹² This data by itself clearly suggest that Generation Z has largely influenced the evolution of media market, but the most remarkable aspect is the creation of their own marketing area – the Generation Z members are being constantly targeted by advertisement on their preferred social networks, in which they are the leading influence. Currently, the biggest digital ads platform for mobile apps remains on Facebook (and its other services – for example Instagram).¹³ TikTok is currently the seventh most-used social network in the world, but when it comes to the Generation Z cohort’s members, it is much more successful and would rank among the top players hunting in the Generation Z customer pool – with the biggest contender being Instagram. As such, Generation Z is currently one of the most-targeted groups that marketers aim to reach. Data from all around the world suggests that Generation Z is a group that is far more accessible via Internet services than via other channels (television broadcasting, radio broadcasting and print). Therefore,

¹⁰ FREER, A.: *Tinder is Top-Grossing Dating App and Netflix Tops Chart for Streaming Apps*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.businessofapps.com/news/tinder-is-top-grossing-dating-app-and-netflix-tops-chart-for-streaming-apps/>>.

¹¹ SEHL, K.: *23 Important TikTok Stats Marketers Need to Know in 2021*. [online] [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://blog.hootsuite.com/tiktok-stats/>>.

¹² MANSOOR, I.: *TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021)*. [online]. [2021-05-14]. Available at: <<https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/#TikTokOverviewandKeyStatistics>>.

¹³ *Facebook Apps*. [online]. [2021-05-14]. Available at: <<https://www.businessofapps.com/ads/facebook-ads/>>.

advertising in the social media space – which is typical for mobile app advertising – is the most-common and most-used method of mobile app advertising targeting Generation Z.

Some of the most profitable social networks that live off marketing are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Tinder and a few others, and are all favoured by the Generation Z members. Additionally, even the mobile-apps usage is advancing towards the Generation Z members. In Great Britain in 2020, about 50% of all girls aged between 5 years old and 15 years old played games online on smart devices – up from about 39% in 2018. This means an increase by at least 25% in two years, while at least 5% of adolescents in Great Britain regularly watch or/and stream online gameplays on Twitch,¹⁴ also accessing and creating new advertising space for mobile apps and games. The same way, apps and services not seen before are getting attention of youth on their social media. In 2019, at least 10% of adolescents in Great Britain had already signed at least one online petition. Even more Generation Z members had supported an organization or humanitarian service online via their social networks and condensing applications accessed via their social networks.¹⁵

Conclusion

All this data suggests that the Generation Z's activity on the media market is huge and still growing. The problem, however, comes from the ethical implications that need to be investigated further. Here, we conclude our paper with the identification of the first two:

The Legislative (and Ethical) Problem of Marketing Aiming at Youth

In some countries around the world, marketing and advertisement targeting children is limited by local legislatives. In these cases, social media offering targeted advertising based on cookies and other user-bound data practically omit the requirements set by the local legislatives, possibly also conflicting with the moral codes for advertisement, journalism or/and other sets of rules of morally correct conduct. Social media have several conflicts with legislative rules, as they are also often subjected to taxes and other rules that in ways different to other form of media – especially when compared with television, for example – but this area of advertising is especially problematic in countries, in which the rules of marketing focused on children are strictly given by law. In our opinion, a debate regarding the aimed marketing on social media must be commenced immediately in order to solve these issues.

The Problem with Sharing of Parents' Personal and Financial Data

Most children and adolescents that use social media do so (or are supposed to) under their parents' supervision. Even more importantly, these younglings often shop and purchase various items and services via their parents' bank accounts, credit cards and other financial tools, possibly revealing their parents' personal and financial information to third parties. The problems of security and moral ambiguity of these acts remain problematic for all areas of online shopping, as at one hand, today's youth tend to feel appreciation for modern way of shopping, but on the other hand is mostly unable to comprehend all the consequences of their actions – especially when it comes to exposing their parents to personal-data-theft. Since TikTok remains the second most profitable application with its online revenue, there is a pending suspicion that many of its financial transactions are in fact made by children and adolescents using their parents' financial tools. In our opinion, the discussion of in-app

¹⁴ *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report 2019*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/190616/children-media-use-attitudes-2019-report.pdf>.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

purchases and their availability to children and adolescents must also commence immediately, as the rising threats to financial security (and to other areas of security) have emerged in recent times and will pose threats in the future as well. We expect our fellow scholars to address these topics and create a standing new discourse on these issues in the near future, as these new problems will continue to emerge and need an integrated strategy and approach.

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ADVERTISEMENT TEXT AS SEMIOTIC CONSTRUAL

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Abstract:

Advertising is one of the most well-known parts of marketing communication. Advertisement text has a specific structure and consists of a headline, sub-headline and body copy. These elements belong to different language levels: phonetic, grammatical (morphological and syntactical), and lexical. To make the advertisement effective different promotional strategies are employed, which imply the use of various linguistic and extralinguistic means. Linguistic means include paradigmatic and syntagmatic expressive means and stylistic devices. We may mention lexical, syntactic, phonetic, and semasiological expressive means (speech) and stylistic devices (language). Extralinguistic means include colours, different types of fonts, pictures and so on and can be considered as visual communication with the potential customer. Advertisement text often contains basic semiotic elements: icon, index, and sign. Some of them are used as a trademark or logo and accompany advertisement. The visual perception of the advertisement is very important; linguistic means enhance it. The combination of linguistic and visual means allows us to consider the advertisement text as a semiotic construal.

Key words:

Advertisement Text. Expressive Means. Graphical Means. Semiotics. Stylistic Devices. Visual Communication.

Introduction

To compose a successful advertisement is not easy, because there must be a harmony in the advertiser's creativity and readers' expectations, which depend on their subjective interpretation and understanding. Thus, the advertisers must point out the essential attributes of advertised products and in that way attract a reader, who, in fact, is a possible consumer. Different techniques of text construction are used, but the advertisement text (AT) structure, which includes a headline, a sub-headline and a body copy is always taken into account. The aim of our research is to specify what stylistic devices (SD) together with expressive means (EM) and graphical design are used by marketing specialists to make the advertisement more attractive for potential customers. We have carried out the stylistic analysis of ATs, which helped identify the most significant stylistical features occurring in a text. These features cover all language levels and include lexical, syntactic, and phonetic SD and EM. Graphical means (different colours, fonts, pictures, total advertisement design) in some cases enhance linguistic means; in others are the basis of the AT as a semiotic construal.

1 Advertisement Text and Principles of Its Composition

Let us start with some definitions of advertisements. Generally speaking, advertising is the promotion of goods, services, companies and ideas, usually by an identified sponsor. Marketers see advertising as part of an overall promotional strategy. Other components of the promotional mix include publicity, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. The Advertising Association defines advertising in this way: “*Advertisements are messages paid for by those who send them, intended to inform or influence people who receive them.*”¹ Bovee and Arens describe advertising as “*nonpersonal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, service, or ideas by identified sponsors through various media*”.² Knittlová explains the term advertising as “*a form of*

¹ MANN, B.: *Advertising*. Hove : Wayland, 1993, p. 4.

² BOVÉE, C. L., ARENS, W. F.: *Contemporary Advertising*. Homewood : Irwin, 1989, p. 5.

persuasion that includes two interconnected actions: it is a form of communication and persuasion that intends to inform and influence people".³ There are many other definitions of advertising. Most of them accentuate that it is a kind of persuasive and influencing communication, which anticipates readers' reactions and expects them to interact. The advertised items reflect social trends, possibilities and values having the main aim of making a profit. However, Bovée and Arens mention other specific aims: *"to identify products and differentiate them from others; to communicate information about the products, its feature and its location of sale; to increase product usage; to build brand preference and loyalty; to induce customer to try new product and to suggest reuse"*.⁴

Advertising is important, because it *"contemplates the positioning of a certain product within a system of needs and meanings that motivate the purchase. Advertising plays a crucial role in showing design properties and inducing consumerist meanings and needs"*.⁵ People have different reasons for trying new products; some of the reasons are material needs – food, drink, clothes, home appliances, means of communication, etc. We have chosen food advertisements because they satisfy everyday human needs and thus are very numerous. All the advertisements can be classified according to the target audience, geographic area and medium. For our research, target audience is more important. It includes *"consumer advertising – most of the advertisements seen in mass media, sponsored by manufacturer of the product or the dealer, products are promoted to the personal use and business advertising – mostly found in specialized publications, journals"*.⁶

If we consider advertisement as a text, we will see that it has a specific structure, obligatory elements of which are a headline, sub-headline and body copy. Each of these elements is important and has a specific function. The headline, which is read first and captures the most attention of the readers, in the opinion of Bovee and Arens has six functions: *"1) to attract attention; 2) to select the reader (whether the subject matter of the advertisement interests the reader); 3) to lead the reader directly into the body copy; 4) to present the complete selling idea (should tell the whole story); 5) to promise a benefit to the customer; 6) to present product news of interest to the reader"*.⁷ The body copy is a logical continuation of the headlines and sub-headlines. It should *"concentrate on one or several benefits; be written as conversation with one person; stress one major idea; position the product clearly; reinforce the brand name"*.⁸ If earlier advertising was mainly found in the print media, later there appeared radio and TV advertisements. Nowadays thanks to the Internet, you can hear or see advertisements while playing computer games, using your mobile, etc., i.e., not only in periodicals. Thus, creating an advertisement that will be watched till the very end can be considered a matter of art. The message should be attractive, meaningful and original the text accompanying this graphic message should also be eloquent and creative. We will present below the system of linguistic and extralinguistic means and show their role in creating advertisements of high quality.

³ KNITTLOVÁ, D.: *Funkční styly v angličtině a češtině*. Olomouc : Faculty of Arts, 1990, p. 72.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

⁵ POPPI, F. I. M., URIOS-APARISI, E.: *Erga Omnes: Multimodal Metaphors of Consumerism*. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2021, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 175.

⁶ BOVÉE, C. L., ARENS, W. F.: *Contemporary Advertising*. Homewood : Irwin, 1989, p. 12-13.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 261-262.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 264-265.

2 System of Stylistic Devices and Expressive Means in Advertisement Texts

Stylistics as a linguistic discipline has several branches: “*stylistic phonetics, stylistic morphology, stylistic syntax, stylistic lexicology, stylistic semasiology and graphical stylistics, which correspond to the language level: phonetic, grammatical, and lexical*”.⁹ Our aim is to vividly demonstrate the role of different stylistic devices and expressive means in advertisement texts. The theoretical background to our research is formed of works by outstanding stylisticians and specialists on metaphor: Galperin (1971), Kövecses (2018),¹⁰ Skrebnev (2003), Verdonk (2002),¹¹ Znamenskaya (2006)¹² and others. The notions of SD and EM are very important. Galperin writes that “*a SD is a conscious and intentional literary use of some of the facts of the language (including EM) in which the most essential features (both structural and semantic) of the language forms are raised to a generalised level and thereby present a generative model*”.¹³ The stylistic meaning of the SD appears in the context of some utterance and is connected by syntagmatics between the unit of one or different levels. EM are “*language units which function in the language for the emotional or logical intensification of a speech. They are stylistically marked and conditioned by paradigmatics of one level*”.¹⁴ Skrebnev understands SD as “*choice of arrangement of units to achieve expressive or image-creating effect*”¹⁵ and EM as “*devices serving to strengthen communicative effect of speech (text)*”.¹⁶ Now let us discuss how SD and EM belonging to different language levels are used in food advertisement texts and what functions they perform.

2.1 Lexical Stylistic Devices

One of most popular classifications of vocabulary is stylistic, according to which all words form three layers: bookish, literary and colloquial vocabulary. Expressiveness at the lexical level is mainly based on words, which have both referential and emotive meanings and on words belonging to the three layers mentioned above.¹⁷ Language consists of words, which have denotative and connotative meanings. A denotative meaning of the word can be formal, general or specific, whereas a connotative meaning may be evaluative or descriptive. Advertising is associated with the use of words having either denotative or connotative meanings, belonging to the different layers of vocabulary, e.g., the Burger King advertisement “*Tastes of being woke*”¹⁸ describes their vegan burger as “*woke*”. Woke is a slang word used mostly by teenagers to describe someone who is aware of and cares about social issues. Other lexical stylistic markers in the advertised text are homonyms, synonyms and polysemantic words. In the advertisements of Panera, a grocery store, synonyms-specifiers are used:

⁹ PANASENKO, N.: Functional-Semantic Types of Speech in Journalistic Messages. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Critique in Media, Critique of Media*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 56.

¹⁰ See: KÖVECSES, Z.: Metaphor in Media Language and Cognition: A Perspective from Conceptual Metaphor Theory. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2018, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 124-141.

¹¹ For more information, see: VERDONK, P.: *Stylistics*. Oxford : OUP, 2002.

¹² See also: ZNAMENSKAYA, T. A.: *Stylistics of the English Language. Fundamentals of the Course*. Moscow : Editorial URSS, 2006.

¹³ GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 26.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

¹⁵ SKREBNEV, Y. M.: *Fundamentals of English Stylistics*. Moscow : Astrel, 2003, p. 6-7.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 6-7.

¹⁷ See: GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 62-100.

¹⁸ CAULFIELD, C.: *Burger King Advert Banned Because Vegan Food Is Cooked on Meat Grill*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://metro.co.uk/2020/04/15/burger-king-banned-vegan-food-cooked-meat-grill-12557077/>>.

“*Strong greens, mighty protein*”.¹⁹ The purpose of these synonyms is to reinforce the healthy products of Panera. In food advertisements, words belonging to literary vocabulary prevail. Goddard stresses that “*vocabulary is carefully chosen to promote positive associations*”.²⁰

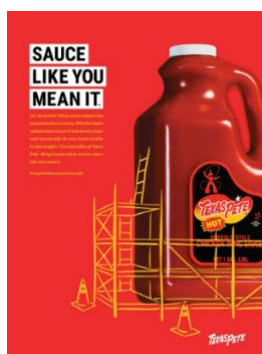
Concerning vocabulary as presented by different parts of speech, in AT nouns, adjectives and verbs prevail. Nouns characterize the object of selling (bread, juice, cheese, wine, etc.). Adjectives have evaluative character: excellent, super, most popular, unforgettable, great, etc. The purpose of using these words is to impress potential customers with the quality of the product, make them form a positive image of the product in their mind and win their trust of the product and finally arouse their desire to buy it. However, certain verbs regularly occur in advertisements: “*those that claim acquisition (get, ask for), those that focus on consumption (have, try, use, enjoy) or those that scream for noticing (look, see, watch, make sure)*”.²¹ Vestergaard and Schroder made a list of the 20 most frequent verbs occurring in advertising. They also claim that the verb “to buy” is avoided on purpose; it is replaced by synonyms.²² The advertisement for the ice cream Carte D'or is a good example of using verbs in the slogan: “*Give more. Give Carte D'or*” (see Picture 1).



Picture 1: Carte D'Or ice cream

Source: *Give More*. [online]. [2021-04-27]. Available at: <<https://www.behance.net/gallery/727513/Carte-dOr>>.

Different pronouns, personal, possessive, reflexive, etc. are widely used: me, you, our, their, your, yourself are repeatedly used for stylistic purposes (see Picture 2).



Picture 2: Advertisement for Texas Pete hot ketchup

Source: *Sauce Like You Mean It*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <https://www.adsofttheworld.com/media/print/texas_pete_sauce_like_you_mean_it>.

¹⁹ Pinterest. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/525232375286947502/sent/?invitecode=f04af513cd0e4266957bbb045f01382c&sender=558165084975665384&sfo=1>>.

²⁰ GODDARD, A.: *The Language of Advertising*. London, New York : Routledge, 2001, p. 74.

²¹ LEECH, G.: *English in Advertising*. London : Longman, 1966, p. 110.

²² VERSTERGAARD, T., SCHRODER, K.: *The Language of Advertising*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1985, p. 68.

This use of personal pronouns obviously sounds like face-to-face talk, making the conversation warmer, more friendly and trustable in tone, and finally strengthens the appeal to the readers. Reading the advertisement, we may probably be persuaded and stimulated and finally agree with what the advertisement says: strong desire for purchasing. Another aspect of informality and familiarity is the use of the imperative mood that calls the reader's attention and urges him/her to action as in the advertisement of Kit Kat: "Have a break, have a Kit Kat".²³ Some scholars attribute the use of pronouns to morphological stylistics.²⁴ Lexical SD can be found in the whole text, making the slogan more effective and the body copy more informative.

2.2 Syntactic Stylistic Devices

The classification of syntactic SD offered by Galperin includes 17 items.²⁵ Skrebnev considers stylistic syntax from the point of view of syntagmatics and paradigmatics.²⁶ It is also possible to divide all the syntactic SD into three groups based on focusing, compression and expansion of information. Syntactic SD based on focusing include detachment, parcellation, and stylistic inversion; syntactic stylistic SD based on expansion include different types of repetitions: ordinary and patterned, tautology, parallel constructions, polysyndeton and expansions proper (enumerations, emphatic constructions, parenthesis, antithesis); syntactic stylistic SD based on informational compression include ellipsis, aposiopesis, asyndeton, nominative sentences and rhetorical questions. Many of these SD serve to intensify the emotional quality of the text (see Panasenکو²⁷ and Stashko).²⁸ We pay so much attention to syntactic SD because together with phonetic and graphical SD they are the mostly widely used in food ATs. Let us illustrate them with some examples. Picture 3 presents an example of anaphora combined with metaphor:



Picture 3: Coca-Cola advertisement

Source: CERVANTES, A.: *Open a Coke, Open Happiness: Coca Cola Ad Campaign Analysis*. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://ayeonline.wordpress.com/2020/03/22/open-a-coke-open-happiness-coca-cola-ad-campaign-analysis/>>.

Anaphoristic repetitions are numerous in the texts of flour advertisements. We mark anaphora in bold:

"We believe in innovation. That's why we were the first flour producers to utilize the cardboard box.

²³ *Creative Classic: Is 'Have a Break, Have a Kit-Kat' the Best Strapline Ever Written?*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.creativemoment.co/creative-classic-how-and-why-have-a-break-have-a-kit-kat-has-lasted-60-years/>>.

²⁴ See: ZNAMENSKAYA, T. A.: *Stylistics of the English Language. Fundamentals of the Course*. Moscow : Editorial URSS, 2006, p. 97-101.

²⁵ See also: GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 190-252.

²⁶ See, for example: SKREBNEV, Y. M.: *Fundamentals of English Stylistics*. Moscow : Astrel, 2003.

²⁷ See: PANASENKO, N.: The Role of Syntactic Stylistic Means in Expressing the Emotion Term Love. In *Research in Language*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 277-293.

²⁸ See: STASHKO, H.: The Effect of Stylistic Repetition in English-Language Advertising Texts. In *Science and Education a New Dimension Philology*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 72, p. 60-63.

We believe in fight to wastes. That's why our cardboard box has a plug which better preserves flour and reduces leakage.

We believe that practicality is a value. That's why our cardboard box is both easy to close and store.

We believe that people have a right to see what they buy. That's why our cardboard box is clear and allows you to measure the quantity of remaining flour.

We believe in environmental responsibility. That's why your cardboard box is made of FSC paper from forests managed responsibly.

We believe in the quality of our products. And so does everyone who has chosen us every day, for the last 250 years."²⁹

In this flour advertisement, six paragraphs begin with the phrase "We believe in..." and another six sentences begin with "That is why...", which sounds very persuasive. It is not only a perfect example of anaphora; it also sends a clear message "Everything we believe is here inside". By listing their values on the packaging, Molino Rossetto is advertising their product and building a brand name at the same time. In this text, we also have a case of full and partial parallelism.

In the texts advertising Wrigley's spearmint gum, we may come across various combinations of syntactic SD, which we mark in a specific way: **anaphora**, parallel constructions and epiphora:

- *I must keep my teeth clean and white, mustn't I?*
- *I must keep my stomach strong, mustn't I?*
- *I must be hungry at mealtimes, mustn't I?*
- *I must have something to keep me quiet, mustn't I?*³⁰

As far as the main function of all the repetitions is the expansion of information, in this case we have insistent attraction of the customer to this product.

2.3 Semasiological Stylistic Devices

All the semasiological SD are based on the interaction between different types of meaning. To SD based on the interaction between logical and nominal meanings of word belongs antonomasia. SD based on the interaction between dictionary and contextual logical meanings of a word are metaphor, personification, and metonymy. The group of SD based on the interaction between the logical and emotive meanings of a word is large and includes understatement and overstatement (meiosis, litotes and hyperbole), epithet, and oxymoron. SD based on the interaction between the free and phraseological meanings of a word (or between the meanings of two homonyms) are zeugma and pun. This classification has been offered by Kukharenko; it differs a little from other classifications. This scholar singles out lexico-syntactical SD: climax, anticlimax, antithesis, simile, periphrasis (logical, euphemistic, figurative), synonyms, and defeated expectancy.³¹ We use this classification, because it vividly shows the relations between different word meanings, forming SD. From all these numerous semasiological SD we have chosen those which are often found in food advertisements, creating "expressive and appealing message".³² They undoubtedly are

²⁹ ROSSITO, M.: *Cardboard Box*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/molino_rosetto_cardboard_box>.

³⁰ *A Disturbing Ad for Wrigley's Gum, 1913*. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/christine592/3586919963/>>.

³¹ See: KUKHARENKO, V. A.: *A Book of Practice in Stylistics*. Vinnytsya : Nova Knyha, 2002.

³² TVRDOŇ, E.: *Text a štýl reklamy v periodickej tlači*. Bratislava : Epos, 1999, p. 189.

metaphor, personification, epithet, simile, andante thesis. **Metaphor** can be fresh and trite. We distinguish substantive metaphor (static attribute prevails over dynamic), adjective metaphor (describes the characteristic feature), verbal metaphor (presents dynamics), and the combination of verbal and substantive metaphor (phrase or sentence construction).³³ We consider personification, epithet, figurative periphrasis, and simile as varieties of metaphor.³⁴ As a good example of metaphor, we offer an advertisement of Coca-Cola (see Picture 4).



Picture 4: Metaphor in a Coca-Cola advertisement

Source: MCCALL, C.: *Campaign Analysis*. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://medium.com/@mccallcara/campaign-analysis-4b7dbe5521a4>>.

Personification is a SD, which endows a thing or a phenomenon with features peculiar of a human being. A wine brand by the name Terra Vox used the slogan “*voice of the land*”. The name Terra Voxis translated from Latin to English and since the land has no voice, it is an example of personification. **Epithet** is the attributive characterization of a person, thing or phenomenon. Its function is creating images.³⁵ It is commonly used in advertising texts. The popular way of creating epithets for advertising slogans is interchanging of visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile characteristics of products, transferring their original meaning into completely different semantic groups. This advertisement for Magnum ice cream abounds in epithets. We will describe the graphical design of the advertisement below, but here the text “*first kiss, loving kiss, passionate kiss, flirty kiss, stolen kiss*” is enhanced by a corresponding illustration (see Picture 5).

³³ TVRDOŇ, E.: *Text a štýl reklamy v periodickej tlači*. Bratislava : Epos, 1999, p. 190.

³⁴ See: MUDROCHOVÁ, R., PANASENKO N.: Metaphors in Food Advertisements Text. In *Young Scholars Journal*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 6-7. No pagination.

³⁵ See: STASHKO, H.: An American Woman through the Prism of the Epithet: Semasiological Aspect in Creating Images. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 356-391.



Picture 5: Advertisement for Magnum ice cream/popsicle

Source: 5 Kisses Collection/Magnum/Global Campaign. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://www.behance.net/gallery/13561275/5-Kisses-Collection-Magnum-Global-Campaign>>.

Another good example of epithet is the advertisement for McDonald's products "Celebrating 60 Golden Years".³⁶ **Simile** usually consists of two elements and connectors (like, as, as though, etc.). It is important to differentiate between simile and comparison. Some scholars treat simile as a variety of metaphor, thus metaphoric shift is an obligatory simile attribute. The advertisements for Magnum ice cream/popsicle, "as good as coffee"³⁷ and "as good as gold"³⁸ have obligatory attributes, but in the first example it is comparison and in the second – simile. **Antithesis** is based on the contraposition of two objects. A good example of antithesis can be found in the advertisement for Wrigley's spearmint gum: "**Hot** days lose their terror in the **cooling freshness** of Wrigley's spearmint"; the second case of antithesis occupies the final part of the body and looks like a summary: "**Big** in benefit, **small** in cost".³⁹

2.4 Phonetic Expressive Means

By the phonetic aspect of ATs we mean the use of phonetic EM and phonosemantics. Food ATs abound in various phonetic EM, which include alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, assonance, and onomatopoeia. These means are recognizable, descriptive, and attractive. They may be found in the body; whereas "rhyme, rhythm and alliteration are typical of a slogan".⁴⁰ Below we present several most interesting examples. Galperin describes **alliteration** as "a phonetic stylistic device which aims at imparting a melodic effect to an utterance. The essence of this device lies in the repetition of similar sounds, in particular consonant sounds, in close succession, particularly at the beginning of successive words".⁴¹ In the food industry, alliteration seems to be very popular with such brand names as *Tic Tac*, *Coca-Cola*,

³⁶ McDonald's: Party Fries. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://sk.pinterest.com/pin/376472850077859927/>>.

³⁷ Magnum. [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://sk.pinterest.com/pin/251638697904178006/>>.

³⁸ Magnum Ice Cream Ads. [online]. [2021-04-06]. Available at: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/97700769/MAGNUM-ICE-CREAM-DS?tracking_source=search_projects_recommended%7Cfaded%20ads>.

³⁹ Wrigley's Spearmint Gum 1929s. [online]. [2021-03-26]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cemetarian/3434555836/>>.

⁴⁰ BOVÉE, C. L., ARENS, W. F.: *Contemporary Advertising*. Homewood : Irwin, 1989, p. 264.

⁴¹ GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 121.

ChupaChups, *Kit Kat*, and *Hubba-Bubba* making their products memorable. From the lexical point of view, these examples are cases of reduplication, i.e., a morphological process, in which the root or stem of a word (or part of it) is repeated exactly or with a slight change. This advertisement for the Alabama Peanut Company's peanuts contains an example of alliteration: three words out of four start with the letter 'b' (see Picture 6).



Picture 6: Peanuts advertisement

Source: *Boiled to Be Bold.* [online]. [2021-04-06]. Available at: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/alabama_peanut_company_boiled_to_be_bold>.

We can find **rhythm** in many spheres of human activity; *“it is a mighty weapon in stirring up emotions whatever its nature or origin, whether it is musical, mechanical or symmetrical, as in architecture”*.⁴² Rhythm is widely used in poetry and music. Rhythm *“can be carried by intonation change, stress, length, segment, quality, alliteration, rhyme, etc., as far as recurrence is concerned.”*⁴³ English is said to be a rhythmical language. No wonder that its peculiarity is widely used in ATs, e.g., in a McDonald’s dessert advertisement: *“One sweet way to treat your day.”*⁴⁴ **Rhyme** is *“a repetition of identical or similar terminal sound combinations of words. Rhyming words are generally placed at a regular distance from each other. In verse, they are usually placed at the end of the corresponding lines”*.⁴⁵ A slogan in the wine advertisement of Club W *“Easy peasy lemon squeezy”*⁴⁶ has a combination of rhythm and rhyme. This slogan brings to mind nursery rhymes and is used to advertise a lemon flavoured wine evoking nostalgia, which appeals to the customer. **Assonance** is intentional repetition of similar vowels in close succession for sound and content organization of the utterance used with the definite purpose, e.g., in the slogan of fruit candies *“Whatever froots your loops”*⁴⁷ the sound /u/ is repeated, which has additional emotive meaning. **Onomatopoeia** is *“a combination of speech-sounds, which aims at imitating sounds produced in nature (wind, sea, thunder, etc.), by things (machines or tools, etc.), by people (sighing, laughter, patter of feet, etc.) and by animals”*.⁴⁸ Picture 5 shows an advertisement for Pepsi-Cola. *“Fizzin’”* is an example of direct onomatopoeia, in imitation of the sound soda drinks produce when opened.

⁴² GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 124.

⁴³ See: STASHKO, H.: An American Woman through the Prism of the Epithet: Semasiological Aspect in Creating Images. In *Legge Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2017, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 299-335.

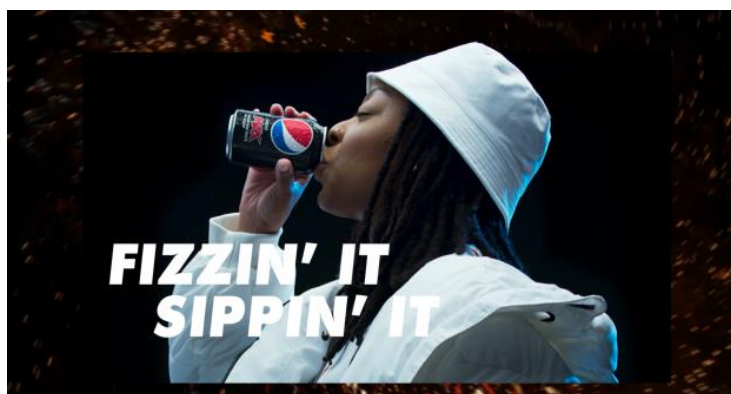
⁴⁴ *Fast Food Ads. These Days Fast Food Ads Come in Many Varieties.* [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.gourmetads.com/articles/fast-food-ads/>>.

⁴⁵ GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 123.

⁴⁶ *Easy Peasy Lemon Squeezy Wine Packaging.* [online]. [2021-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.behance.net/gallery/37067463/Easy-Peasy-Lemon-Squeezy-Wine-Packaging>>.

⁴⁷ *Froot Loops TV Commercial, ‘Wild Dance’.* [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/oAmD/froot-loops-wild-dance>>.

⁴⁸ GALPERIN, I. R.: *Stylistics*. Moscow : Higher School Publishing House, 1971, p. 127.



Picture 7: Advertisement for Pepsi-Cola

Source: CRONIN, É.: *Pepsi Max Unveils Festive TV Campaign*. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.talkingretail.com/products-news/soft-drinks/pepsi-max-unveils-festive-tv-campaign-04-11-2020/>>.

The phonetic aspect includes not only the use of SD, but also sound symbolism or phonosemantics. By phonosemantics we mean specific meanings of vowels and consonants. Phonosemantics, also known as phonaesthesia, is described by Shinohara and Kawahara⁴⁹ as cases, in which particular images are associated with certain sounds. Richardsson defines it as “*the study of the meaning that certain sounds or combination of sounds carry in a particular language*”.⁵⁰ Sound symbolism is “*a set of consistent, non-arbitrary correspondences between phonological components of words and semantic meanings*”.⁵¹ Phonosemantics is divided into two branches: “*objective and subjective. Objective phono semantics is then further divided into synthetical (iconism), conventional (phonesthesia), and productive (onomatopoeia)*”.⁵² The scholars have contributed considerably to the analysis of sound expressivity in many languages, specifying its universal and national character. Several experiments were carried out: by Sapir in 1929, Ramachandran and Hubbard in 2001, Bankieris in 2012, Danilchuk in 2018 and others, which aimed at the analysis of the perception of fabricated words (Danilchuk uses the term “*fantasy words*”).⁵³ Specific combinations of sounds were perceived as something large/small, masculine/feminine, an object with round/sharp edges, etc. There exist many books and dictionaries on sound symbolism, which are used by marketing specialists who create the names of brands, trademarks and compose AT. These names must be pleasant to the ear and create “*a positive image of the company*”.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ For more information, see: SHINOHARA, K., KAWAHARA, S.: A Cross-Linguistic Study of Sound Symbolism: The Images of Size. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 2012, p. 396-410. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://journals.linguisticsociety.org/proceedings/index.php/BLS/article/view/3926/3621>>.

⁵⁰ RICHARDSSON, S.: *Phonosemantics – The Intrinsic Meaning of Sounds*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<https://aperimentis.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/phonosemantics/#:~:text=Phonosemantics%2C%20also%20known%20as%20phonaesthesia,carry%20in%20a%20particular%20language>>.

⁵¹ BANKIERIS, K.: *Sound Symbolism and Synaesthesia: Synaesthetes' Sensitivity to Sound Symbolism and the Role of Sound Symbolism in Lexical-Gustatory Synaesthesia*. [Master's Thesis]. Edinburgh : The University of Edinburgh, 2011, p. 2. [online]. [2021-03-15]. Available at: <<https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/6093/Bankieris%202011%20MSc.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>.

⁵² DANILCHUK, M.: Fantasy Word Sounding in Marketing Phonosemantics. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2018, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 7.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 1-37.

⁵⁴ For more information, see: ANDREEVA, M. V.: *Психологические основы образования и функционирования бренда. Дисс. ... канд. психол. наук*. Москва : Государственный университет управления, 2003.

There appeared a new term – “*marketing phonosemantics*”,⁵⁵ the main point of which is “*its potential for using sounds as a tool of influence on the consumer*”.⁵⁶ Park and Osera analyzed the effect of brand sound on consumers’ brand evaluation and came to the conclusion that “*brand sound has significant effects not only on perceived quality and brand image, but also purchase intention through the fit of brand sound to its product category and product attributes*”,⁵⁷ that brand sound is directly connected with the evaluation and that the results observed in Japan are of universal character and can also be found in the West. To identify semantic meanings of sounds, the following phonological features should be taken into account: features: vowel height (close/high, mid, open/low), vowel backness (back, central, front), vowel roundedness (rounded), place of articulation (coronal, labial, dorsal, glottal), manner of articulation (sonorant), voicing (voiced) and word-level features (vowels, number of syllables).⁵⁸ For example, English words containing the consonant cluster **gl-** (e.g., *glint, gleam, glimmer, glisten, glow*) frequently have meanings related to ‘light’ or ‘vision’.⁵⁹ Sedykh⁶⁰ describes the following meanings of some sounds and their combinations: **gr-** at the beginning of the word implies something negative and unpleasant (*groan, grumble*); **cl-** at the beginning of the word is associated with something sharp, metallic (*click, clank, clash*); **wh-** at the beginning of the word often implies air movement (*whistle, whizz, whiff*); **-ckle, -ggle** and **-zzle** at the end of the word are often associated with the light or something repeated from time to time (*trickle, wriggle, sizzle*).

Magnus in “*A Dictionary of English Sound*”⁶¹ names sounds or sound sequences and their associated meanings of phonesthemes. She presents the phonesthemic classification of most common monosyllabic words in English and shows which associations they evoke. In her opinion, /b/ is associated with big, much, many, water, alcohol and beautiful, handsome people; /g/ – with sound and talk, goodness, light; /p/ with containers and enclosed areas; /t/ – with young, small people. Though her classification of consonants is interesting, some positions, in our opinion, look dubious. Carrying out research on sound symbolism in lexical-gustatory synaesthesia, Bankieris found that sweet tastes are induced by words containing a low proportion of mid vowels (e.g., /e/), are associated with words containing a low proportion of front vowels (e.g., /i/) and a high proportion of back vowels (e.g., /u/).⁶²

⁵⁵ KUTSERUBOV, A. E.: Маркетинговая фоносемантика. In *Социально-экономические явления и процессы*, 2011, No. 10, p. 108-110.

⁵⁶ DANILCHUK, M.: Fantasy Word Sounding in Marketing Phonosemantics. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2018, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 1.

⁵⁷ PARK, J. W., OSERA, S.: The Effect of Brand Sound on Consumers Brand Evaluation in Japan. In ACEVEDO, R. C., HERNANDEZ, C. J.-M., LOWREY, M. T. (eds.): *Latin American Advances in Consumer Research Volume 2*. Duluth : Association for Consumer Research 2018, p. 188-189.

⁵⁸ BANKIERIS, K.: *Sound Symbolism and Synaesthesia: Synaesthetes’ Sensitivity to Sound Symbolism and the Role of Sound Symbolism in Lexical-Gustatory Synaesthesia*. [Master’s Thesis]. Edinburgh : The University of Edinburgh, 2011, p. 28. [online]. [2021-03-15]. Available at: <<https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/6093/Bankieris%202011%20MSc.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>.

⁵⁹ For more information, see: BERGEN, B. K.: The Psychological Reality of Phonaesthemes. In *Language*, 2004, Vol. 80, No. 2, p. 290-311.

⁶⁰ SEDYKH, D. V.: Проблемы фоносемантики в современном английском языке. In *Международный журнал экспериментального образования*, 2011, No. 5, p. 135-136.

⁶¹ MAGNUS, M.: *Sound Symbolism, Phonosemantics, Phonetic Symbolism, Mimologics, Iconism, Cratylus Ideophones, Synaesthesia The Alphabet, The Word*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<http://www.trismegistos.com>>.

⁶² BANKIERIS, K.: *Sound Symbolism and Synaesthesia: Synaesthetes’ Sensitivity to Sound Symbolism and the Role of Sound Symbolism in Lexical-Gustatory Synaesthesia*. [Master’s Thesis]. Edinburgh : The University of Edinburgh, 2011, p. 36-37. [online]. [2021-03-15]. Available at: <<https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/6093/Bankieris%202011%20MSc.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>.

Now let us give some phonesthemic examples found in the ATs. Advertisements for Maltesers have several interesting items: **MM-MM!** *Much **m**ore to **m**unch on Maltesers! Another sweet treat by Mars. Crisp to Crunch-**M**ore to **M**unch-Everyone's Sweet on Maltesers.*⁶³ We have marked the letter 'm' in bold to show how often it is used in this text. The interjection *Mmmm* (extended as much as needed) is used to show pleasure. 'Cr-' at the beginning of the word imitates the sound of eating crispy sweets (a case of onomatopoeia). *Skips* area light and melty Cocktail Flavour snack produced in the UK. They should be balanced on the tongue and melt in the mouth. The advertisement for it is composed in best tongue twister tradition: a combination of identical sounds ending with a question: "*If Skips make **t**angled tongue **t**wist with **t**angy **t**ingles, will **t**angy **t**ingles **t**angle **t**wirling tongues? **T**rain your tongue to **t**wist with the tongue **t**ingling a **c**risp*".⁶⁴ We have also marked in bold those letter sounds, which have phonetic stylistic value. The initial /t/ can be considered as a case of alliteration; according to Magnus, /t/ is associated with young, small people.⁶⁵ The cluster -gl/-gle is associated with a repeated movement; *crisp* is a case of onomatopoeia. This advertisement contains many interesting sound-to-meaning correspondences.

2.5 Graphical Stylistic Devices

The graphic messages used in advertisements convey all the relevant and important information for a consumer on the products they advertise. If the graphical design of the advertisement is proper, its visual effect will be great. The visual aids used in the advertisement inevitably lead us to semiotics, which was founded by Peirce. He created the basic classification of signs: icon, index and symbol. An icon contains the physical resemblance of the object; in the AT, it may be a photo or a picture describing the advertised product; index points directly to the object; in the advertisement it may be, say, a coffee grain; a symbol is created arbitrarily and has culture-specific value. A star as a symbol can have different meanings: it is connected with night, it means light; it is used metaphorically as '*a top-star actress*' and the number of stars serves for hotel and services assessment – '*a five-star hotel*'. There were many scholars who greatly contributed to semiotics and further developed the ideas of Peirce. Here we will mention only the name of de Saussure, who defined two parts of the sign: signifier and signified. If we apply his classification to the advertisement, a signifier may be different, depending on the advertisement type. In a radio advertisement, it may be a sound or specific intonation; a TV advertisement includes sounds together with actions, movements, gestures, face expression, etc. A printed text consists of graphically arranged words, which have specific font, size and colour and are accompanied by a photo or a picture. The signified is the object of advertising. Signifiers in the advertisement can be icons, indexes, and symbols.

Making analysis of Peirce's theory, Bradley reminds us that there are several types of iconic representation: resemblance icons, exemplar icons, symbolic icons, and arbitrary icons.⁶⁶ In his book *Design fundamentals*, he successfully uses the principles of semiotics. He speaks about the visual perception of the text and with the help of numerous examples demonstrates

⁶³ CHAPMAN, C.: *Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth with These Delicious Vintage Advertisements*. [online]. [2021-04-27]. Available at: <<https://design.tutsplus.com/articles/satisfy-your-sweet-tooth-with-these-delicious-vintage-advertisements--psd-11704>>.

⁶⁴ *Crisp Ads*. [online]. [2021-04-27]. Available at: <<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/565975878156843493/>>.

⁶⁵ MAGNUS, M.: *Sound Symbolism, Phonosemantics, Phonetic Symbolism, Mimologics, Iconism, Cratylus Ideophones, Synaesthesia The Alphabet, The Word*. [online]. [2021-04-25]. Available at: <<http://www.trismegistos.com>>.

⁶⁶ BRADLEY, S.: *Icon, Index, and Symbol – Three Categories of Signs*. [online]. [2021-04-06]. Available at: <<https://vanseodesign.com/web-design/icon-index-symbol/>>.

what techniques can be used to make the text (and in our case, AT) effective. Any composition can have three basic directions: horizontal, which suggests calmness, stability and tranquillity; vertical, which suggests balance, formality and alertness, and diagonal, which suggests movement and action. He claims that we can show movement in a composition in a different way: rhythm, gradation, perspective, gestural lines, directional lines, repetition of elements, subject matter of elements and implied action an element exhibits.⁶⁷ Though he treats all these elements as the constituents of a picture design, the connection of some of them (rhythm, gradation, repetition of elements) with language are obviously seen in an AT. The combination of linguistic and graphical means allows the consideration of an AT as a semiotic construal. Now let us give some illustrations of graphical means in the texts under analysis.

Discussing graphical means, we must state that they are widely used in advertisements. We will concentrate our attention on two items: colours and fonts. All the colours have value (light vs. dark or white vs. black), chroma (saturation, purity, strength, intensity), and hue (e.g., the name of the colour family: red, yellow, green, cyan, blue, magenta).⁶⁸ Panasenکو has analyzed such physical properties of colour as value, chroma, hue and in various examples and has shown how they function in a literary text.⁶⁹ This approach can be applied to our language material. One of the main classifications of colour is into warm (advancing) and cold (retreating) colours. Warm colours include yellow, orange, red and white. Blue, violet, indigo and black are cold colours. Green sprawls over both categories.⁷⁰ In advertisements, colours are often connected with the product they offer: advertisements for ketchup are in red, advertisements for vegetables and healthy and ecological products are green. The combination of red and yellow are most prominently featured in the food industry. They stimulate appetite and evoke taste buds. They also happen to be most prominently used by fast food restaurants.⁷¹

There is one more additional category of colours. These are so called neutral colours. To neutral colours belong browns, white, and black. Browns are described by David as wholesome, warm, appetizing, natural, and perfect for the food industry. To reinforce the flavour visually, colour should denote the flavour of the product if possible. This means not making a blue advertisement for an orange flavoured product.⁷² Most of the time, a mixture of two or more colours is used. In the advertisement for the candies *Skittles* different colours are used (see Picture 8).

⁶⁷ BRADLEY, S.: *Design Fundamentals. Elements, Attributes & Principles. A Beginner's Guide to Graphic Communication*. [online]. [2021-03-24]. Available at: <<https://vanseodesign.com>>.

⁶⁸ See: WYLER, S.: *Colour and Language: Colour Terms in English*. Tübingen : Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992.

⁶⁹ See: PANASENKO, N.: Colourful Mosaic of Images and Characters in the Works of Iris Murdoch. In *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 2020, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 185-227.

⁷⁰ See: BIRREN, F.: *Colour Psychology and Colour Therapy*. Secaucus : The Citadel Press, 1961.

⁷¹ DAVID, J. C.: *Colors That Influence Food Sales*. [online]. [2021-03-10]. Available at: <<https://jennadavid.com/colors-that-influence-food-sales-infographic/#:~:text=Red%20and%20yellow%20are%20the,reason%E2%80%94because%20it%20is%20effective>>.

⁷² Ibidem.



Picture 8: Advertisement for the candies Skittles

Source: *Taste the Rainbow! 30-Pack Skittles and Starburst Variety Box for \$18 Prime Shipped (Reg. up to \$30)*. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://9to5toys.com/2016/05/10/30-pack-skittles-starburst-variety-box/>>.

Skittles are depicted as a rainbow because each separate piece of candy consists of a different colour of the rainbow. If we come back to Bradley's *Design Fundamentals* mentioned above and consider the movements of lines in this advertisement, we will see that it has horizontal lines, which suggest “calmness, stability and tranquillity”.⁷³ We also have a picture of seven-coloured rainbow. An upturned rainbow is a very scarce optical phenomenon, which appears thanks to some physical conditions. We guess that the upturned rainbow in this case is used metaphorically; graphical design enhances the text “*Touch the rainbow, taste the rainbow*”.

Wrigley's launched this brand in 1893. To show that it has been on the market for such a long time, they very often use this style of retro advertisement (see Picture 9).



Picture 9: Wrigley's Chewing Gum

Source: *A Disturbing Ad for Wrigley's Gum, 1913*. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/christine592/3586919963/>>.

⁷³ BRADLEY, S.: *Design Fundamentals. Elements, Attributes & Principles. A Beginner's Guide to Graphic Communication*. [online]. [2021-03-24]. Available at: <<https://vanseodesign.com>>.

In this advertisement, as well as in many others, illustrations work hand in hand with the advertised text. The graphical arrangement in food advertisements plays a very important role in drawing people's attention, making it prominent among other product advertisements.

Concluding Remarks

Advertisements have achieved amazing effects on the persuasion of consumers to buy products. The enormous competition for potential customers has led advertisers to exploit the incredibly versatile capacities of language and visual design to influence people's thoughts and actions. Food ATs includes many linguistic and extralinguistic means. They have well-organized language, exact figures, eye-catching and bright pictures and affirmative adjectives to describe the good qualities of the product. Using these devices, producers can better communicate with consumers and make the product more popular among them in order to achieve the goal of ever-lasting purchase and popularity among consumers. A successful advertisement as a semiotic construal includes an icon, index and symbol and a properly organized text. This combination must be unique and able to persuade prospective customers to buy the advertised product.

Abbreviations:

AT(s) – advertisement text(s)

EM – expressive means

SD – stylistic devices

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EVIDENCE FROM CROATIA

Marija Šain

Abstract:

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the need to change and quickly adjust the company's business strategies to the needs of its stakeholders in order to strengthen mutual trust and develop resilience to the new situation. In such circumstances, the application of corporate social responsibility (CSR) becomes inevitable, but also socially expected. The aim of this paper is to identify CSR activities carried out by the 10 best companies in the Republic of Croatia in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The content analysis method analyzes the websites of these companies in relation to CSR during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the socially responsible activities are categorized according to the three most important stakeholders for the company: employees, customers and the community. The results of the research determine the equal representation of CSR activities towards all observed stakeholders and the importance of coordination between external (customers and communities) and internal (employees) CSR activities during Covid-19 in order for companies to maintain their competitiveness and relationship with stakeholders. The paper provides practical implications for the effective management and implementation of CSR activities in the period of pandemics and other crisis situations, but it is also possible to maintain certain additional activities after the cessation of these circumstances.

Key words:

Community. Corporate Social Responsibility. COVID-19. Croatia. Stakeholders.

Introduction

In 2020, the world faced a Covid-19 pandemic that affected all aspects of life and society – in sociological, health, economic and every other sense. Unfortunately, the pandemic has resulted in thousands of business closures and large layoffs, affecting both workers and their communities.¹ In order to continue to operate, generate revenue and meet the needs of their stakeholders, companies have been forced to adapt their operations by introducing a number of measures and changes. The challenges faced by companies in such a situation is to comply with all regulations imposed by governments, experts, but also society. Namely, in such crisis situations, the company has higher expectations from the company to apply corporate social responsibility (CSR)² that is, to act responsibly towards society in its business, respecting all the principles (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibility) on which such business is based.³ In addition to societal expectations, crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic provide an opportunity for companies to demonstrate their commitment to CSR activities⁴ to redefine and expand their CSR strategies to adapt them to changes in the environment⁵ and thus

¹ BARTIK, A. et al.: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Business Outcomes and Expectations, Working Paper*. Boston : Harvard Business School, 2020, p. 2. [online]. [2021-02-08]. Available at: <https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/20-102_1c8a5b54-d400-4a8d-b136-d6890cf876dd.pdf>.

² See: GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, I-M., GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, A.: Corporate Social Responsibility during COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Open Innovation Technology, Market and Complexity*, 2020, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 1-21. [online]. [2021-03-27]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2199-8531/6/4/126/htm>>.

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⁴ See, for example: HE, H., HARRIS, L.: The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Corporate Social Responsibility and Marketing Philosophy. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2020, Vol. 116, p. 176-182.

⁵ See: DROPPERT, H., BENNETT, S.: Corporate Social Responsibility in Global Health: An Exploratory Study of Multinational Pharmaceutical Firms. In *Globalization and Health*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 15, p. 1-8. [online]. [2021-02-27]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-015-0100-5>>.

turn the threat into an opportunity.⁶ Therefore, the situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic should be seen as a challenge that offers opportunities for transformation, new ideas and projects, and improved business continuity.

The paper draws attention to the activities of corporate social responsibility (CSR) carried out by companies in the Republic of Croatia in order to alleviate and reduce the potential effects caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific research questions are as follows: How can companies help cope with the Covid-19 pandemic? What CSR activities did companies in the Republic of Croatia undertake for the care and protection of employees and customers, and what activities did it undertake to help the community during the COVID-19 pandemic? In order to answer these questions, the author conducted an analysis of the content of the website, the top 10 companies operating in the Republic of Croatia. Based on three vital stakeholders for the company (employees, customers and the community) and the literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR), the aim of this paper is to investigate how the top 10 companies in terms of revenue operating in the Republic of Croatia (RH) reacted during the period the COVID-19 pandemic to protect its employees, customers and the community in the context of corporate social responsibility. The results of this research show that the analyzed companies have an equal representation of CSR activities towards the observed stakeholders, i.e., the importance of harmonization between external (customers and communities) and internal (employees) CSR activities is noticed. Given that no research has been conducted so far on the application of CSR in the Covid-19 situation in the Republic of Croatia, this research contributes to the missing literature. In addition, based on these findings, the research provides key practical implications for the effective management and implementation of CSR activities during a pandemic, but also other crisis situations. Also, it is noticed that some positive practices that were applied in crisis circumstances, can be maintained in non-crisis circumstances.

1 Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility implies “*attention with which we treat ethically and socially responsible stakeholders who are outside, but also within the organization*”.⁷ “*Stakeholders are all individuals or organizations that can have an effect on the organization, and are directly or indirectly influenced by business processes and activities of an organization.*”⁸ Company stakeholders are employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, the community, the state, managers, NGOs, government, ecosystems, and business partners.⁹ Employees, consumers and the community are considered vital stakeholders for the company because they are important for business growth and long-term survival of the company and are also a central feature of all

⁶ See also: FERNÁNDEZ-FEIJÓO SOUTO, B.: Crisis and Corporate Social Responsibility: Threat or Opportunity. In *International Journal of Economic Sciences and Applied Research*, 2009, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 36-50. [online]. [2021-03-17]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46543037_Crisis_and_Corporate_Social_Responsibility_Threat_or_Opportunity>.

⁷ HOPKINS, M.: What Is Corporate Social Responsibility All about. In *Journal of Public Affairs*, 2006, Vol. 6, No. 3-4, p. 299.

⁸ FAROOQ, O. et al.: The Multiple Pathways through Which Internal and External Corporate Social Responsibility Influence Organizational Identification and Multifoci Outcomes: The Moderating Role of Cultural and Social Orientations. In *The Academy of Management Journal*, 2017, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 957. [online]. [2021-03-17]. Available at: <<https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/amj.2014.0849>>.

⁹ For more information, see: MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>.

CSR Reports.¹⁰ For this reason, in this paper, the CSR activities of the company are analyzed according to these stakeholders. Given that there are three different stakeholders (1 internal and 2 external), there are different internal and external activities of socially responsible business, where the community and consumers are users of external activities of CSR, and employees are users of internal CSR activities.¹¹ These CSR activities include: “*CSR targeting the community can include support for humanitarian causes, charitable giving, community development investments, and collaboration with non-governmental organizations (...) CSR targeting consumers relates to the responsibilities of a business toward those who receive its services or consume its products. CSR practices within this domain include product safety initiatives and customer care programs. Internal CSR refers to practices focused on stewardship toward the internal workforce (i.e., employees). This has included activities such as employee training, continuing education programs, safe working environments, diversity policies, daycare programs, and ethical labor practices.*”¹²

At the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, CSR activities were specific given the effects that such a situation brought. This is evidenced by research conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which shows that companies have placed emphasis on the health and safety of employees and consumers by taking all necessary measures (disinfection of premises and equipment, use of protective equipment, work from home, social distance, etc.).¹³ This situation has created increased insecurity among employees regarding their employment, and research has shown that the use of CSR activities during the Covid-19 pandemic has a positive effect on their perception of job security,¹⁴ contributes to better work performance and organizational commitment,¹⁵ and increasing psychological capital, which includes: self-efficacy, hope,

¹⁰ See, for example: MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>; GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, 2021, p. 905-918.

¹¹ See: MARGOLIS, J. D.; WALSH, J. P.: Misery Loves Companies: Rethinking Social Initiatives by Business. In *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2003, Vol. 48, No. 2, p. 268-305.

¹² See also: FAROOQ, O. et al.: The Multiple Pathways through which Internal and External Corporate Social Responsibility Influence Organizational Identification and Multifoci Outcomes: The Moderating Role of Cultural and Social Orientations. In *The Academy of Management Journal*, 2017, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 954-985. [online]. [2021-03-17]. Available at: <<https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/amj.2014.0849>>.

¹³ See: MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>; GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, 2021, p. 905-918.

¹⁴ See also: FILIMONAU, V. et al.: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Organizational Commitment of Senior Hotel Managers. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2020, Vol. 91, 2020, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-03-13]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278431920302115>>.

¹⁵ See, for example: FILIMONAU, V. et al.: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Organizational Commitment of Senior Hotel Managers. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2020, Vol. 91, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-03-13]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278431920302115>>; VO-THANH, T. et al.: How Does Hotel Employees' Satisfaction with the Organization's COVID-19 Responses Affect Job Insecurity and Job Performance?. In *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2020, Vol. 29, No. 6, p. 907-925. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09669582.2020.1850750>>; ZHANG, J., XIE, C.: The Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Hotel Employee Safety Behavior during COVID-19: The Moderation of Belief Restoration and Negative Emotions. In *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 2020, Vol. 46, p. 233-243. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S144767702030259X?via%3Dihub>>; JAKULEVIČIENĖ, L., GAILIŪTĖ-JANUŠONĖ, D.: The Scope of Legal Expectations from Business in Human Rights: Carrot or Stick? In *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 932-946. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <https://jssidoi.org/jesi/uploads/articles/30/Jakuleviciene_The_scope_of_legal_expectations_from_business_in_human_rights_carrot_or_stick.pdf>.

resilience and optimism of employees¹⁶ through their satisfaction with corporate COVID-19 responses. In addition to internal CSR activities, at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, companies were also conducting external CSR activities to other stakeholders, primarily customers and the community observed in this work. As with employees, companies have taken great care of the health and safety of their consumers,¹⁷ but they have also allowed some flexibility in their business for the benefit of consumers (especially in tourism – for example, waiving the right to charge for changes and canceling purchased tickets;¹⁸ but also in the banking sector – deferred payments due to financial difficulties their clients).¹⁹ Such activities affect the positive perception of consumers about the company, which contributes to its intention and loyalty to the same, and it ultimately helps companies to increase their market, reputation and image.²⁰ As far as the community is concerned, during the Covid-19 pandemic, companies focused mostly on donations to health organizations (in money and products), non-profit organizations, assistance to the entire community (through the production and donation of protective equipment, financial assistance)²¹ as well as assisting the state by providing logistical support within its organizational capacity.²² By using CSR activities to their stakeholders, companies develop better resilience to the negative effects of the Covid-19

¹⁶ See: MAO, Y. et al.: Effects of Tourism CSR on Employee Psychological Capital in the COVID-19 Crisis: From the Perspective of Conservation of Resources Theory. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2020, Vol. 23, p. 1-19. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13683500.2020.1770706>>.

¹⁷ See also: GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, 2021, p. 905-918.; TALBOT, D., ORDONEZ-PONCE, E.: Canadian Banks' Responses to COVID-19: A Strategic Positioning Analysis. In *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, Vol. 10, p. 1-8. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20430795.2020.1771982>>.

¹⁸ See, for example: ZHANG, J., XIE, C.: The Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Hotel Employee Safety Behavior during COVID-19: The Moderation of Belief Restoration and Negative Emotions. In *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 2020, Vol. 46, p. 233-243. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S144767702030259X?via%3Dihub>>.

¹⁹ See: TALBOT, D., ORDONEZ-PONCE, E.: Canadian Banks' Responses to COVID-19: A Strategic Positioning Analysis. In *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, Vol. 10, p. 1-8. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20430795.2020.1771982>>.

²⁰ See, for example: YANG, K. et al.: Effects of Retailers' Service Quality and Legitimacy on Behavioral Intention: The Role of Emotions during COVID-19. In *The Service Industries Journal*, 2021, Vol. 41, No. 1-2, p. 84-106. [online]. [2021-04-06]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02642069.2020.1863373>>; LIU, F. et al.: The Influence of the Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosures on Consumer Brand Attitudes under the Impact of COVID-19. In *Frontiers of Business Research in China*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 28, p. 1-22. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://fbr.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s11782-020-00096-0>>; CHUA, B. L. et al.: Tourists' Outbound Travel Behavior in the Aftermath of the COVID-19: Role of Corporate Social Responsibility, Response Effort, and Health Prevention. In *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2020, Vol. 28, No. 6, p. 879-906. [online]. [2021-02-12]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09669582.2020.1849236>>.

²¹ See also: GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, I.-M., GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, A.: Corporate Social Responsibility during COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Open Innovation Technology, Market and Complexity*, 2020, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 1-21. [online]. [2021-03-27]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2199-8531/6/4/126/htm>>; GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, 2021, p. 905-918.; MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>.

²² See, for example: RIVO-LÓPEZ, E. et al.: Corporate Social Responsibility and Family Business in the Time of COVID-19: Changing Strategy?. In *Sustainability*, 2021, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/4/2041>>; PALMA-RUIZ, J. M. et al.: Socially Responsible Investing as a Competitive Strategy for Trading Companies in Times of Upheaval Amid COVID-19: Evidence from Spain. In *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 2020, Vol. 41, No. 8, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-04-14]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7072/8/3/41>>.

pandemic and crisis situations in general.²³ Therefore, it is important for the company to implement and coordinate external and internal CSR activities,²⁴ given their mutual influence²⁵ and the benefits it brings to both the company and its vital stakeholders.

2 Methodology

The aim of the research is to identify and analyze how companies operating in the Republic of Croatia reacted during the COVID-19 pandemic to three vital stakeholders: employees, customers and the community within the framework of socially responsible business. Stakeholder perspective was used as a modern approach to evaluating the CSR activities of organizations,²⁶ and such research design, during the Covid-19 pandemic, has been used in several studies.²⁷ The sample on which the survey was conducted is the top 10 companies by revenue operating in the Republic of Croatia, according to the Financial Agency (FINA)²⁸ for 2019, and published by Lider magazine.²⁹ The following table lists the companies that represent the sample for this survey with their total revenues in 2019.

Table 1: Top 10 companies by revenue in the Republic of Croatia in 2019

Company	Total Revenue (in HRK million)
INA-INDUSTRIJA NAFTE	21.613
HRVATSKA ELEKTROPRIVREDA	10.520
KONZUM PLUS	7.657
PRVO PLINARSKO DRUŠTVO	7.091

²³ For more information, see: FILIMONAU, V. et al.: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Organizational Commitment of Senior Hotel Managers. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2020, Vol. 91, 2020, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-03-13]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278431920302115>>; QIU, S. C. et al.: Can Corporate Social Responsibility Protect Firm Value during the COVID-19 Pandemic?. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2021, Vol. 93, p. 4. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027843192030311X?via%3Dihub>>; HUANG, H.; LIU, S. Q.: “Donate to Help Combat COVID-19!” How Typeface Affects the Effectiveness of CSR Marketing? In *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 2020, Vol. 32, No. 10, p. 3315-3333. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2020-0462/full/html>>; VALLS MARTÍNEZ, M. D. C., MARTIN CERVANTES, P. A.: Testing the Resilience of CSR Stocks during the COVID-19 Crisis: A Transcontinental Analysis. In *Mathematics*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 1-24. [online]. [2021-03-14]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7390/9/5/514>>.

²⁴ DENG, X. et al.: External Corporate Social Responsibility and Labor Productivity: A S-Curve Relationship and the Moderating Role of Internal CSR and Government Subsidy. In *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 2020, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 395.

²⁵ EBRAHIM, A. H., BUHEJI, M.: A Pursuit for a ‘Holistic Social Responsibility Strategic Framework’ Addressing COVID-19 Pandemic Needs. In *American Journal of Economics*, 2020, Vol. 10, No. 5, p. 301. [online]. [2021-02-27]. Available at: <<http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.economics.20201005.04.html>>.

²⁶ QUAZI, A. M., O’BRIEN, D.: An Empirical Test of a Cross-National Model of Corporate Social Responsibility. In *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2000, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 36.

²⁷ MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>; GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, p. 905-918.

²⁸ Fina is a leading national provider of financial, electronic (IT), data and other services, and the users of its services include financial institutions, state and public bodies, business entities and citizens. (More information available at: <https://www.fina.hr/tko-smo>).

²⁹ Lider is a business weekly, one of the most influential, most reputable and most read business magazines in Croatia and is relevant in terms of providing information (More information available at: <https://lider.media/>).

HRVATSKI TELEKOM	6.070
LIDL HRVATSKA	5.865
CRODUX DERIVATI DVA	5.721
PETROL	5.566
ZAGREBAČKA BANKA	5.361
SPAR HRVATSKA	4.808

Source: LITVAN, G.: *1000 najvećih: Tko je skrivio prepolovljen rast prihoda i stagnaciju u zapošljavanju*. Released on 3rd September 2020. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://lider.media/poslovna-scena/hrvatska/1000-najvecih-tko-je-skrivio-prepolovljen-rast-prihoda-i-stagnaciju-u-zaposljavanju-132988/>>.

The sampled companies come from different industries, with energy companies (5) and retail chains (3) at the top of the list of the largest, followed by one company from the banking sector and telecommunications. In order to determine their CSR activities, a method of analyzing the content of the websites of the observed companies was carried out as of 1st April 2021. Getting data from a company's website is the most convenient tool because it is an effective way of communication and the most popular method of data discovery for organizations,³⁰ and content analysis is an analytical technique that puts many words from the examined text into certain categories.³¹ The search included all the contents of the corporation's website, such as reports, press releases, updates for COVID-19 and all other available content on the accessed websites related to the subject of the research. By reviewing and reading all documents and using a qualitative data coding technique, certain CSR actions taken in response to the COVID 19 pandemic were identified. Further, the data was categorized according to the impact they have on three important stakeholders: employees, communities and consumers. individual activities of corporate social responsibility were coded. It was found that all companies provided at least some information to the observed stakeholders related to the coronavirus pandemic as part of their corporate social responsibility. A total number of CSR activities was identified which was divided into 15 categories and sub-categories according to three main stakeholders: community, employees and customers.

3 Research

3.1 Consumer

At the time of the pandemic, all sampled companies continued to operate their core business, which means that they ensured continuous operations and deliveries to customers, with changed conditions in accordance with the situation. Within stakeholders, customers are coded into two categories:

Table 2: CSR activities towards consumers

Category	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Customer health and safety:		
Set protection measures for customers	9	90
Secure business with clients	6	60
Flexibility in business	3	30

Source: Own processing.

³⁰ See: HOLDER-WEBB, L., et al.: The Supply of Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosures among U.S. Firms. In *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2009, Vol. 84, No. 4, p. 497-527. [online]. [2021-03-14]. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=970330>.

³¹ See also: WEBER, R. P.: *Basic Content Analysis*. London : Sage Publications, 1990.

Almost all analyzed companies (90%) have taken all protection measures for the safety of their customers, enhanced hygiene and sanitary measures, as well as additional disinfection of cash registers, equipment and POS devices, clear instructions and advice to customers to prevent the spread of disease and protect their health, placing space markers, installing transparent partitions at checkouts, different packaging and handling of certain foods, trolleys, baskets, handles are disinfected several times a day). For one company (PPD) these data were not known. All companies have found it important to provide their products and services to consumers, regardless of the circumstances. Half of the analyzed companies also enabled online business with clients, which includes the use of digital tools in communication with the company (HEP), contactless payment (INA, Petrol, SPAR, Konzum), online purchase and home delivery (Konzum). Regarding business flexibility, due to such an extraordinary situation that affected all aspects of society and their lives, HEP suspended customer disconnections due to debts for electricity, gas and heating, and those whose electricity was cut off were restored. Also, the sending of warnings and enforcement was temporarily suspended. The two companies analyzed the company also provided a package of additional assistance. In particular, ZABA has prepared a package of measures to support customers, consumers and businesses that are feeling the financial consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic, without specifying which measures are in question. In addition, it abolished the fee for withdrawing cash with citizens debit cards at ATMs of all banks in Croatia, thus further facilitating clients' access to funds at the nearest ATM so that they would not have to come to branches. HT has made additional free gigabytes available to all private and business subscribers, as well as to those on vouchers. Also, students who use the School for Life program, provided free access while classes are held at a distance and also offers the service instrukcije.hr which helps students through video instructions to master the material in mathematics for primary and secondary school.

3.2 Community

Within the category of communities, 5 categories are coded:

Table 3: CSR activities towards communities

Category	Number of Companies	Percentage (%)
Cash donations to health care institutions	5	50
Cash donations to non-profit organizations	3	30
Donations in products and services	3	30
Cooperation with other organizations	3	30
Community mental health	1	10

Source: Own processing.

Half of the analyzed companies gave monetary donations to health care institutions (Ina – more than 1,500,000 kuna to health care institutions and institutions, HT – 4 million kuna to the hospital that was primarily in charge of fighting coronavirus, Lidl – distributed one million kuna to several Croatian hospitals, HEP donated a total of HRK 5.1 million for the fight against coronavirus – all HEP employees waived their salaries in the amount of HRK 500, or a total of HRK 5.1 million. ZABA – donated HRK 1.3 million to hospitals to help cover medical expenses and purchase medical equipment 30% of the observed companies gave monetary donations to non-profit organizations, primarily the Red Cross (HEP, Konzum – donated HRK 100,000.00, ZABA employees provided HRK 380,000 HRK donations for the Croatian Red Cross intended for the purchase and distribution of food packages for socially disadvantaged citizens and households, and they are Zagrebačka banka with an additional million kuna donation). Donations in products and services were assisted by three companies; INA – donated 720 liters of disinfectant for surfaces to the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia and

also designed a campaign “Coffee for Our Heroes” at their gas stations – free coffee for health professionals, police and firefighters. Konzum Plus sought to facilitate the work of health professionals in various health care institutions and those gathered in the Croatian Association of Nurses through numerous donations of various food and hygiene supplies. Also, they donated more than half a million disposable protective masks worth almost two million kuna to the Directorate of Civil Protection of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia. PPD donated seven respirators to the hospital in Zagreb, as many as could be found on the market at that time, as well as 20 delivery vehicles and vans. Cooperation with other organizations is evident in the business of the three companies. Namely, INA, in cooperation with a Croatian company, produced a new, deficient product on the market – surface disinfectant. Konzum Plus and ŠPAR established cooperation with domestic agricultural producers who, due to the emergency situation, were not allowed to sell at local markets. Through this cooperation, they made their fruits and vegetables available throughout the Republic of Croatia, as well as plants. Also, SPAR supported a Croatian company that focused on the production of cotton protective masks by providing its employees with masks from that production. In this way, they take care of preserving jobs and other businesses. The mental health of the community was meant by HT (1 company) who made the biggest business-racing online ht b2run challenge #stayhome where the main task was to run five kilometers in his home. This event was organized with the aim of encouraging the business public to a challenge which, in addition to entertainment, in the isolation of their own home, will simultaneously work on their – physical and mental – health and start and start some physical activity.

3.3 Employees

Within the category of employees, 3 categories are coded where within one category, three more sub-categories are coded.

Table 4: CSR activities towards employees

Category	Number of companies	Percentage (%)
Employee health and safety:	10	100
- Provided personal protection equipment and a safe working environment		
- Work in shifts	2	20
- Home-office	5	50
Financial allowance for employees	3	30
Employee mental health	4	40

Source: Own processing.

All analyzed companies provided personal protection equipment for their employees, which includes gloves, masks and hand sanitizers, as well as a safe working environment, which includes partition walls at toll booths to reduce social contact, enhanced disinfection of space, equipment, mandatory temperature measurement at coming to work and using online meetings instead of live. In this segment, Lidl stands out, which is the winner of the Excellence in Challenges award, where quality employee management is assessed, which means that Lidl has provided all necessary preventive protection and continuously adjusted its work organization and daily processes while maintaining a strong focus on employee welfare. and maintaining job security. As for shift work, the two companies said in a statement that such a way of working was introduced. HEP formed two teams of workers, who worked alternately for 15 days in a row. times a day, at the handover of the shift.). SPAR has reduced the number of working days – employees in stores are thus divided into two groups, working one day three days and the other four days a week. Such a work schedule reduces contact between employees, which increases their safety, and in turn, workers have more days off a week to spend with their

families. On the one hand, this reorganization of business in shifts also affects the (improved) mental health of employees because they have more time for family. Half of the analyzed companies enabled work from home. The other half was not able to do so due to the need for business and contact with consumers (such as trade). Three companies (from the trade sector) gave bonuses to their employees, namely Konzum Plus paid an allowance for employees for special circumstances at work of 15 percent per hour per hour worked; Lidl was paid an additional cash reward for employees who were most exposed to the coronavirus at the beginning of the pandemic, while all employees in 2021. increased salaries (5%) and paid the 13th salary with Easter bonuses, Christmas bonuses and other monetary prizes that are not explicitly stated in the analyzed contents. SPAR paid the employees a bonus of HRK 1,500 as a sign of gratitude for their exceptional efforts to ensure an uninterrupted supply of food and other necessities to the citizens. Three companies also thought about the mental health of their employees, so INA provided support programs for the health of its employees – activities aimed at online education of employees, instructions and expert advice for maintaining physical and mental health in a pandemic, which includes videos and online workshops led by well-known experts (doctors, virologists, molecular biologists, athletes, kinesiologists, doctors, etc.). ZABA launched the Mind Matters program that takes care of employee mental health, and includes lectures by psychologists, training for managers, podcasts and live streams on mental health, creating a library of useful articles and blogs, and free and anonymous initial professional individual psychological counseling for those who are aware that they need help. During the pandemic, PPD paid great attention to internal communication because they recognized maintaining a team spirit as a great challenge. Konzum recorded a video message of thanks, encouragement, support and recognition to its employees for their selfless work and work in the most difficult moments, and it was shown on public services.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to identify and analyze which CSR activities were carried out by the top 10 best companies in the Republic of Croatia during the Covid-19 pandemic towards three vital stakeholders: employees, customers and the community. It was found that the companies equally carried out activities towards all observed stakeholders, i.e., they carried out at least some of the CSR activities towards them. In this paper, customer-oriented CSR is divided into two categories and two sub-categories: Customer Health and Safety (Customer Protection Measures Set, Safe Customer Business) and Business Flexibility. Community-oriented CSR is coded into 5 categories: Cash Donations to Healthcare Institutions, Cash Donations to Nonprofits, Donations in Products and Services, Collaboration with Other Organizations, and Community Mental Health. Employee-oriented CSR is divided into 3 categories and 3 sub-categories: Employee Health and Safety (Personal Protected Equipment and Safe Work Environment, Shift Work and Home Work), Employee Financial Allowance, and Employee Mental Health. The results of the research show that during the Covid-19 pandemic, all sampled companies continued to operate their core business, which means that they ensured continuous operations and deliveries to customers, with changed conditions in accordance with the situation. Almost all analyzed companies (90%) provided protection measures for their consumers. For one company, this information was not known. In order to ensure further continuity of work, in compliance with all regulations for consumer protection, 40% of companies enabled contactless payment, while one company (retail chain) enabled online purchase and delivery of their products. Given that there are two other retail chains in the sampled companies that did not provide this service to their consumers, it is proposed to introduce this way of doing business, given that such work, regardless of pandemic conditions,

is certainly the future of such companies. Also, one company enabled communication via digital tools so that consumers would not have to come to the company's premises, which is a total of 60% of companies that ensured safe business with consumers. Furthermore, 30% of companies have introduced some flexibility in business for the benefit of their consumers in terms of suspension of reminders, exclusions and foreclosures (one energy company) and additional assistance measures in the form of abolition of certain fees and free access to their services – two companies – banking and telecommunications).

CSR activities towards the community show that 50% of the analyzed companies make monetary donations to health institutions, while 30% of the analyzed companies make monetary donations to other non-profit organizations (e.g., Red Cross) as well as donations in products and services that mainly refer to donations of protective equipment such as masks and disinfectants. Furthermore, new circumstances have led to new partnerships that have enabled even better growth and development and competitive advantage. Namely, 30% of companies have shown their commitment to society through cooperation with other organizations in order to improve the situation, develop economic activities and provide products or services to meet (new) community needs (one company (energy company) is in cooperation with another Croatian companies produced a new deficient product on the market - surface disinfectant, while two retail chains cooperated with domestic farmers who, due to the emergency situation, were not allowed to sell in local markets and the analyzed companies put their products on the shelves of their stores and provided them further business). These activities show a strong altruistic commitment of the company to society, “*and empathy is an important sign for establishing community trust*”.³² In this way, helping the community, but also the state, the top 10 companies in the Republic of Croatia during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as companies in other countries³³ they play an important role in the economic and social recovery of society as a whole.

Furthermore, the results of the research show that all analyzed companies have provided protection measures for their employees, which is in line with previous research,³⁴ but also by the situation and regulations that required such a way of functioning. Also, the situation required a reorganization of operations, and two companies enabled shift work, while half of the companies enabled work from home. In the segment of work from home, which brought some new costs or savings for both the company and employees,³⁵ there is a need for legal regulation of this area, given that this way of working could continue to be practiced after

³² BOADI, E. A. et al.: Let the Talk Count: Attributes of Stakeholder Engagement, Trust, Perceive Environmental Protection and CSR. In *SAGE Open*, 2019, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 5. [online]. [2021-03-15]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019825920>>.

³³ GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, I-M., GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, A.: Corporate Social Responsibility during COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Open Innovation Technology, Market and Complexity*, 2020, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 1-21. [online]. [2021-03-27]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2199-8531/6/4/126/htm>>; PALMA-RUIZ, J.M. et al.: Socially Responsible Investing as a Competitive Strategy for Trading Companies in Times of Upheaval Amid COVID-19: Evidence from Spain. In *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 2020, Vol. 41, No. 8, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-04-14]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7072/8/3/41>>.

³⁴ See, for example: MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 1-17. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>; GÜRLEK, M., KILIÇ, İ.: A True Friend Becomes Apparent on a Rainy Day: Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Top Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 7, p. 905-918.

³⁵ See also: PARKER, L. D.: The Covid-19 Office in Transition: Cost, Efficiency and the Social Responsibility Business Case. In *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, 2020, Vol. 33, No. 8, p. 1943-1967.

the pandemic.³⁶ Since the Covid-19 pandemic required social distance, suspended gatherings and socializing, and introduced extraordinary changes in the lives of individuals, this also affected the mental health of the entire community. In order for the community to maintain its physical and mental health, one analyzed company launched a program with this goal in mind. In addition, the way of doing business also changed and led to uncertainty in the survival of the company, and thus caused insecurity of employees and their existence. Therefore, companies have focused on this segment of preserving the health of their employees (30% of companies), but also the community (10% of companies) through the introduction of mental training programs and the development of better internal communication to maintain team spirit and influence their psychological capital that is significant to the company.³⁷ “*In a critical period like the COVID-19 pandemic, employers and employees need to build a stronger relationship than before,*”³⁸ because their work is key to ensuring uninterrupted business continuity. It was the employees who worked continuously and were on the front line when the pandemic broke out that 30% of the analyzed companies (retail chains) paid the financial supplement due to special circumstances at work.

Accordingly, the analyzed companies carried out CSR activities towards their stakeholders and recognized the need to expand their CSR strategies due to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to maintain their trust, enable the continuation of their business, but also contribute to economic and social recovery of the entire community. This crisis situation has opened up opportunities for the introduction of new activities that could be useful even after the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this research provides key practical implications for the effective management and implementation of CSR activities in the period of pandemics and other crisis situations, but also redefining business strategies that can be applied in normal, non-crisis circumstances. In this sense, crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to being a challenge, are also an opportunity to redefine its business, which can contribute to its better development and improvement. In order to cover the entire business of a company, it is necessary to observe its relationship with other stakeholders, so this research has certain limitations. Therefore, CSR activities should also be considered towards other stakeholders as the Covid-19 pandemic affected them as well. Also, in addition to content analysis, other scientific methods can be used, as well as to include a larger number of companies in the sample. Guidelines for future research in this area are also provided.

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³⁶ GATARIĆ, L.: *Otkrivamo detalje iz novog zakona: Rad od kuće bit će moguć i nakon pandemije*. Released on 10th December 2020. [online]. [2021-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/otkrivamo-prijedloge-iz-novog-zakona-rad-od-kuce-bit-ce-moguc-i-nakon-pandemije-1452580>>.

³⁷ See: MAO, Y. et al.: Effects of Tourism CSR on Employee Psychological Capital in the COVID-19 Crisis: From the Perspective of Conservation of Resources Theory. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2020, Vol. 23, p. 1-19. [online]. [2021-04-04]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13683500.2020.1770706>>; FILIMONAU, V. et al.: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Organizational Commitment of Senior Hotel Managers. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2020, Vol. 91, p. 1-13. [online]. [2021-03-13]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278431920302115>>.

³⁸ MAHMUD, A., DING, D., HASANET, M.: Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. In *SAGE Open*, 2021, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 14. [online]. [2021-03-04]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020988710>>.

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PERCEPTION OF THE ETHICAL ASPECT OF BUSINESS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract:

The paper discusses the issue of perception of the ethical aspect of corporate reputation management, specifically in the field of online environment and the issue of traditional and innovative approaches to reputation management. Reputation and ethics are key determinants to building a sustainable competitive advantage and becoming a preferred provider to a market. Even the perception of unethical behaviour can create a reputation management crisis, whether or not there is any proof. Therefore, the main objective of our study is to present the accessible ways and approaches of managing the reputation, especially online reputation in the way of the ethical aspect, as the current challenge for responsible and maintainable development of perceived image of subjects, as their very fragile intangible assets.

Key words:

Ethics. Innovative Approaches. Management. Online Environment. Reputation.

Introduction

In today's digitalization era, there is no time for a company to try and get their side of the story out. By the time they can craft a response to an attack, the damage has already been done. Even the perception of unethical behaviour can create a reputation management crisis, whether or not there is any proof. It does not matter that there is little to no actual evidence besides a screenshot of a snippet of the alleged conversation between consumers and the company. Years of proven and effective reputation building tools have almost seamlessly managed to offer solutions in difficult situations. But times have changed, the flow of information has accelerated and the nature of the information has been adapted to fit the time. The availability of information in combination with the interactivity of the environment offers innumerable possibilities for influencing reputation; of course, it is not just about influencing it in a positive sense.¹ With the growing popularity of social media, websites, blogs and other third-party digital platforms, it is important for companies to maintain a stable reputation in the online space. And this importance will only increase. Basically, nothing will ever disappear from the online space, but what is immediately visible can be largely managed. Trust and reputation are simply important both in the stone space and in the online world. Being able to manage them through online reputation practices as a PR tool is therefore a huge benefit for companies. Pricewaterhouse Coopers in The Millennium Poll or Corporate Social Responsibility surveyed 25,000 citizens from 23 countries and found out, that almost 60% of their opinion is influenced by work practices, business reputation ethics and responsibility towards society.² According to mentioned, the ethical dimension of reputation seems to be a very important aspect of business in the online environment, so paper will focus further on the analysis of the perception of discussed issue.

¹ ZAYED, A. M.: Does Corporate Reputation Affect Brand Preference? Application to the Soft Drinks Industry in Egypt. In *African Journal of Marketing Management*, 2015, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 8.

² MEŇOVSKÝ, I.: *Etický kódex ako nástroj budovania podnikovej kultúry*. [online]. [2021-04-26]. Available at: <<https://www.epi.sk/odborny-clanok/Etický-kodex-ako-nastroj-budovania-podnikovej-kultury.htm>>.

1 Ethical Aspects of Online Reputation as a Tool of Digital PR

Many domestic and foreign authors describe online reputation as the overall presence of a particular subject on the Internet.³ At present, from a layman's point of view, presence on the Internet is equal to presence on social media, and from a professional point of view, this view is to a large extent limited. Reputation is not only the domain of social platforms, it is created primarily by users sharing their attitudes and following their interactions through a wide range of tools such as search engines, catalogues, forums, blogs, and so on.⁴ Due to the instrumental variety of marketing in the Internet environment, it is recommended that the subjects use the largest possible number of these sub-tools as part of their marketing communications. There is pressure on active marketing communication to eliminate potential threats caused by content moderation or the complete passivity of the subject. The contrast of 'one' negative mention in the context of dozens of positive messages will greatly reduce the risk of long-term damage to the reputation of the subject. According to Business for Social Responsibility,⁵ it is possible that companies with poor ethics will soon find out that they are losing business contracts or that they have lost promising contracts, as large companies are increasingly stressing the importance not only of adhering to the ethical principles of doing business within their own company, but are also interested in the business ethics of their suppliers. The ethical reputation of companies increases the company's ability to attract investment, hire the most capable employees and take lessons from crisis periods. Managing a reputation in the online world raises many ethical issues. The concept of disclosure of cooperation or, for example, information censorship, are not clearly defined. It is fairly common nowadays that companies hire employees who act as bloggers on third-party websites without disclosing that they are paid for what they do. Some of them were also criticized for asking other websites to remove negative posts that affected reputation of the company they work for. Employing similar unethical reputation management practices can be risky for the reputation of the company that attempts to do so.⁶

Ethics in ORM has been a complex topic for many years. Those who consider it unethical emphasize their belief that companies which do employ ORM deceive consumers by portraying a one-sided image of their brand and thus directly influence their purchasing decisions. Proponents believe that reputation management is something every company should have the right to do. Especially at a time when people can freely express their views on companies on public platforms, whether they are true and accurate or not. Search engines sort information in a certain way by constantly changing algorithms.⁷ The way information on a brand is sorted has a lot to do with how people judge its importance. When search engines choose to place bad news in the higher position than the good ones, it is not always that they are more relevant. Often, it is just because such information gets more clicks. It is simply true

³ JANOUC, V.: *333 tipů a triků pro internetový marketing*. Brno : Computer Press, 2011, p. 48; JONES, B. et al.: Corporate Reputation in the Era of Web 2.0: The Case of Primark. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2009, Vol. 25, No. 9, p. 931.

⁴ WEBER, L.: *Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Build Your Business*. Hoboken : John Wiley and Sons, 2007, p. 47.

⁵ *White Papers on Business Ethics*. [online]. [2021-05-07]. Available at: <https://equal.network/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2.-EQUAL_WHITE_PAPER_ON_BUSINESS_ETHICS-Nov_2012.pdf>.

⁶ FARMER, Y.: Ethical Decision Making and Reputation Management in Public Relations. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 2018, Vol. 33, No. 1, p. 6.

⁷ *Is Reputation Management Ethical? What's Wrong, What's Right, and How We Decide*. [online]. [2021-05-05]. Available at: <<https://www.reputationx.com/orm/ethics>>.

that search profits stand out and fall on clicks.⁸ According to Gani, in 2015 the giant Amazon.com sued 1,114 people who were paid to publish fake five-star reviews on products sold on their platform.⁹ These reviews were created using websites Macrotasking and Fiverr.com. Several other companies offered writing fake reviews on Yelp and Facebook, and one journalist collected five-star reviews for non-existent businesses ranging from a chiropractor in Arizona, a hair salon in London, a limousine rental in North Carolina, a real estate agency in Texas, and a locksmith in Florida, among others.¹⁰ Reputation management is ethical in itself, as long as it does not cross certain boundaries by using and producing false content, false reviews or other unfair practices. It's still just another form of marketing, just like Google search results.

1.1 Determinants of Ethical Reputation in the Online Space

Online reputation or virtual reputation is nothing other than reputational issues in the Internet environment, at the same time we could also call this statement the simplest definition of the term. The fact that it concerns a neologism from the point of view of terminology, also suggests a rather austere interpretation of the concept of business vocabulary, which describes this term as obscure without a specific definition referring to the individual, society or industry.¹¹ As noted by Watson, Argenti and Druckenmiller¹² argue that, organisations increasingly recognize the importance of corporate reputation to achieve business goals and stay competitive. While there are many recent examples of organisations where poor leadership and unethical business practice behaviour have destroyed their reputation, such as Enron, Arthur Andersen and WorldCom, the positive case for reputation is that it fosters the continued expansion of excellent companies such as Johnson & Johnson and Philips and innovators such as Cisco Systems, which appear regularly in the top percentile of rankings of the most respected organisations in the USA and Europe.¹³

Trust is a concept having many dimensions and is part of interpersonal and business relationships at almost every step. In 1974, Nobel laureate in economics Kenneth Arrow stated that trust has an irreplaceable place in every economic exchange and its presence it is a precondition for the efficiency and mutual benefit of each transaction.¹⁴ However, many authors agree that it is not easy to clearly define this 'elusive' concept. It is necessary to perceive it as a holistic concept. Various studies have been conducted to describe the concept of trust through a step-by-step process of trust-building within a relationship. The authors also agreed on the identification of the basic features of trust – reputation, brand, confidence building and on the conditions whose existence is necessary to strengthen and build the trust (for these they determined risk appetite and emotional interdependence). Trust helps every successful company in different ways. Without it, no institutions could function. Trust is a firm belief that we can rely on a certain person. According to de Quevedo Puente, Delgado

⁸ ORAVEC, J. A.: Gaming Google: Some Ethical Issues Involving Online Reputation Management. In *Journal of Business Ethics Education*, 2013, Vol. 10, p. 71.

⁹ GANI, A.: *Amazon Sues 1,000 Fake Reviewers*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/oct/18/amazon-sues-1000-fake-reviewers>>.

¹⁰ HILL, K.: *I Created a Fake Business and Bought It an Amazing Online Reputation*. [online]. [2021-04-13]. Available at: <<https://splinternews.com/i-created-a-fake-business-and-bought-it-an-amazing-onli-1793850918>>.

¹¹ *Reputation*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reputation>>.

¹² WATSON, T.: Reputation and Ethical Behaviour in a Crisis: Predicting Survival. In *Journal of Communication Management*, 2007, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 16.

¹³ GARDBERG, N. A., FOMBRUN, C.: The Global Reputation Quotient Project: First Steps towards a Cross-Nationally Valid Measure of Corporate Reputation. In *Corporate Reputation Review*, 2002, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 304.

¹⁴ SERVATKA, M., VADOVIČ, R.: *Dôvera – Kľúč k produktivite a rozvoju*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <http://www.virtualsciencelab.org/content_images/media/Dovera%20.pdf>.

García and de la Fuente Sabaté, an alternative definition is offered by Anguera-Torrell. According to him, trust is the belief that those on whom we depend will meet our expectations that concern them. These expectations depend on our critical evaluation of another person's responsibility for meeting our needs.¹⁵ Tavakolifard argues that we still lack a generally accepted definition of trust, despite extensive studies by philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists being done. In some cases, a good name can be equivalent to good will.¹⁶ This is not considered a mistake at all. The term is semantically related to a position gained thanks to the opinions of others – it is similar to the concept of image and reputation is its complementary and integrated part. Naturally, as in the case of trust, reputation has only one dimension. Many domestic and foreign authors describe online reputation as the overall presence of a particular entity on the Internet.

At present, from a layman's point of view, an online presence is equivalent to participation in social networks, and from a professional point of view this view is largely limited. Reputation is not only created on social platforms, it is created primarily through user views and interactions through a wide range of tools such as search engines, catalogues, forums, blogs, etc.¹⁷ Due to the instrumental diversity of marketing in the Internet environment, it is recommended that entities use as many tools as possible as part of their marketing communication. Companies are pressured to make use of active marketing communication to eliminate potential threats caused by content moderation or complete passivity of the subject.¹⁸ The contrast of 'one' negative message in connection with dozens of positive messages will significantly reduce the risk of long-term damage to the good name of the subject. With the growing number of Internet users and the related growth of users of social networks, blogs and sites where users generate their own content, the importance of Internet monitoring is growing. Many tools can be used to track the Internet.¹⁹ These tools constantly index new pages on the Internet and compare them with tracked phrases such as product name, company, competition, or other keywords.

1.2 Ethical and Effective Corporate Online Reputation

The basis of corporate ethics always entails the relation between firm and society, inspired by principles of correctness and equity; correctness and equity in the exchange relationship between the resources of the society drawn on by the firm and the wealth, or new resources, furnished to the firm by the undertaking itself.²⁰ In addition to removing or suppressing unwanted content or addressing derogatory comments (which a company should never

¹⁵ DE QUEVEDO PUENTE, E., DELGADO GARCÍA, J. B., DE LA FUENTE SABATÉ, J. M.: Financial Impacts of Corporate Reputation. In HELM, S., LIEHR-GOBBER, K., STORCK, C. (eds.): Reputation Management. Heidelberg, Dordrecht, London, New York : Springer, 2011, p. 172.

¹⁶ TAVOKALIFARD, M.: *On Some Challenges for Online Trust and Reputation Systems*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Trondheim : Faculty of Information Technology, Mathematics and Electrical Engineering, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2012, p. 71. [online]. [2021-04-18]. Available at: <https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/262604/548911_FULLTEXT02.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁷ NASTIŠIN, L. et al.: Analysis of the Use of Smartphones during Purchasing Process for a Selected Group of Customers within Slovak Market Conditions. In *Management: Science and Education: Slovak Scientific Journal*, 2015, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 77.

¹⁸ ŠTEFKO, R. et al.: Descriptive Study of the Perception of Effectiveness of Marketing Tools in the Context of Dental-Hygienic Health Services. In *Journal of Management and Business: Research and Practice*, 2018, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 9.

¹⁹ GODANY, Z. et al.: Entrepreneurship Motivation in the 21st Century in Terms of Pull and Push Factors. In *TEM Journal*, 2021, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 338.

²⁰ GAZZOLA, P., COLOMBO, G.: Ethics and CSR. In *Interdisciplinary Review of Sociology and Law*, 2014, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 91.

ignore), the company can implement many strategies to generate positive online content. Positive content will help improve the company's digital profile, attract visitors to the company's website and help them perceive the brand positively.²¹ It is important to take control of the company's online profile by creating a strong portfolio of digital resources – corporate websites, online brochures, blogs and social and professional media profiles for platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter. It is important to make sure that they are regularly updated with unique and relevant content: by publishing articles about the company on other blogs in the industry, distributing media reports and using social media to market products online.²² Managing a company's online presence on the Internet is essential if it wants to maintain its positive image. Keywords and phrases should be chosen carefully – these are words or phrases that someone would type into a Google (or other search engine) to find the type of service the company offers, or directly to search for a company. By including key phrases in articles that the company publishes online, the company will reach more prominent position in search results. Articles should be written 'naturally' and should not use keywords too much.²³

Social media are a really useful and cost-effective tool for organizations that want to promote themselves online. Potentially, they can reach a much larger audience than with more traditional methods. Social media is also a great communication tool. Social media can inform customers on new products, news and offers. They are also of great help when answering customers' questions directly and, importantly, using social media, companies can inform customer that they are experiencing some sort of a problem. Online reputation means what people believe about the organization, and therefore the recommendations of external stakeholders are the cornerstone of a good ORM strategy. The main factors that affect each organization's online reputation are listed below:

1. Presence: The organization must claim and optimize its online presence, including social media profiles, and ensure that all of its contact information is up-to-date.
2. Online reviews: The organization must determine where it is being reviewed and then monitor its reviews and track trends that emerge.
3. Social media: The organization must have an attractive representation on each of the leading social media sites and disclose only information that is most important to its customers.
4. Survey: The organization must set up digital survey kiosks to gather customer feedback.
5. Analysis: The organization must monitor new data and make regular reports.
6. Benchmarking and scoring: The organization must measure how well its competitors manage their online reputation in order to seek guidance to improve its own online reputation.
7. Alignment by location: The organization must coordinate efforts between its branches and collect data centrally.²⁴

²¹ YOUNG, D. T.: *Content Marketing for PR: How to Build Brand Visibility, Influence and Trust in Today's Social Age*. Australia : Digital Citizen, 2019, p. 184.

²² *A Guide to Building Your Company Reputation Online*. [online]. [2021-05-13]. Available at: <<https://www.igniyte.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/A-Guide-to-Building-your-Company-Reputation-Online.pdf>>.

²³ PHO, K., GAY, S.: *Establishing, Managing and Protecting Your Online Reputation: Social Media Guide for Physicians and Medical Practices*. Maryland : Greenbranch Publishing, 2013, p. 167.

²⁴ *Online Reputation Management Methodology*. [online]. [2021-04-18]. Available at: <<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:mZpyOV17A-gJ:https://onlineprestigemanagement.com/online-reputation-management-methodology/+&cd=12&hl=sk&ct=clnk&gl=sk>>.

People use Internet tools because they need a quick and easy way to decide which organization to trust. If a company does a good job, ORM should open up space for the company to grow and not give it additional tasks in relation to monitoring its reputation in the online space. The time and money the company would otherwise spend on ORM could be spent elsewhere. Positive reputation can also save customers' time because they do not need to look for a new organization that they can trust. They can be sure that their money has been spent wisely.²⁵

2 Material and Methods

As part of the analysis of the current state of the ethical dimension of business reputation management in the online environment in the practice of small, medium and large enterprises, a questionnaire was created to collect primary data. Businesses answered individual questions on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant "definitely yes", 2 "rather yes", 3 "neutral attitude", 4 "rather no" 5 "definitely no". The selection criteria of sample consisted of the amount of employees/size of the enterprise. The research sample consisted of 133 companies, the largest representation was held by large enterprises (250 and more employees) $n = 72$ (54.14%). The second most numerous group consisted of medium-sized enterprises (50 – 249 employees) $n = 37$ (27.82%) and the least represented group were small enterprises (up to 50 employees) $n = 24$ (18.04%).

Statistical methods applied – Pearson's chi-squared test and Mann – Whitney U test. Pearson's chi-squared test examines the relationship between variables. We determine the dependence on the basis of the value of the correlation coefficient, which takes a value from -1 to 1. The closer its value is to 1, the stronger the dependence between the variables.²⁶ Mann – Whitney U test is a non-parametric test, which tests the hypothesis at the test level, in our case 0.05. In contrast to the examined hypothesis, a null hypothesis is built, which means the homogeneity of independent choices. If the calculated value of p is lower than the level of the test, then we reject the null hypothesis and the original established hypothesis applies. For the purpose of solving the research problem, we use selected mathematical-statistical methods. The data collected in the questionnaire survey was sorted and coded using the MS Office suite and thoroughly statistically analysed using the STATISTICA program. Main research task was formulated:

- Identification of statistically significant differences in the perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management in online environment.

3 Sample Description and Statistical Testing of Data

The main hypothesis focused on the analysis of the existence of a statistically significant differences in the perception of the ethical dimension of managing the reputation of the company in the online environment between various size of the enterprises. The statistical investigation of the differences provided the following results:

²⁵ PEARCE, S. et al.: *Online Reputation: Your Most Valuable Asset in a Digital Age*. London : House of Words Publishing, 2015, p. 127.

²⁶ LITAVCOVÁ, E. et al.: *Štatistika s balíkmi STATISTICA a SPSS*. Prešov : Bookman, 2012, p. 117.

- H1: We assume the existence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management between various size of the enterprises.
- H0: We assume the nonexistence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business online reputation management between various size of the enterprises.

If the value of the correlation coefficient is from the interval $<0 - 0.1$), then there is a trivial relationship between the variables. If the value of the correlation coefficient is from the interval $<0.1 - 0.35$), then there is a weak relationship between the variables. If the value of the correlation coefficient is from the interval $<0.35 - 0.55$) then there is a moderately strong relationship between the variables. If the value of the correlation coefficient is from the interval $<0.55 - 0.7$), then it is a strong relationship between the variables and if the value of the correlation coefficient is from the interval $<0.7 - 1>$, then it is a very strong relationship between variables, i.e., strong dependence.

Table 1: Pearson’s chi-squared test – various size of the enterprises

		Business Size	Perception of the Ethical Dimensions of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment
Business Size	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.068
	p-value		0.438
	N	133	133
Perception of the Ethical Dimensions of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment	Pearson Correlation	-0.068	1
	p-value	0.438	
	N	133	133

Source: Own processing using STATISTICA.

Table 1 shows the value for Pearson’s correlation coefficient, which is equal to the value (-0.068) , which can be considered a trivial force of the relationship, it is an indirect linear dependence. The p-value at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, is equal to 0.438 , which is not less than 0.05 and therefore we do not reject the null hypothesis, i.e., there is no relationship between the variables. We do not confirm the examined hypothesis H1. To find out the differences between enterprises with different sizes and the ethical dimensions of business reputation management in online environment, we decided to use the nonparametric Mann – Whitney U test. If the value of the statistical significance of the p-value is less than the level of the test $\alpha = 0.05$, then we reject the null hypothesis and the original hypothesis that we verify applies.

Let X_1, \dots, X_n and Y_1, \dots, Y_m are 2 independent random selections of two continuous distributions, the distribution functions of which can differ only by displacement. Let $x_{0.50}$ be the median of the first distribution and $y_{0.50}$ be the median of the second distribution.

We test the hypothesis of equality of distribution functions of both distributions:

H0: $\Phi(x) = \Phi(y)$ or about the equality of medians H0: $x_{0.50} = y_{0.50}$ against the alternative of their inequality H1: $\Phi(x) \neq \Phi(y)$, respectively H1: $x_{0.50} \neq y_{0.50}$.

All $n + m$ values of X_1, \dots, X_n and Y_1, \dots, Y_m arrange in ascending order by size. Sum of orders X_1, \dots, X_n denote T_1 , the sum of the order Y_1, \dots, Y_m denote T_2 .

We determine the statistics $U_1 = \frac{mn}{n+1} + n(n+1)/2 - T_1$ and $U_2 = \frac{mn}{m+1} + m(m+1)/2 - T_2$.

The equality $U_1 + U_2 = mn$ applies, which can be easily proved.

We reject the null hypothesis at the level of significance α , if $\min(U_1, U_2) \leq$ tabulated critical value for the given m, n and α .

For large values of n, m ($n, m > 30$) the asymptotic normality of the U_1 statistic is used.

If the null hypothesis is valid:

$$U_0 = \frac{U_1 - \frac{mn}{2}}{\sqrt{\frac{mn(m+n+1)}{12}}}$$

The critical field for the two-sided alternative is $W = (-\infty, -u_{1-\alpha/2} > U < u_{1-\alpha/2}, \infty)$. Analogous to one-sided alternatives. We reject H_0 on the asymptotic level of significance α , if $U_0 \in W$.²⁷ To test differences, we formulated further three hypotheses.

- H1.1: We assume the existence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management between small and medium-sized enterprises.
- H0: We assume the nonexistence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business online reputation management between small and medium-sized enterprises.

Table 2: Mann-Whitney U test – small and medium-sized enterprises

	Perception of the Ethical Dimensions of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment
Mann-Whitney U	432.500
Wilcoxon W	1135.500
Z	-0.177
p-value	0.859

Source: Own processing using STATISTICA.

Using the table above, we examined whether there is a difference between small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of the perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management. The value Z (-0.177) and the value of statistical significance of the p -value (0.859), which is not less than 0.05 , so we reject the hypothesis and the partial H_0 applies, from the point of view of small and medium-sized enterprises there is no statistically significant difference of the perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management.

- H1.2: We assume the existence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management between small and large enterprises.
- H0: We assume the nonexistence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business online reputation management between small and large enterprises.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U test – small and large enterprises

	Perception of the Ethical Dimensions of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment
Mann-Whitney U	775.500
Wilcoxon W	3403.500
Z	-0.773
p-value	0.439

Source: Own processing using STATISTICA.

The table above shows the results of the Mann – Whitney U test. We verified whether there is a difference between small businesses and large enterprises in terms of perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management. The value Z (-0.773) and the value of statistical significance of p-value (0.439), which is not less than 0.05, so we reject the hypothesis and the partial H0 applies, from the point of view of small and large enterprises there is no statistically significant difference in perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management.

- H1.3: We assume the existence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management between medium-sized and large enterprises.
- H0: We assume the nonexistence of a statistically significant differences in perception of the ethical dimensions of business online reputation management between medium-sized and large enterprises.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney U test – medium-sized and large enterprises

	Perception of the Ethical Dimensions of Business Reputation Management in the Online Environment
Mann-Whitney U	1222.000
Wilcoxon W	3850.000
Z	-0.727
p-value	0.467

Source: Own processing using STATISTICA.

The table above shows the results of the Mann – Whitney U test. Using a test, we verified whether there is a difference between medium-sized enterprises and large companies in terms of perception of the ethical dimensions of business reputation management. The value of Z (-0.727) and the value of statistical significance of the p-value (0.467), which is not less than 0.05, so we reject the hypothesis and the partial H0 applies, from the point of view of medium-sized and large enterprises there is no statistically significant difference the ethical dimensions of business reputation management.

Conclusion

From the results of the tested hypotheses, we can state that there is no statistically significant difference between the perception of the ethical dimension of corporate reputation management in the online space in terms of enterprises size or between individual enterprises. Usually, enterprises practice ethical forms of reputation management. According to Google itself, there is nothing inherently bad about online reputation management, and even in 2011

introduced a set of tools that users can use to track their online identities and request the removal of unwanted content.²⁷ Many companies choose clients that fit into their segmentation.²⁸ For example, they can avoid individuals who have committed violent crimes and who want to move information about their crimes lower in search results. Negative practices in online reputation management include, for example:

- Providing false sales numbers and statistics.
- Generating fake online reviews.
- Creating negative propaganda, reviews or content about the company's competitors.
- Using negative and 'black' SEO methods to damage competitors' search engine rankings.
- Spam.

As we already mentioned the size of the enterprise does not play a role in the perception of ethical reputation. In this area, therefore, the golden rule applies that reputation is a very fragile asset, regardless of the size of the company, and it is very important to manage it effectively especially in the current information age full of social networks, websites or blogs.

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²⁷ KESSLER, S.: *Google Launches Tool for Online Reputation Management*. [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <<http://mashable.com/2011/06/16/google-me-on-the-web/>>.

²⁸ SZEINER, Z. et al.: Management Consulting Trends in Slovakia in the Light of Global and Regional Tendencies. In *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 198.

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DIGITAIN- MENT

HOMEWORK
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officeentainment

MEGATRENDS
AND MEDIA

NEW NORMAL: DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

Axel Müller – Alena Müller

Abstract:

The megatrend of digital transformation is evident in several sub-aspects – for example, in the course of coping with the Coronavirus pandemic, in an unprecedented and intensive use of the home office for many employees. For employers, this is associated with innovation in work organisation (trans-local working) and leadership (digital leadership). The relationship between managers and employees in virtual contexts will have to establish a different balance of trust and control, and different communicative routines will have to develop. This paper explains whether (and to what extent) the current form of the home office will continue to exist after the pandemic and what adjustments companies will have to make. This is because – and this much is clear – in the post-Corona era, there will be a new normal in the working world.

Key words:

Collaboration. Digital Corporate Culture. Digital Leadership. Home Office. Skills. Trust.

Introduction

Working from home is very much *en vogue*.¹ Due to lockdown measures deployed to combat the Coronavirus pandemic, the proportion of employees who use home offices at least several times a week increased from 19 to more than 50 per cent in German medium-sized companies in the period 2019 to 2020. Since 22nd April 2021, the Third Ordinance Amending the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance has been in force in Germany, in which employers are obligated (as an infection control measure) to allow their employees to work in home offices, taking into account operational concerns.² In Slovakia, most workers are employed in a mix of manufacturing, construction and service industries that require presence in the workplace. Subsequently, the nature of the work only allows about 30 per cent of workers to work in a home office as per the government order.³ Furthermore, Slovakia differentiates between the home office and teleworking. Use of a home office is permitted – occasionally or in exceptional circumstances (e.g., the Coronavirus pandemic) and requires the employer's consent; whereas teleworking is already regulated in the employment contract (e.g., for sales representatives) and is performed from home or another location.⁴ This trend in work organisation and workplace design alone shows that digital leadership is increasingly becoming the new normal.

Direct leadership based on physical presence is losing importance and can no longer meet the demands of good leadership on the part of the organisation and the employees operating under digital and virtual conditions. The necessary competencies need to be imparted for this. Challenges include technical equipment, work organisation, the reorientation of teamwork and the relationship between managers and employees in a virtual context. Managers will need

¹ *Studienüberblick: Der digitale Status quo des deutschen Mittelstands*. [online]. [2021-04-27]. Available at: <<https://www.digitalisierungsindex.de/studie/gesamtbericht-2021/>>.

² *SARS-CoV-2-Arbeitsschutzverordnung*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <<https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Gesetze-und-Gesetzesvorhaben/sars-cov-2-arbeitsschutzverordnung.html;jsessionid=1E5937D530305B1CD2A1A7BE8DA2F5FA.delivery1-replication>>.

³ *Vláda nariadila povinný home-office. Reálny je len pre menej ako tretinu pracujúcich*. Published on 3rd February 2021. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.trend.sk/spravy/home-office-moze-vyuzivat-iba-menej-ako-tretina-pracujucich-slovakov>>.

⁴ *Home office a BOZP – AKTUALIZÁCIA*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.ip.gov.sk/homeoffice-a-bozp/>>.

different competencies, they will need to lead differently, they will have to build a different balance of trust and control and develop different communicative routines. Managers are faced with the challenge of reflecting on (and adapting) their self-image as leaders, on the one hand, and their leadership actions, on the other. In the process of digital transformation, employees demand that leaders act as role models, courageously exemplifying change processes and shaping the future path of the company – mind you, combined with the equally existing demand for participatory involvement. Managing the digital transformation and, at the same time, creating acceptance for it is, therefore, one of the core tasks of today's managers.

Leadership is often only viewed in the context of leading employees, but in a comprehensive view, three levels can be distinguished: Firstly, the leadership of the organisation (corporate leadership),⁵ secondly, the leadership of employees (employee leadership) and, thirdly, self-leadership (self-leadership). This also highlights the difference between 'leading' and 'managing': While managing means working through the PDCA cycle and is dedicated, to a greater extent, to the specific handling of operational and entrepreneurial challenges, leadership also (and without exception) represents vision, change and transformation. In leadership, the role model function and future-centric way of thinking and acting with the involvement of employees should be emphasised. In comparison, a manager is more focused on the present and assigns tasks, thereby controlling instead of inspiring.⁶ Digital leadership can be defined in two different ways. On the one hand, digital leadership in the narrower sense represents the leadership of employees in the context of digital transformation. On the other hand, digital leadership can be seen, in a broader sense, as the implementation of digitalisation – then with reference to digital business models and the creation of digitally competent organisations.⁷

In the further course of this paper, the definition in the narrower sense will be used, as it is applied, for example, in the case of leadership involving a physical distance and the use of the home office. Digital leadership is an appropriate and situation-adequate form of leadership in the digital age, a new and modern kind of leadership. Digital leadership also represents the development of a leadership concept for organisations. This includes the leadership behaviours, the understanding of leadership and the applied leadership instruments deemed necessary to bring about (and sustain) a digital transformation.⁸ There is a prevailing conviction that the focus of leadership is changing due to the digital transformation and that a new topic – including for leadership development – is emerging, with the keyword "digital leadership". The prerequisite for effective "digital leadership" is not only digital leadership competence but also a digital mindset on the part of the managers. The focus is not only on methodological and professional competence, as before but also on personal and social sub- and key competencies. The latter includes communication and cooperation skills, teamwork and decision-making skills. This is supplemented by media- and intercultural competence.⁹

⁵ See: LUCAS-NÜLLE, T.: Digital Leadership. In DAHM, M. H., THODE, S. (eds.): *Strategie und Transformation im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 119-134.

⁶ WAGNER, D. J.: *Digital Leadership. Kompetenzen – Führungsverhalten – Umsetzungsempfehlungen*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 10-12.

⁷ HEUPEL, T., LANGE, V. W.: Wird der Controller zum Data Scientist? Herausforderungen und Chancen in Zeit von Big Data, Predictive Analytics und Echtzeitverfügbarkeit. In HERMEIER, B., HEUPEL, T., FICHTNER-ROSADA, S. (eds.): *Arbeitswelten der Zukunft. Wie die Digitalisierung unsere Arbeitsplätze und Arbeitsweisen verändert*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 205-206.

⁸ LORENZ, M.: *Digitale Führungskompetenz. Was Führungskräfte von morgen heute wissen sollten*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 40.

⁹ WERTHER, S., BRUCKNER, L., MANN, F.: Psychologische Perspektiven auf Arbeit 4.0. In WERTHER, S., BRUCKNER, L. (eds.): *Arbeit 4.0 aktiv gestalten. Die Zukunft der Arbeit zwischen Agilität, People Analytics und Digitalisierung*. Berlin : Springer, 2018, p. 48.

Members of the Y and Z generations¹⁰ (cohorts from 1980 onwards) can be assumed to have a positive attitude towards virtual collaboration in the workplace. As “digital natives”, these generations are familiar with information technologies such as mobile phones, the Internet itself and social media.¹¹ These generations are interested in other, more flexible forms of work due to their digital affinity – as well as other basic values imparted in their process of socialisation. Demographic change and the shrinking reservoir of skilled workers are increasing their chances on the labour market and, at the same time, they will represent the numerically largest group of employees in a few years.¹² Today, strategically important positions in companies are still occupied by representatives of other generations (Generation X or Baby Boomers). As “digital immigrants” or even “digital dinosaurs”, these generations have a different approach to the virtual world: “*The baby boomers want to change less, Generation Y wants to redefine the strategies of the future.*”¹³ Digital leadership must take this intergenerational diversity into account. The VUCA environment¹⁴ (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) forces companies to adopt new business models – either to react as quickly as possible to disruptions or, at best, to revolutionise the market disruptively themselves. This requires adjustments to the company’s organisation in terms of structures, processes and culture. Flexible working hours, sabbaticals and home office are just a few features of the “New Normal” working world of tomorrow. Such an “Agile Change” must also include a “Leader Change”.¹⁵

1 State of Research

A large-scale global study from 2016 involving more than 2,000 industrial companies from 26 countries on the topic of building a digital company came to the following conclusions with regard to human factors. The focus of the drivers of digital transformation in companies is on employees, managers and culture. It is not the lack of technology that poses the greatest challenge, but the digital culture that is not yet well-developed in the behaviours and, above all, in the mindset of those involved. The top management level plays a particularly important role in establishing a digital culture.¹⁶ Another 2017 digital change study to determine the digital maturity of companies in 16 countries with 750 respondents shows that companies worldwide cite employee aversion to change (42%), security concerns (39%) and a lack of organisational and leadership models (38%) as the biggest challenge.¹⁷

¹⁰ See: SCHOLZ, CH.: *Generation Z. Wie sie tickt, was sie verändert und warum sie uns alle ansteckt.* Weinheim : Wiley, 2014.

¹¹ MÜLLER, S.: *Virtuelle Führung. Erfolgreiche Strategien und Tools für Teams in der digitalen Arbeitswelt.* Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 150.

¹² HURRELMANN, K., ALBRECHT, E.: *Die heimlichen Revolutionäre. Wie die Generation Y unsere Welt verändert.* Weinheim und Basel : Beltz, 2014, p. 67.

¹³ PARMENT, A.: *Die Generation Y. Mitarbeiter der Zukunft motivieren, integrieren, führen.* 2nd Edition. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2013, p. 11.

¹⁴ WAGNER, D. J.: *Digital Leadership. Kompetenzen – Führungsverhalten – Umsetzungsempfehlungen.* Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 30.

¹⁵ KUPIEK, M.: *Digital Leadership, Agile Change und die Emotion Economy. Emotion als Erfolgsfaktor der digitalen Transformation.* Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Globálny prieskum 2016: Industry 4.0. Budovanie digitálneho podniku.* [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <<https://www.pwc.com/sk/sk/publikacie/assets/2016/ceo-prieskum/industry-4-0-budovanie-digitalneho-podniku.pdf>>.

¹⁷ *Digitalisierung: Studie von IFS zeigt große Investitionsbereitschaft in die digitale Transformation Digitalisierung IFS Studie zu digitale Transformation.* [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <https://www.ifs.com/de/news/presse/2017/06/21/digitale-transformation-ifs-studie/?_ga=2.218356761.1215239450.1619090386-760079340.1619090386&_gac=1.52802010.1619090386.Cj0KCCQjwvYSEBhDjARIsAJMn0lhOu3jIjkIb7xDdgyt3SZLqvQ5z5tAyowPtGwLgMegrnsnkAa7NxzmQaAlqqEALw_wcB>.

The current situation with the Coronavirus pandemic has led to home office becoming increasingly commonplace and, thus, to it being the “New Normal”. From a company’s point of view, this concept offers opportunities to strengthen the relationship between employer and employee. On the one hand, the home office promotes self-determination and personal responsibility on the part of employees; on the other hand, the company must give them the necessary confidence to carry out important tasks independently at home.¹⁸ Satisfaction and a willingness to commit lead to job satisfaction and, ultimately, increase the appeal of a company. This can be confirmed by an earlier study from 2018 conducted in Germany with over 4,000 employees from various industries: Here, those respondents who work most frequently in a home office achieved the highest values in terms of motivation, performance and commitment.¹⁹ On the other hand, the home office also entails risks for companies, such as a certain loss of control over employee performance. The use of a home office is the subject of controversial discussion. On the one hand, working in one’s own four walls is perceived as pleasant because, for example, long commuting times are eliminated. However, employees also state that there is a measurable addition to the workload. Several socio-economic panel studies (The German Socio-Economic Panel Study) were included in the comparison of a home office and working at a company location. The sample comprised 5,092 observations and takes into account non-self-employed workers aged 17 to 65 from the public and private sectors in Germany. The analysis shows that employees in the home office worked an average of 2.5 hours extra work per week compared to their colleagues working at the company location.²⁰ The extra work is justified, on the one hand, by lower productivity (disturbing children, household tasks), a less than optimal infrastructure (slow Internet) and gratitude to the employer for being able to use this flexible form of work.

New forms of work have gained greater dynamism, flexibility and acceptance. In the meantime, the home office as a new form of work organisation is viewed positively by companies. The spatial and temporal flexibility gained by employees as a result, leads to a better work-life balance and strengthens the long-term loyalty of qualified staff to the employer. The condition for this is, in general, a consistent and structured organisation of work by the employees – however, it must be noted that not all occupational groups (and not all personality types) are suited to this. An AOK study with 2,000 respondents from 2019 found that while there is greater job satisfaction among those who work in a home office – which is reflected in greater autonomy, the freedom to make decisions and a general say in how things are done – there can also be increased psychological stress. Those who work a lot in the home office suffer more often from problems such as exhaustion, sleep disorders or low levels of concentration. Designing working conditions in a way that promotes health is a challenge that has not yet been solved.²¹

¹⁸ HELLERT, U., MÜLLER, F., MANDER, R.: Zeitkompetenz, Vertrauen und Prozessfeedback im Virtual Work Resource Model. In HERMEIER, B., HEUPEL, T., FICHTNER-ROSADA, S. (eds.): *Arbeitswelten der Zukunft. Wie die Digitalisierung unsere Arbeitsplätze und Arbeitsweisen verändert*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 147-149.

¹⁹ See: RUPIETTA, K., BECKMANN, M.: Working from Home: What Is the Effect on Employees’ Effort?. In *Schmalenbach Business Review*, 2018, Vol. 70, No. 1, p. 57-62. [online]. [2021-04-20]. Available at: <<https://www.springerprofessional.de/working-from-home/15291202>>.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ *Arbeiten im Home-Office: Höhere Arbeitszufriedenheit, aber stärkere psychische Belastungen*. [online]. [2021-04-22]. Available at: <https://www.aok-bv.de/presse/pressemittelungen/2019/index_22652.html>.

2 Developing Digital Corporate Cultures

One of the most important tasks of leadership in companies is to build a suitable organisational culture. It is about uniting values, attitudes and behavioural guidelines into an organisational culture that is suitable for creating meaning and shaping how people live and work together.²² Attitudes are short- to medium-term behavioural preferences; values are solidified, long-term attitudes. Values stand consensually for certain desirable attitudes such as trust, respect, freedom and truth. In the context of leadership, authenticity is central – it is about being truthful as a leader because only truthfulness creates trust.²³ Values are communicated through rules, norms and standards, but also through language, rituals, clothing, architecture or other artefacts and symbolisation. Just how the values from a corporate culture are actually lived out – including by managers – is decisive for their acceptance. If values – as components of the cultural mindset – are to be changed, this is neither easy nor quick, but rather a long and fundamental change process. Issuing commands and demanding obedience do not work in establishing and anchoring values.²⁴ Digital leadership specifically uses the idea of cultural realignment. It is not only about mastering digital technologies but also about a new leadership culture within the digital transformation. Digital leaders are more like coaches than leaders and more like enablers than controllers. Their primary tasks include initiating, accompanying and communicating (cultural) change processes within the framework of the digital transformation.²⁵

In order to understand the need for cultural adaptation processes in companies, it is important to look at the term “disruption”. *Uber*, *AirBnB*, *Netflix* and *Spotify* are just a few examples of how digital networking can lead to new business models. This fundamental process of creative disruption is treated with concern and scepticism by managers (and employees) of traditional companies, as significant (and partly existential) risks can be associated with it. The scope and speed of upheavals (game changers) can hardly be controlled. Thus, in the digital age, management is faced with the dilemma of introducing changes that often only have a positive effect in the long-term – or lead to the demise of the company in the short term (see *Kodak*,²⁶ *Agfa* and *Fuji*). Due to this, out of fear and uncertainty, necessary changes are ignored, neglected and suppressed. Digital leadership must address these distortions and pro-actively develop solutions on the basis of an accepted corporate culture and the security it creates.²⁷ In its implementation, digital leadership implies an indissoluble mix of desire, ability and action. Not all managers “want” to deal with digital changes, well-founded specialist knowledge (“ability”) is not available across the board, and “action” in the sense of concrete implementation often fails due to traditional structures, attitudes and values. When it comes to “desire”, there is sometimes a lack of willingness to let go of cherished, experience-based knowledge and adopt new perspectives (resulting in the defence of the status quo). This shows

²² See: SACKMANN, S.: *Unternehmenskultur. Erkennen – Entwickeln – Verändern. Erfolgreich durch kulturbewusstes Management*. 2nd Edition. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2017.

²³ RUSSEL-WALLING, E.: *50 Schlüsseliideen Management*. Heidelberg : Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, 2011, p. 110.

²⁴ CREUSEN, U., GALL, B., HACKL, O.: *Digital Leadership. Führung in Zeiten des digitalen Wandels*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2017, p. 111-112.

²⁵ KOLLMANN, T.: *Das Digital Leadership. Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung in der Digitalen Wirtschaft*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 28-29.

²⁶ SCHLAUTMANN, CH.: *Kodak droht der Untergang*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/industrie/fotoindustrie-kodak-selbst-laeutete-den-niedergang-ein/6021928-2.html?ticket=ST-1291170-71RthcRMBgql0e9mMjuc-ap6>>.

²⁷ CREUSEN, U., GALL, B., HACKL, O.: *Digital Leadership. Führung in Zeiten des digitalen Wandels*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2017, p. 188-189.

the permanence and persistence of values that are anchored in corporate culture. This observation underscores the importance of an open approach to new topics and a certain curiosity, especially for managers.²⁸ The “ability” of the digital transformation also depends on the teaching of the necessary competencies. The dismantling of hierarchies, increasing flexibility and the growing sense of dynamism and complexity in the world of work require an adaptive knowledge base.²⁹ *The Future Skills* of the organisation *Stifterverband* are an excellent example of this (especially the digital key skills such as data literacy, collaboration and digital learning).³⁰ The adaptation of learning content will be a mammoth task for education systems in the years to come.³¹

3 Skills

In the following, some key qualifications – or better: key competencies – which are particularly important success factors in digital leadership:

- Communication and media competence: Communication is the basis of every form of leadership. The virtual leader is obligated to communicate unambiguous and clear guidelines – even without specific reference to space and time. Goal definitions, task allocations and all other miscellaneous content up to and including feedback also occur in the area of virtual leadership. The use of communication tools and the development of media competence are indispensable to this end. The distortion of non-verbal communication (gestures and facial expressions) caused by communication media must be recognised and taken into account by the virtual leader.³² On the one hand, communication competence is reflected in the understanding of communication situations, in finding one’s way around the multi-dimensionality of possibilities. On the other hand, communication skills are reflected in the ability to correctly interpret messages from others, i.e., to act appropriately to the situation based on signals such as facial expressions, gestures and body posture. One equally important factor is the ability to convey all information in a way that is appropriate for the recipient.³³ Media competence is understood as the ability to use media channels (and content) competently and to act in these channels. This includes knowledge of the media to be used; in a corporate or leadership context, these are primarily the spoken word in meetings, written statements such as those on the company website and, above all, e-mails. Digital leaders need to understand how they can use these media and for which purposes. With strong self-reflection skills, it is possible to analyse one’s own media user behaviour and thus avoid rash and inappropriate decisions. Such trained media competence is part of the tools of the trade for modern leaders and even more so within the scope of digital leadership, where communication across space and time is a constitutive feature and daily challenge.

²⁸ KOLLMANN, T.: *Das Digital Leadership. Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung in der Digitalen Wirtschaft*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 44.

²⁹ See: MÜLLER, A., MÜLLER, A.: Das Unternehmen ohne Hierarchie – Messung und Umsetzung. In HERMEIER, B., HEUPEL, T., FICHTNER-ROSADA, S. (eds.): *Arbeitswelten der Zukunft. Wie die Digitalisierung unsere Arbeitsplätze und Arbeitsweisen verändert*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 459-476.

³⁰ *Das Future-Skills-Framework*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <<https://www.future-skills.net/>>.

³¹ KUPIEK, M.: *Digital Leadership, Agile Change und die Emotion Economy. Emotion als Erfolgsfaktor der digitalen Transformation*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 5.

³² MÜLLER, S.: *Virtuelle Führung. Erfolgreiche Strategien und Tools für Teams in der digitalen Arbeitswelt*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 1-2.

³³ DENGSCHERZ, S., COOKE, M.: *Transkulturelle Kommunikation. Verstehen – Vertiefen – Weiterdenken*. München : UTB, 2020, p. 33.

- Self-reflection on one's own strengths: The will to actively shape change and try out new things is essential for digital leadership – especially in the face of resistance. Building awareness of these sources of resistance, but also courage, are important personal characteristics. Courage in the context of change is defined as the general disposition to act voluntarily after the risks of a situation have been appropriately assessed, even if fear may be felt in the process. The goal is to improve or maintain the status quo.³⁴ Courage in a work context refers to actions that are relevant to the work environment. They are performed for a valuable purpose, even though the instigator perceives significant risks.³⁵ If managers succeed in mustering courage for their own change, setting a good example and dynamically adapting to new circumstances, they also motivate their own team to take appropriate steps. In this way, the overriding will for digital leadership makes it possible to use the potential of digital economic spaces despite certain hurdles.³⁶ Innovative spirit and enthusiasm for new technology, on the one hand, and “old” virtues such as empathy, showing composure, taking responsibility for one's own actions and being a role model, on the other hand, convey an overall picture of positive qualities that are often associated with leaders in the digital transformation. The will to network with employees also plays a decisive role. Digital leaders have their own basic digital attitude rooted in their conduct: Digital leaders recognise appealing perspectives for themselves in future digital goals, activate surprising sources of digital potential for themselves and others in the company and see an approach for a new digital solution in every challenge.³⁷ The question of “born or made?” is completely irrelevant – it is always about remaining adaptable and pursuing personal development.
- Collaboration skills: Collaboration is a key feature of tomorrow's working world and must, therefore, be a skill that managers³⁸ have. Collaboration in a team is much more than teamwork to achieve common goals. Collaborative working means not only working together but simultaneously on a project. All team members have simultaneous and equal access to all documents – which, in addition to the willingness to do so, also requires a corresponding IT infrastructure. The advantages are obvious: Improved cooperation (exploiting strengths in the team); stronger communication (promoting a communicative exchange among each other); the avoidance of duplicate workloads (clear responsibilities and transparency); greater independence (elimination of strict space-time bound presence) and direct feedback (real-time feedback and suggestions for improvement in the process). No collaboration without a new understanding of hierarchy!³⁹ In addition to formal structures, informal networks are also used. In this way, other employees are approached for collaboration in order to fight together as partners for the digital issues in the company. Not all decisions made under such uncertainty translate into success. However, failures are at best mistakes that are learned from, true to the motto: “The game is not won on the defensive!” Managers with a digital mindset are accordingly characterised as people who

³⁴ See: SHELP, E. E.: Courage: A Neglected Virtue in the Patient-Physician Relationship. In *Social Science & Medicine*, 1984, Vol. 18, No. 4, p. 351-360.

³⁵ See: DETERT, R. J., BRUNO, E. A.: Workplace Courage. Review, Synthesis, and Future Agenda for a Complex Construct. In *Academy of Management Annals*, 2017, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 593-639. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/annals.2015.0155>>.

³⁶ KOLLMANN, T.: *Das Digital Leadership. Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung in der Digitalen Wirtschaft*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 71-72.

³⁷ GROß, M.: *Digital Leader Gamebook – Erfolgreich führen im digitalen Zeitalter*. Freiburg : Haufe, 2019.

³⁸ RUSSEL-WALLING, E.: *50 Schlüsselideen Management*. Heidelberg : Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, 2011, p. 111.

³⁹ LUCAS-NÜLLE, T.: Digital Leadership. In DAHM, M. H., THODE, S. (eds.): *Strategie und Transformation im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 127.

are ready for their own change, are already prepared to take the associated risks and think big when it comes to digital transformation.⁴⁰

- VUCA competence: Behind the characteristics already described is, as a watermark, so to speak, the competence to remain adaptable in a VUCA environment.⁴¹ In this context, people- and technology-oriented issues are important: Ensuring a high level of sovereignty, flexibility and autonomy for all employees; continuous self-development and self-learning behaviour encompassing all levels of the company (employees and managers); an openness to actively sharing knowledge and resources; establishing a hierarchy-reduced network organisation.⁴² Digital transformation is leading to profound changes in business models, organisations and work design – including new demands being placed on managers. The digital transformation includes, firstly: the transfer of power from managers to employees, secondly: relationship-building and coaching behaviour on the part of managers, and thirdly: leadership skills such as agility, change management and leadership from a distance. Leadership itself will become more technological, i.e., supported by digital tools.⁴³
- Trustworthiness: Considerations such as the home office, flexible working hours and the changing needs and demands of employees are leading to the growing importance of digital leadership for companies. An essential element of this reorientation is openness on the part of managers towards their employees. Employees who sense this openness and trust are more willing to take on initially uncertain digitalisation projects.⁴⁴ With regard to the issue of openness, it is important to reflect on entrenched ways of thinking and to adapt them if necessary. Managers can gain the trust of their employees through credibility and common goals. In the course of disruptive developments, the role of managers is being readjusted in a paradigm shift from classic hierarchical “command-and-control” to meaningful communication with motivated employees on an even footing. Modern leaders strike a good balance between realism, goal orientation and a synergetic leadership style with elements of transformational, virtual and network-based leadership.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The significant appeal of the home office before the Coronavirus crisis is not always congruent with the experiences had in the home office during the Coronavirus crisis. While the home office was previously an often unknown, nice-to-have solution with a desirable amount of free

⁴⁰ KOLLMANN, T.: *Das Digital Leadership. Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung in der Digitalen Wirtschaft*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 72-74.

⁴¹ KUPIEK, M.: *Digital Leadership, Agile Change und die Emotion Economy. Emotion als Erfolgsfaktor der digitalen Transformation*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2020, p. 38.

⁴² MÜLLER, A., MÜLLER, A.: Das Unternehmen ohne Hierarchie – Messung und Umsetzung. In HERMEIER, B., HEUPEL, T., FICHTNER-ROSADA, S. (eds.): *Arbeitswelten der Zukunft. Wie die Digitalisierung unsere Arbeitsplätze und Arbeitsweisen verändert*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 465.

⁴³ See: SCHWARZMÜLLER, T., BROSI, P., WELPE, I. M.: Führung 4.0 – Wie die Digitalisierung Führung verändert. In HILDEBRANDT, A., LANDHÄUßER, W. (eds.): *CSR und Digitalisierung. Management-Reihe Corporate Social Responsibility*. Berlin Heidelberg : Springer Gabler, 2017, p. 617-628. [online]. [2021-04-06]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-53202-7_43>.

⁴⁴ HELLERT, U., MÜLLER, F., MANDER, R.: Zeitkompetenz, Vertrauen und Prozessfeedback im Virtual Work Resource Model. In HERMEIER, B., HEUPEL, T., FICHTNER-ROSADA, S. (eds.): *Arbeitswelten der Zukunft. Wie die Digitalisierung unsere Arbeitsplätze und Arbeitsweisen verändert*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2019, p. 150-151.

⁴⁵ See: EGGERS, B., HOLLMANN, S.: Digital Leadership – Anforderungen, Aufgaben und Skills von Führungskräften in der “Arbeitswelt 4.0“. In KEUPER, F. et al. (eds.): *Disruption und Transformation Management. Digital Leadership – Digitales Mindset – Digitale Strategie*. Wiesbaden : Springer Gabler, 2018, p. 43-67.

time, today, the home office has been unmasked to reveal what it truly is. Lockdown regulations restrict the options for movement – which leads to the fact that partners and children in the household are also present during daily home office working hours. Apart from this sometimes-sobering experience, there are fundamental transformational effects with regard to the redesign of leadership in companies:

- Digital leadership is a new, digitally competent form of leadership that has the potential to positively fuel the digital transformation of companies.
- Digital leadership requires skills that have not yet played a role in traditional companies or in a conventional understanding of leadership; therefore, these must first be taught.
- Digital leadership rethinks leadership, namely collaborative, dynamic, critical of hierarchy and trust-based in terms of its communication and control.

The spread of digital leadership is just as unstoppable as digitalisation itself. The New Normal has been defined and its causes, prerequisites, challenges and effects described. The skills outlined, which must be available for this type of leadership, are the task of HR and Management Development functions in companies – as well as of higher education institutions – when training the managers of tomorrow.

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ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY AND NEW TRENDS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

Over the past few years, the video game industry has achieved unprecedented success in terms of sales, revenue and the number of employees, as well as those who play video games. The video game industry, as one of the sectors of the creative industry, is one of the most propulsive and fastest growing. The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to some new trends in the video game industry, because more and more people started playing games due to the lock down. In this paper, emphasis will be placed primarily on the economic contribution of the video game industry has made to the economy of the United Kingdom and the United States as well as new trends that have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper will analyse economic indicators such as: employment, consumption in the segment of game software, game hardware the specific impact of the direct expenditures of video game industry companies, indirect impact – the impact of national or in state suppliers to these companies, induced impacts – the additional economic impact of the spending of employees and supplier employees and total impact – the sum of direct, indirect and induced impacts.

Key words:

Creative Industry. Economic Contribution. Economic Impacts. Employment. New Trends in Video Game Industry. Spend. Video Game Industry.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the videogame industry as an economic sector encompassing videogame development, marketing, and monetization, but also as a creative industry sector that employs a substantial number of people and generates significant sales, mainly by selling and exporting its products. The videogame industry in the EU employs more than 100,000 people and generates more than EUR 16 billion in sales annually. Albeit relatively small, the videogame industry is one of the most innovative and propulsive industries in the digital economy. *“Video gaming itself had become a staple of pop culture, which most children – and sometimes, indirectly, their parents – had experienced, and worried voices had been raised about the influence of gaming on young minds. (...) We also believe that academic research into games becomes more inclusive – and more valuable – when it shows an understanding of the market. (...) Video games occupy a (pop) cultural niche competing most directly with the movie and music industries for the consumer’s time and money, although the so-called serious games space is starting to make its mark more clearly.”*¹

1 The State of the Videogame Industry

*“The videogame industry emerged in the second half of the 20th century as a segment of the media industry, and kept increasing its revenue continually every year.”*² Taking a look at the European videogames market, we note that information and communications technologies (ICT) in Europe are considerably less developed than in the U.S. or Eastern Asian industry. This is because the USA and Eastern Asian countries dictate a fast pace, including constant innovation and a substantial investment of capital in continual development and productivity.

¹ EGENFELDT-NIELSEN, S., SMITH, J. H., TOSCA, S. P.: *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. 3rd Edition. New York : Routledge, 2015, p. 85.

² LOZIĆ, J.: Trends in Entertainment and Video Games Industry: The Mobile Gaming Industry Takes over the Global Market. In *Polytechnic and Design*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 154.

“Even though Europe has found its place in the ICT sector, there is definitely room for improvement. Innovation is crucial for the position Europe currently occupies, and to avoid disruptions in industry structure, business models and the like, it is very important that politics plays its role. Even though the videogame industry still does not receive enough support from the governments of less developed European countries, this is definitely not the case in the countries that have recognised the potential of this type of industry as a driver of the entire ICT sector, with a capacity to generate substantial revenue, and offer jobs to a broad array of professions.”³ A 2020 study identifies China, the United States, and Japan as the leading videogame industry markets in terms of generated revenue, as shown in Chart 1.

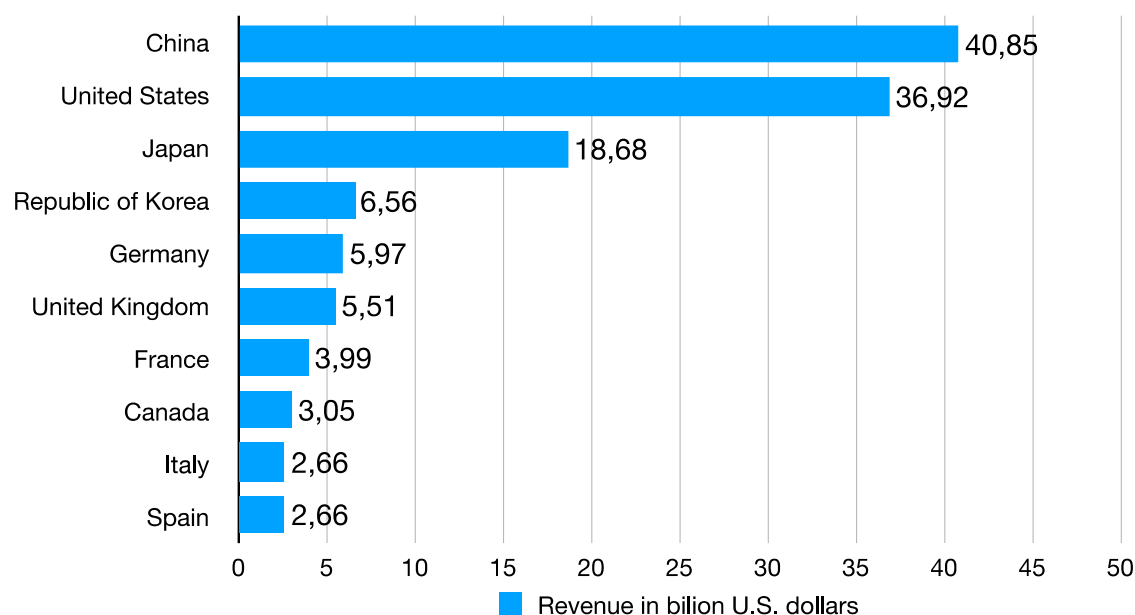


Chart 1: Leading gaming markets worldwide in 2020, by gaming revenue (in billion USD)

Source: *Leading Gaming Markets Worldwide in 2020*, by Gaming Revenue. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/308454/gaming-revenue-countries>>.

Chart 1 ranks China as the first, with USD 40.85 billion of generated revenue, followed by the United States with USD 36.92 billion, and Japan with USD 18.68 billion. As a segment of the creative industry, the videogame industry is one of the most dynamic and propulsive sectors, and the sector least affected by the lockdowns and the COVID-19 crisis, as discussed in further detail below. “At the first glance, it may seem that a sculptor creating a work of art has nothing in common with a programmer writing code for a mobile app. However, the sculpture and the software are both symbolic products, and their creators take the credit for making a ‘product’ endowed with a symbolic significance.”⁴ “Thanks partly to public support for video game development, Europe ranks number three in the world for video game production after the US and Japan. The European Games Developer Federation says digital distribution and the adoption of so-called free-to-play business models, especially in mobile games, have enabled European game developers to break value chains previously dominated by strong US- and Asia-based publishers. Europe’s success is based upon creating game content. Games and video games have become one of Europe’s most exported cultural goods and the largest developers have half their business overseas.”⁵

³ ZACKARIASSON, P., WILSON, T. L.: *The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future*. New York : Routledge, 2012, p. 221-222.

⁴ TOMAŠEVIĆ, N.: *Kreativna industrija i nakladništvo*. Zagreb : Naklada Ljevak, 2015, p. 33.

⁵ *Creating Growth – Measuring Cultural and Creative Markets in the EU*. Paris : EY, 2014, p. 77. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<http://www.creatingeurope.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/study-full-en.pdf>>.

The classic videogame industry is developing rather well, mostly thanks to substantial technological progress in interactivity, graphics, and image quality. *“The power of Sony’s PlayStation consoles surpasses that of most personal computers. Desktop virtual reality machines are coming up, and new gaming devices (such as Dreamcast), with high-quality resolution and interactivity, are becoming networked, allowing online, interactive gaming.”*⁶ *“Over the past three decades, computer and video games have progressed from the primitive two-paddles-and-a-ball Pong to the sophistication of Final Fantasy, a participatory story with cinema-quality graphics that unfolds over nearly 100 hours of game play, or Black and White, an ambitious moral tale where the player’s god-like choices between good and evil leave tangible marks on the landscape. (...) One could make the case that games have been to the PC what NASA was to the mainframe – the thing that pushes forward innovation and experimentation. The release of the Sony PlayStation 2, the Microsoft X-Box, and the Nintendo Game Cube signals a dramatic increase in the resources available to game designers. In anticipation of these new technological breakthroughs, people within and beyond the game industry began to focus attention on the creative potentials of this emerging medium.”*⁷ *“Games represent a new lively art, one as appropriate for the digital age as those earlier media were for the machine age.”*⁸ *“New technologies impact the cultural/creative industries on three levels: the production level (by simplifying the production and multiplication of symbolic products using an increasing number of multimedia tools), the distribution level (by offering easier and faster distribution options, and creating new content sharing models in addition to the classical channels, such as p2p, Web 2.0, etc), and the consumption level (by making it easier for consumers to intervene in products, etc). Increased possibility of user participation in the exchange is one of the positive characteristics of new technologies, even though the question of availability arises on the other hand, because not everyone can afford the latest technology.”*⁹ These technologies are one of the key conditions for the development and consumption of videogames. The Internet penetration rate is one of the prerequisites for the development of the videogame industry. The Internet penetration rate and the percentage of Internet users in the population in Europe, the EU, America, and the United Kingdom is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Internet users in Europe, EU, America and the United Kingdom

Country	Population (2021 Est.)	Internet Users (31 st December 2020)	Penetration (% of Population)
EUROPE	829,173,007	727,559,682	87.7 %
EUROPEAN UNION	445,250,514	397,988,114	89.4%
AMERICA	1,015,892,658	783,909,293	77.2 %
UNITED KINGDOM	66,959,016	63,544,106	94.9 %

Source: *Internet World Stats* [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.internetworldstats.com>>.

Table 1 indicates that the UK has the highest percentage of Internet users in the population, 94.9%, followed by the EU with 89.4%, Europe with 87.7%, and America with 77.2%. Somewhat surprisingly, America has the largest population, and yet it has the lowest percentage of Internet users, which is incongruous with the fact that the USA is one of the leading countries in terms of generated revenue (Graph 1).

⁶ CASTELLS, M.: *Internet galaksija – Razmišljanja o Internetu, poslovanju i društvu*. Zagreb : Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2003, p. 218.

⁷ HARTLEY, J: *Creative Industries*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 456; See also: JENKINS, H.: *Games, the New Lively Art*. In GOLDSTEIN, J., RAESSENS, J. (eds.): *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2003, p. 175-192.

⁸ HARTLEY, J: *Creative Industries*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 458.

⁹ ŠVOB-ĐOKIĆ, N., PRIMORAC, J., JURLIN, K.: *Kultura zaborava – Industrijalizacija kulturnih djelatnosti*. Zagreb : Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2008, p. 96.

2 Videogame Industry Market Leaders

As previously stated, videogame industry market leaders are mostly based in the USA, Asia and Japan, with a handful based in the EU. Table 2 below shows the videogame industry market leaders, comparing their revenues (in USD million) in 2017 and 2020.

Table 2: Comparison of videogame industry market leaders' revenues in 2017 and 2020

No.	COMPANY	REVENUE 2017 (in USD million)	COMPANY	REVENUE 2020 (in USD million)
1	Tencent	12,701	Tencent	6,733
2	Sony	6,642	Sony	5,353
3	Activision Blizzard	4,975	Apple	3,758
4	Microsoft	4,854	Microsoft	3,473
5	Apple	4,764	Nintendo	2,459
6	NetEase	4,072	Google	2,428
7	EA	3,935	Activision Blizzard	2,108
8	Google	3,093	NetEase	1,924
9	Nintendo	1,879	Electronic Arts	1,673
10	Bandai Namco	1,737	Take-Two Interactive	805

Source: Compiled by authors based on *Top 25 Public Companies by Game Revenues*. [online.] [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-25-companies-game-revenues>>.

Many of the companies in the list deal in more than just videogames, consoles and supporting content in the video industry. The leading company, *Tencent*, is the best example: it has business dealings in almost all sectors, from buying interests in banks and shipping companies, to videogames and mobile communications. Tencent usually buys established businesses, but has achieved the greatest successes with start-ups. For example, the company invested in *Riot Games* and in *League of Legends* back in 2009, when the game was still in its infancy, only to buy the controlling interest in 2011. Similarly, in the mobile games segment, *Tencent* acquired *Supercell*, the company that developed some of the most popular games, including *Clash of Clans*, *Clash Royal*, and others.¹⁰ Along the same line, the Chinese corporation *NetEase* grew by a head-spinning 53% compared to 2016, coming dangerously close to the top revenue generators.¹¹ It is obvious from the table that there are differences in the revenue of the top ten videogames industry market leaders in 2017 and 2020. In both years, *Tencent* was number one, and *Sony* number two, remaining unchallenged in their positions as the top revenue generators for several years. *Microsoft*, *Apple*, *Nintendo* and *Google* are also among the top ten in both years, but their order changed somewhat, with the exception of *Microsoft*, which is a steadfast number four. “*This Top Video Game Companies ranking is based on analysis of annual and quarterly financial reports published by a number of relevant publicly listed game companies. For companies that do not split out their game revenues, the analysis includes estimates, which may or may not be indicated explicitly. Revenues (GAAP) are restated to reflect Calendar Years, therefore do not necessarily match reported Fiscal Year results of individual companies. Revenues exclude hardware sales and other non-game sales to the extent publicly available. Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo*

¹⁰ CARSTEN P., ROSENDAHL J., ANDO, R.: *China's Tencent Buys 'Clash of Clans' Maker Supercell for \$8.6 Billion*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-supercell-m-a-tencent-holdings/chinas-tencent-buys-clash-of-clans-maker-supercell-for-8-6-billion-idUSKCN0Z716E>>.

¹¹ WIJMAN, T.: *Game Revenues of Top 25 Public Companies Jump 22% to \$42.0 Billion in H1 2017*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/game-revenues-of-top-25-public-companies-jump-20-to-41-4-billion-in-h1-2017>>.

estimates represent all Xbox, PlayStation, and Nintendo non-hardware platform revenues (including Xbox Live, PSN, and Nintendo eShop revenues respectively).”¹²

3 The Economic Contribution of the Videogame Industry – The Situation in the UK vs the Situation in the USA

For the purposes of this paper, the economic contribution of the videogame industry includes the number of employees, sales, and total economic contribution through direct, indirect and induced impact in the field of development, publishing, digital sales and physical sales in United Kingdom and United States.

3.1 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom boasts the world’s third largest videogames industry in terms of developer success and hardware and software sales, but the fourth largest in terms of the number of employees, behind Canada. The size of the UK’s gaming industry roughly corresponds to the size of its movie or music industry. The UK is home to some of the world’s most successful videogames franchises, including *Tomb Raider*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *Fable*, *Colin McRae Dirt* and *Total War*. This country no longer offers tax reliefs as of 21st March 2012, when the Government terminated tax reliefs for the UK’s developers, which meant that most of them had to relocate abroad in order to increase their profits. Table 3 below shows the total economic impact through direct, indirect and induced impact in development, publishing, digital sales and physical sales.

Table 3: Total economic impact of VGTR¹³ – supported video games throughout the value chain, 2016

		Development	Publishing	Digital Sales	Physical Sales	Total
Employment (FTEs)	Direct	4,320	120	20	180	4,640
	Indirect	2,260	340	10	100	2,710
	Induced	1,550	210	10	50	1,820
	Total	8,130	670	40	330	9,170
Labour Compensation (£m)	Direct	230.1	6.4	0.7	4.0	241.4
	Indirect	66.1	11.4	0.3	2.6	80.6
	Induced	42.0	5.5	0.2	1.4	49.2
	Total	338.3	23.4	1.3	8.1	371.1
GVA (£m)	Direct	257.7	28.4	1.8	6.1	294.1
	Indirect	115.3	18.3	0.6	4.3	138.5
	Induced	76.5	10.1	0.4	2.5	89.5
	Total	449.5	56.8	2.8	13.0	522.1

Source: *Screen Business – How Screen Sector Tax Reliefs Power Economic Growth Across the UK, from October 2018*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/screen-business-full-report-2018-10-08.pdf>>.

Revenue in the videogames industry is based on two main sources, hardware and software. Hardware includes console hardware, PC game hardware, peripherals & accessories, and VR hardware, while software includes actual games, sold physically and digitally. Table 3 clearly

¹² *Top 25 Public Companies by Game Revenues*. [online.] [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-25-companies-game-revenues>>.

¹³ Remark by the authors: VGTR means Video Game Tax Relief.

shows the total economic impact of the videogame industry in the United Kingdom through direct, indirect, induced and total employment, labour compensation and GVA.¹⁴ “To estimate the value of these impacts, a bespoke model was generated using Office for National Statistics (ONS) sales and use data. This model tracked the spending from the video games sector through the areas of the economy from which it makes purchases, allowing for the impact of this spending to be estimated. This approach also provided an estimate of the labour income arising from the purchases of goods and services, which was used to identify indirect impacts, through a modelling of consumer spending.”¹⁵ Table 4 below details hardware and software sales in the UK 2012 – 2020.

Table 4: Total annual spend from 2012 to 2020 in UK

YEAR	TOTAL SPEND in £	% GROWTH
2020	7.0bn	+29.9
2019 (revised)	5.39bn	
2019	5.35bn	-4.8
2018	5.7bn	+10.0
2017	5.11bn	+12.4
2016	4.33bn	+1.2
2015	4.19bn	+5.3
2014	3.94bn	+14.6
2013	3.48bn	+19.9
2012	3.27bn	

Source: *Ukie UK Consumer Games Market Valuation*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <https://ukiepedia.ukie.org.uk/index.php/Ukie_UK_Consumer_Games_Market_Valuation>.

Table 4 shows a clear positive sales growth trend in the videogame industry market. The only decline (of 4.8%) was registered between 2018 and 2019, while the highest growth (of 29.9%) was registered between 2019 and 2020. The following subchapter details the situation of the videogame industry in the USA.

3.2 United States

The USA has the highest number of employees in the videogame industry in the world. In 2004, the US gaming industry was worth a total of USD 10.3 billion. More than 150 million Americans play videogames, and average player age is 35. Chart 3 shows employment trends in the videogame industry’s number of employees in the United States 2010 – 2020.

¹⁴ Remark by the authors: GVA means Gross Value Added.

¹⁵ *Screen Business – How Screen Sector Tax Reliefs Power Economic Growth across the UK, from October 2018*. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/screen-business-full-report-2018-10-08.pdf>>.

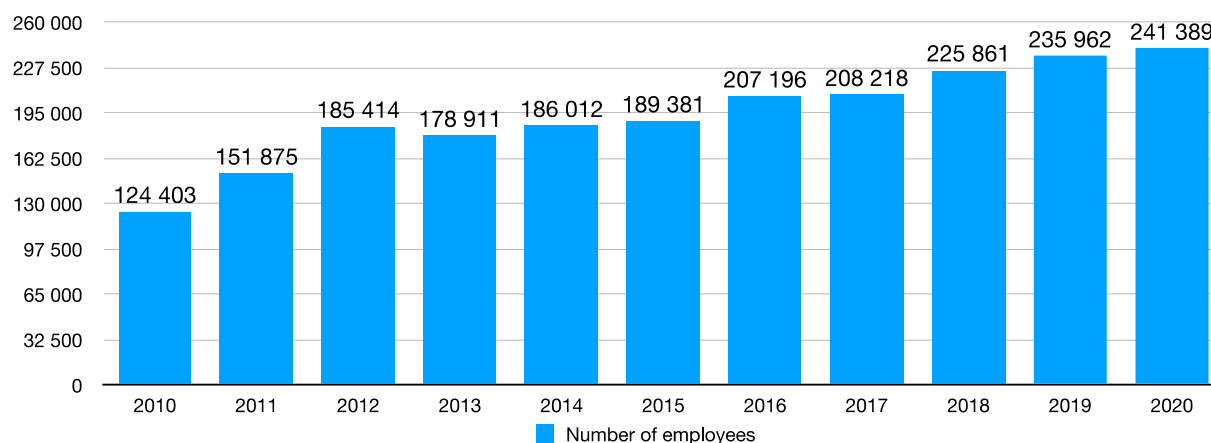


Chart 3: Number of employees in the video game industry in the United States from 2010 to 2020

Source: *Number of Employees in the Video Game Industry in the United States from 2010 to 2020*. [online]. [2021-05-06]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1175322/video-game-employment>>.

Chart 3 clearly indicates that the number of employees in the videogame industry increased significantly over the ten-year period, from 124,403 in 2010 to 241,389 in 2020. Table 5 shows the total economic impact of the videogames industry in the United States in terms of output, employment, and labour impact. All data is given in million USD.

Table 5: Gaming industry total economic impacts in the United States

GAMING INDUSTRY IMPACTS 2017 (in Millions USD)	Output Impacts (Business Sales in Millions USD)	Employment Impacts	Labour Income Impacts (in Millions USD)
TOTAL IMPACT	261,363	1,755,981	73,967
Direct Impact	108,981	726,811	33,306
Indirect Impact	67,090	412,463	18,349
Induced Impact	85,292	616,707	22,312

Source: AMERICAN GAMING ASSOCIATION: *Economic Impact of the US Gaming Industry*. Oxford : Oxford Economics, 2018, p. 13. [online]. [2021-05-09]. Available at: <<https://www.americangaming.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/OE-AGA-Economic-Impact-US-2018-June.pdf>>.

Table 5 shows that the total economic impact of the gaming industry in the USA in terms of output (business sales) was USD 261.4 billion. Also, the gaming industry supported 1.8 million total jobs and generated 74.0 billion USD in total labour income. This includes USD 33.3 billion of direct wages, salaries, tips, benefits and other income.

4 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Videogames Industry

In 2020, the videogame industry did not have an operational model ready for a possible pandemic. A relatively young, emerging industry, in fifty years of its history, it never before faced big global crises. It did survive several economic crises and geopolitical instabilities, but prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no studies, projections or indicators as to how the effects of a pandemic might reflect on this segment of the entertainment industry. A number of other industries were in the same situation, but the videogame industry seems to have operated more successfully in the pandemic than similar creative industries, such as the movie or music industry. This chapter details the reasons for its success in the pandemic, positive trends and negative effects of the pandemic on the videogame industry, and, finally, future trends that could develop from this situation.

4.1 Videogames as Indoor Entertainment and a Response to Quarantine Challenges

The pandemic forced humanity to enforce and adhere to a number of epidemiological safety measures to prevent the virus from spreading. Movement restrictions and public gathering bans – what came to be known as social distancing – were some of the most common measures. The restrictions further pushed people towards information and communications technology (ICT) and the use of modern systems for remote interpersonal communication. Since information and communications technology is the basis that the videogame industry rests on, this trend gave it the means to draw attention to itself in an uncertain situation like a pandemic.¹⁶ Unlike other creative industry media, videogames are primarily a form of indoor entertainment. They depend on screens for audio and visual reproduction, whether it is a TV screen, PC monitor, projector, or another device. The vast majority of such devices are traditionally used in indoor spaces because they need an electrical outlet. There are exceptions – screens that offer mobility and do not need a power supply to operate – such as smartphones or handheld game consoles. However, the exceptions do not mean that mobile phones are only used in exterior spaces, or away from home. The key feature of all devices, on which videogames are reproduced, is that they are available *en masse* as privately owned devices. In other words, all videogames can be played in private, in indoor spaces, which was convenient in a restricted movement situation. Besides, using information and communications technology, videogames provide an outlet for people's social needs, offering Internet-powered communication. The advice to reduce physical contacts benefitted videogames as a medium that uses digital channels for communication.

The spread of COVID-19 was the main, but not the only problem in the pandemic. People suffered from an array of mental and physical issues, such as loneliness and anxiety, due to restrictive measures like quarantine and self-isolation, and often resorted to videogames to help them cope.¹⁷ A temporary escape to virtual environments offered many people a welcome alternative at a time when almost all public events were cancelled or postponed in the physical world. A good example is *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* by Nintendo, where players build a private island, populated with anthropomorphised characters. Launched at the peak of the pandemic, it sold in more than 30 million copies worldwide. With a total of seven million copies sold in the European market, it became Nintendo's hottest-selling videogame in the first year of sales. Such a result in a global pandemic is even more important if we consider that the company has been selling videogames for half a century.¹⁸

4.2 Pandemic-Driven Positive Growth of the Videogames Industry

The videogame industry had been on an upward path in terms of consumer numbers and revenue generation for years before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. However, driven by the circumstances discussed above, the industry soared exponentially in 2020 in almost every respect. Some existing processes and trends in the videogame industry were merely accelerated by the pandemic, but some new opportunities opened up as well. We will mention just a few here. The enormous Chinese market, which is only just opening up to western games, was the first to exhibit sudden growth trends in PC gaming. At first, the trend flew

¹⁶ See: LOPEZ-CABARCOS, M. A., RIBEIRO-SORIANO, D., PINEIRO-CHOUSA, J.: All That Glitters Is Not Gold. The Rise of Gaming in the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 2020, Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 289-296.

¹⁷ MARSTON, R. H., KOWERT, R.: What Role Can Videogames Play in the COVID-19 Pandemic (Working Title). In *Emerald Open Research*, 2020, Vol. 2, No. 34. No pagination. [online]. [2021-05-05]. Available at: <<https://emeraldopenresearch.com/articles/2-34>>.

¹⁸ See: ZHU, L.: The Psychology behind Video Games during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Animal Crossing: New Horizons. In *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 157-159. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/hbe2.221>>.

below the radar, because the number of active players on the digital PC gaming platform Steam started to soar during Chinese New Year, in late February 2020.¹⁹ The correlation between this growth and the outbreak of the still unnamed coronavirus had been spotted, but the other videogame markets had not adjusted to the new threat to a greater extent at the time. As the virus spread to other territories, it went hand-in-hand with the growth of videogame-related activities. Gaming was only a part of the picture because viewership of gaming livestreams on streaming platforms such as *YouTube* and *Twitch* also increased.

The extent of the positive impact of the pandemic on the videogame industry became clear after the big publishers started submitting their financial reports for the past fiscal year. Almost all posted record revenues. Market research company *NPD* estimated the consumption in the U.S. videogame market in 2020 at USD 56.9 billion, up 27% year-on-year. Videogame and supporting content sales accounted for most of the growth, up 26% year-on-year. Gaming device sales in the U.S. market rose 35% year-on-year in 2020, scoring the best result in the past nine years, with a consumption of USD 5.3 billion. A report by the market research company *GSD* estimates videogame sales in the UK market in 2020 at more than 42.7 million copies, up 34% year-on-year. It also notes that UK customers mainly bought videogames online, in digital form (24.5 million copies sold) versus optical media or physical form (18.2 million copies), pushing digital videogame sales up by 74% year-on-year. Similar trends were present in the other European markets in 2020. Analyses by Japan-based *Famitsu* show that the Japanese videogame market generated more than USD 3.5 billion in sales in 2020, up 12.5% year-on-year. Gaming device sales soared as well, and Japan recorded videogame and gaming device sales growth for the first time since 2017. *GSD*'s analysis indicates that consumption in the Australian videogame market in 2020 was up 35% year-on-year.²⁰

Several videogames stood out in the pandemic with record results. In addition to *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, which sold in more than 30 million copies, two so-called freemium model games (offering free access to the game) rose to incredible popularity. *Call of Duty: Warzone* was launched in March 2020, soon after the *World Health Organisation* declared the pandemic. In the next 13 months, it attracted more than 100 million players. *Genshin Impact* by the Chinese company *miHoYo* boasts a similar success, having cashed in a billion USD on mobile platforms in the US market alone in the first six months. Statistics compiled by the app intelligence provider *Sensor Tower* suggest that no other game had ever earned so much in such a short time. In conclusion, there are two indicators of the videogame industry's success during the COVID-19 pandemic, record gamer numbers, and substantial consumption growth at almost all levels.²¹ The question for how long this growth momentum will be maintained, and what will happen to the videogame industry once the pandemic is officially over, remains open for now.

Awareness-Raising and Solidarity Programmes

Videogame developers and publishers launched several initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, calling on gamers to act responsibly and thus prevent the spreading of the disease. They were realised up to several months after the outbreak of the pandemic, and were mostly designed to include the promotion of brands and videogames. *Sony* launched the "Play at

¹⁹ *Steamworks Development – Steam - 2020 Year in Review – Steam News*. [online]. [2021-05-01]. Available at: <<https://store.steampowered.com/news/group/4145017/view/2961646623386540826>>.

²⁰ DRING, C.: *The State of Console & PC Games Market Worldwide*. [online]. [2021-05-02]. Available at: <<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2021-04-08-download-our-state-of-console-and-pc-games-market-worldwide-2020-report-for-free>>.

²¹ *Genshin Impact Races Past \$1 Billion on Mobile in Less Than Six Months*. [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://sensortower.com/blog/genshin-impact-one-billion-revenue>>.

Home” initiative for its *PlayStation* brand in mid-April 2020, comprising two campaigns. In the first, free copies of two videogames were handed out to gamers. In the second, Sony invested USD 10 million in a crisis fund to help independent videogame designers. The initiative was brought back in 2021, minus the aid for independent studios. In the second round of “Play at Home”, *PlayStation*’s owners handed out a total of 11 of their own and their partners’ videogames to their customers. A number of videogames sought to raise awareness of personal responsibility during the pandemic among the gamers.²² In coordination with the British Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, British companies *Codemasters*, *Rebellion* and *King* integrated the message “Stay at Home, Save Lives” in their games to draw attention to the importance of social distancing.²³ The message was, among others, featured in *DiRT Rally 2.0*, *Candy Crush Saga*, *Farm Heroes*, and other games. *The World Health Organisation (WHO)* also got on board, using videogames to raise awareness of the dangers of COVID-19. In cooperation with *Ndemio Creations*, the *WHO* introduced gamers to the challenge of vaccine development, production and distribution in *Plague, Inc.: The Cure*, underlining the importance of global cooperation for quick resolution of the pandemic.²⁴ The idea of the initiative was to provide information through an interactive videogame in an effort to fight disinformation in the online environment. The game is available totally free of charge until the *WHO* declares the end of the pandemic.

Negative Impacts of the Pandemic

The videogame industry is one of the few industries that were mostly positively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This does not mean, however, that there have been absolutely no negative effects. Several negative effects, not measured in gamer numbers or revenue growth, are discussed in this segment of the paper. Some have forced the videogame industry to adapt, and could have a lasting impact on its work practices. Even though videogames are a medium consumed mainly in private, indoor spaces, the videogame industry has a bustling public event scene, including competitive gaming, videogame fan conventions, industry events for developers, fairs, and so on. Even before the pandemic, such events in the videogame industry were increasingly moving to the digital domain. Physical events were held in 2020, but the majority of the audience attended them online. Event organisers were not ready to fully transition to the digital format in 2020, and the pandemic forced them to look for alternatives. Their slow reaction time was apparent just before the pandemic was declared. The first bigger videogame industry fair in 2020, the *PAX East 2020*, was held in late February in Boston, USA. The fair was held even though many exhibitors had cancelled their participation over concerns for their staff’s health and safety. Soon after that, a number of events in the videogame industry were cancelled or postponed in a chain reaction, including the *E3 2020*, the world’ leading videogame fair, *Gamescom 2020*, Europe’s busiest videogames fair, and *Tokyo Game Show 2020*, Japan’s largest fair. This did not mean that the promotion of videogames stopped, though: it was merely moved to the online sphere, which was partly used before too. However, professional conferences in the videogame industry did not transition to the digital form so easily, robbing the professional community of opportunities for networking, business meetings, and the like. *The Reboot Develop* convention, one of Europe’s largest videogame developer conferences, which takes place in Croatia, was held neither in 2020 nor in 2021.

²² *Government and Video Games Industry Join Forces in Fight Against Coronavirus*. [online]. [2021-05-10]. Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-and-video-games-industry-join-forces-in-fight-against-coronavirus>>.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Experts and Gamers Join Forces to Fight COVID-19 and Stop Future Disease Outbreaks via Plague Inc: The Cure*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/experts-and-gamers-join-forces-to-fight-covid-19-and-stop-future-disease-outbreaks-via-plague-inc-the-cure>>.

The ability to work flexibly and for the most part switch to home office was a mitigating circumstance for the videogame industry, as it was for other IT sectors. In this respect, the videogame industry did not suffer from a more substantial workforce reduction like some other industries, which were more severely affected by the pandemic. However, there were still challenges, and some adaptation to new working circumstances was required. Videogame development is teamwork for the most part, and requires the developers to be in constant touch during the development process. As this communication was moved to the online environment, videogame development slowed down, resulting in a number of delayed videogames' launches, and many breaches of the promised completion deadlines. In addition to communication difficulties, videogame designers faced the unavailability of certain equipment essential in their work. Studio video and audio recording equipment, for instance, could not be switched to the home office mode. In a survey commissioned ahead of the *Game Developers Conference 2021*, which included more than 3,000 videogame developers from Europe and the USA, 35% respondents reported that their productivity increased at the home office, 32% reported that their productivity decreased, 32% said that their productivity was unchanged, and the rest did not work from home. 44% respondents had their videogame launches postponed due to the effects of the pandemic, 49% experienced no delays in videogame development on account of the pandemic, and the rest said that they were not developing a videogame right now.²⁵

When the pandemic was first declared, a number of videogame publishers had trouble distributing the physical copies of their videogames. There were delays in the delivery of optical disk videogames, pushing customers to buy digital copies in online stores. Stores specialising in selling physical videogame copies faced a decline in their turnover due to the convenience of the digital form. However, selling gaming hardware helped maintain their bottom lines during the pandemic. The launch of a new generation of gaming consoles was planned for 2020, when the pandemic began. This normally happens once in a decade and generally raises the interest of gaming industry consumers. The plans to launch new consoles (*PlayStation 5* and *Xbox Series X/S*) had been in place before the pandemic, and there was considerable uncertainty throughout the year regarding the possible impact of the pandemic on the production and distribution of new gaming devices. The economic instability of the USA as the top market further fuelled the scepticism over the launch of these devices amidst the pandemic. However, when they were launched in November 2020, the new gaming consoles sparked an unprecedented interest. *NPD Group's* statistics indicate that *Sony's PlayStation 5* became the fastest-selling console in the history of the American market in only six months.²⁶ Selling new consoles proved a challenging task for the stores that moved their business online during the pandemic. The substantial interest in these devices attracted a number of resellers, who caused shortages in retail. The global shortage of computer chips, the key component in the production of almost all gaming devices, did not help the situation any. The pandemic impacted the production and distribution of gaming hardware, both directly and indirectly. Hardware manufacturers estimate that the effects of slowed-down production could persist in the videogame and gaming equipment market throughout 2021, possibly even in 2022.

²⁵ *GDC Survey: 44% of Developers Have Had Their Game Delayed by COVID-19*. [online]. [2021-05-08]. Available at: <<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2021-04-28-gdc-survey-44-percent-of-developers-have-had-their-game-delayed-by-covid-19>>.

²⁶ PISCATELLA, M.: "*US NPD HW – PlayStation 5 Is the Fastest Selling Console in U.S. History in Both Unit and Dollar Sales (Lifetime Sales with Five Months on the Market)*." [online]. [2021-05-03]. Available at: <<https://twitter.com/MatPiscatella/status/1383042564756893703?>>.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was certainly a valuable lesson for the videogame industry. The videogame world turned out to be more resilient to crises than some other creative industries. The successful performance of the videogame industry in terms of revenue and engagement clearly correlates with the changes in the society resulting from lockdowns and social distancing. It is, however, difficult to predict how these trends will develop in the future. Videogames helped many people cope with the challenges of quarantine and movement restrictions, but it remains unclear to what extent the audience will hold on to their gaming habits once the pandemic is over. For the videogame industry, talks about a return to normal can also mean a return to the statistics prior to the record revenues and engagement. On the other hand, it is also possible that the pandemic was a turning point where the videogame industry strongly defined and consolidated its position in the entertainment industry. Taking a look at the leading countries in terms of employment and revenue generated in recent years, China, the United States and Japan are still at the top, but the European Union is also a factor to be reckoned with, having recorded growth trends in all segments of the videogame industry. The number of employees in the videogame industry keeps increasing from one year to the next, as evidenced by the number of employees in this sector in the USA 2010 – 2020. The statistics on the total economic impact, shown as direct, indirect and induced impact on the examples of employment, output and labour impact for the United States and the United Kingdom, are another testament to the importance and the impact of the videogame industry.

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DIGITAL GAMES AND SMART CITY

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Abstract:

This paper deals with the topic of digital games and Smart City. Smart City is rapidly expanding phenomenon. It is a city that through technology tries to improve the lives of its inhabitants. Games which use digital technology are one of the ways to bring the functioning of the city closer to his inhabitants or to motivate them to a certain behaviour. Based on the analysis of information from professional articles and Internet portals, paper provides an overview of the games that based on digital technology. These games deal with the urban issues and try to influence the behaviour of people in the city. The aim of the article is to bring information about games that are linked to the concept of Smart City and can help build it.

Key words:

Digital Technology. Entertainment. Games. Innovations in Cities. Smart City.

Introduction

Today's times can best be defined by the word "fast". This word describes the haste we face in everyday life. Fast cars, fast food, fast trains, fast Internet or fast delivery. Therefore, it is not surprising that urbanization is also moving at a rapid pace. There is a constant influx of people and mass migration from the countryside to the cities. This is the reason for moving towards to the concept of Smart City, which try to improve the lives of citizens through technology. The basic and most important component of Smart City is people, more precisely smart people. It all begins and ends with people. Playing as an activity of spending time in a fun way has been a part of human life since time immemorial. During human development, games also developed and whereas technology reigns today, naturally, entertainment based on digital technology is also part of human life. However, in addition to fun, games can bring many other benefits to people and society. One of the possibilities of their use is also an application into the concept of Smart City.

1 Theoretical Background

There are a number of definitions of the term "Smart City". The European Commission characterizes them as places where traditional networks and services are streamlined using digital and telecommunications technologies for the benefit of citizens and businesses. Based on that definition, these cities use information and communication technologies to improve the use of resources and lower emissions. This results in a smarter urban transport network, modernized water supply as well as waste disposal and more efficient lighting or heating of buildings. It also means more interactive and responsive urban management, safer public procurement, but also meeting the needs of an aging population.¹ Analyst of Gartner's *Company*, Bettina Tratz-Ryan, said that the definition of "Smart City" lies in the fact that it is the city that is trying to effectively optimize certain technologies, operations or infrastructure. The point is to start sharing results or best practices with each other, creating not only guaranteed practices but also generating results. The aim is to provide services in which you look at a person not only as a citizen but also as a person with individual needs or a business

¹ *Smart Cities. Cities Using Technological Solutions to Improve the Management and Efficiency of the Urban Environment.* [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/city-initiatives/smart-cities_en>.

group with very specific needs. Esmeralda Swarts, Vice President of Marketing Enterprise and Cloud at *Ericsson*, summarized the concept of “Smart City” as place that use sensors, actuators and Internet technology to link components throughout the city. These components connect every layer of the city, from the air through the streets to the underground. It is a way of deriving data from everything connected with it and using it to improve the lives of citizens and to improve communication between citizens and government.² But what does a Smart City do and what distinguishes it from typical cities? An example is the issue of parking in congested cities, where drivers, whether residents or visitors, drive around looking for a free place to park. In Smart City they can find out exactly where to go through a mobile application, which using sensors that are installed in parking spaces. Another example is intelligent waste management, in which waste containers contain sensors that can detect the amount of waste in the collection bin and accordingly notify the municipal service department that it is time to pick up the waste.³ Mrinalini Ingram, who spent 16 years working with intelligent and interconnected communities of Cisco Systems, said that one of the most important reasons for creating Smart City is that it allow communicate with the people among themselves but also with the environment around them as never before.⁴

Smart City is a modern urban unit, where everything from transport to energy is connected to digital technologies, which ensure a two-way flow of information between the city, residents and visitors. Based on the use of technologies such as “Internet of Things”, “Big Data”, “Machine Learning”, the city council can share and exchange information with residents and infrastructure and evaluate what services could be needed for residents and the city in the future. The aim of this process is to increase the quality of life in the city for all its inhabitants. It is a comprehensive approach that affects all areas of city life, like culture, environment, economy, social services and others. In each area it pursues selected goals that are interconnected and create a system that follows the principles of sustainable development. This is the main reason why there is no uniform international definition or legal framework for Smart City. Each state follows its own smart concept and methodology, which takes into account its current state and needs for the future.⁵ The determination of the exact dimensions or elements of the Smart City has been and continues to be discussed. Despite the lack of consensus in this area scientists agreed on several basic elements of each Smart City. The elements that form Smart City are Smart Economy, Smart Mobility, Smart Environment, Smart Living, Smart Governance and Smart People.⁶

2 Games

Games have been a part of human life since childhood and accompany people in various forms throughout all life. The game is a voluntary activity, which is limited by a special space, time and rules. It has procedural character which means that it is a certain activity that takes place in an artificially induced fictional situation. It has certain features in common with

² MADDUX, T.: *Smart Cities: A Cheat Sheet*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.techrepublic.com/article/smart-cities-the-smart-persons-guide/>>.

³ *Smart Cities: The Smart Person's Guide*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<http://elwataniaegypt.com/smart-cities-smart-persons-guide/>>.

⁴ MADDUX, T.: *Smart Cities: A Cheat Sheet*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.techrepublic.com/article/smart-cities-the-smart-persons-guide/>>.

⁵ *Definicia Smart Cities*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.smartcity.gov.sk/definicia-smart-cities/index.html>>.

⁶ FERNANDEZ, D., STAWASZ, D.: The Concept of Smart City in the Theory and Practice of Urban Development Management. In *Romanian Journal of Regional Science*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 84.

reality, but also it is mostly detached from real life. The game can be perceived as a manifestation of human freedom, creativity, imagination, art and it is accompanied by feelings of tension and joy. It can be perceived also as a way of developing the human psyche or acquiring new knowledge and skills.⁷ Through the game important physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral skills are developed. It helps to create and maintain friendly relationships, constructive thinking and creativity. The essence of the game is in its activity, so the motivating aspect is the process. Through this, it is a tool for the development of self-discipline and self-control. Despite of that it can have a connection to real objects or environments, allows the user to mentally break away from reality. During the game the human mind is in attention and active state, but it is not in stress. Attention is given to the game, which mean that person, can depersonalize and detach from space and time.⁸ The game is therefore something that brings us benefits in the form of entertainment, satisfies our curiosity, arouses our interest and can keep our attention for a long time.

The essence of digital technology is the creation, transmission and processing of data using numbers. Digital technology runs automatically using a specific operating system. A digital game is an interactive program that it is control by one or more players and allows them to communicate with content in a fun way. It could offer a set of scenarios and can be played online or offline.⁹ A game that uses digital technology can convey a lot of positives to its users. It is one of the most engaging forms of entertainment for all ages. Many games require visual or auditory retention and thus improve not only short-term but also long-term memory. When we put the brain to the test, we force it to work more efficiently and teach it how to solve problems faster, which improves critical thinking and logic. In general, focus and attention are needed to play a game, which increases a person's alertness. At the same time there is a requirement to monitor several variables simultaneously, which forces the player to be flexible in changing tactics. Failure in the game teaches a person not only strategic thinking but also perseverance. In addition, games based on digital technology, help reduce stress, anxiety and support the development of interpersonal and cognitive skills. Studies show that playing games reduce the level of the stress hormone, cortisol, by up to 17%. Multiplayer games support cooperation and ability to work in team. Another important benefit of games is the ability to acquire new knowledge that is presented in an attractive way.¹⁰

Games that use digital technology can have a significant impact on a person's personality development. Thanks to their benefits they gradually began to be introduced to various activities. The use of game elements in a non-game environment is called gamification. Because games are primarily for entertainment purposes, they can motivate users to engage in a particular activity. Game elements are therefore a very important tool for creating products,

⁷ See: STOFFOVÁ, V.: Počítačové hry a ich klasifikácia. In *Trendy ve vzdelávaní*, 2016, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 243-252; BÚRY, J.: Interaktivita a inscenované svety. In *Slovenské divadlo*, 2019, Vol. 67, No. 2, p. 145-157. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/07160926SD02-2019-145.pdf>>.

⁸ GRAY, P.: *The Value of Play I: The Definition of Play Gives Insights*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/freedom-learn/200811/the-value-play-i-the-definition-play-gives-insights>>.

⁹ *What Is Digital Game*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/chemistry-learning-through-designing-digital-games/7625>>.

¹⁰ See: ROZANI, A.: *Digital Gaming and Stress-Management in Today's World*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/333409>>; ROBICHAUD, V.: *What Are the Positive Effects of Online Gaming?*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://sonomasun.com/2020/05/14/what-are-the-positive-effects-of-online-gaming/>>; TUMBOKON, R.: *25+ Positive and Negative Effects of Video Games*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.raisesmartkid.com/3-to-6-years-old/4-articles/34-the-good-and-bad-effects-of-video-games>>.

services or applications that attract and motivate their users to use them for a longer period of time.¹¹ Signs of gamification are an interesting topic or story that attracts attention; division of tasks into smaller inter-tasks; various side quests or branches of the story and gaining points or some benefit. These characters can be used all at once or only a part of.¹² Gamification is currently found in various areas of our lives. Its elements can be found in education during training, in companies when rewarding employees for cooperation or for participation in voluntary activities, or in marketing in an effort to maintain and expand the customer platform.¹³

3 Digital Games and Smart City

Every government should strive for its people to be actively involved in creating cities. Such involvement has repeatedly demonstrated positive effects on the development of the city, increasing trust in representatives and increasing community cohesion. Cities are currently seeking the involvement of different parties, with the aim of introducing new technologies and improving the quality of life. Gamification therefore also enters the public administration and the city administration. In that case, its goal is mostly education and involvement of the population. Based on the definitions in previous chapter, the group of digital game includes not only games played by mobile phones or other devices, but also forms of entertainment that use elements of games and are based on digital technology. As a tool to improve city life, design of games and entertainment that use digital technology can take many forms.

An example of a city that uses digital technology with game elements is Amsterdam. In the Amsterdam Noord area, households use the *Wasted* application. It motivates users to properly disposing of plastics and thus reduces pollution with this type of waste, which could lead to a reduction of the use of plastics in everyday life. Application teaches users how to dispose plastic waste, try to change their behaviour by quests which want from users change their habit and as a proof require photo. As a reward, users receive so-called a “plastic money” that they can use to get a discount on sustainable products in local supermarkets, cultural organizations, shops (such as bicycle repair shops) or get a discount on beer in local bars. The plastics collected by residents are recycled in a local laboratory and transformed into things that improve the quality of life in the community, such as flower pots or park benches.¹⁴ A similar project had in 2009 American city, Seattle, with name “Trash Track”. With this application citizen could see where their waste is going. The aim of the project was to help residents understand the process of waste disposal and change their behaviour. For example,

¹¹ DETERING, S. et al.: Gamification: Toward a Definition. In *CHI 2011 Gamification Workshop Proceedings*. Vancouver : Gamification Research Network, 2011. No pagination. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<http://gamification-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/02-Deterding-Khaled-Nacke-Dixon.pdf>>.

¹² See: MEZEIOVÁ, A.: Gamifikácia ako nástroj vzdelávania 21. storočia. In LÖSTER, T., LANGHAMROVÁ, J., VRABCOVÁ, J. (eds.): *RELIK 2018*. Prague : Prague University of Economics and Business, 2018, p. 270-281. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://relik.vse.cz/2018/download/pdf/192-Mezeiova-Adriana-paper.pdf>>.

¹³ See: PÚPAVOVÁ, M.: *Gamifikácia a eLearning vo vzdelávaní: Čo tieto pojmy znamenajú?*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://eduworld.sk/cd/martina-pupavova/2170/gamifikacia-a-elearning-vo-vzdelavani-co-tieto-pojmy-znamenaju>>; ŠTEFKOVÁ, S.: *Gamifikácia a jej využitie v HR procesoch*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <https://www.hrvpraxi.sk/33/gamifikacia-a-jej-vyuzitie-v-hr-procesoch-uniqueidmRRWSbk196FPkyDafLfWANui-FXsvOj-B7H1wjKOkjzH6coFSRzmEg/?uri_view_type=4>.

¹⁴ MARWAHA, P.: *WASTED: A Plastic Upcycling Initiative in Amsterdam Noord*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.iamexpat.nl/lifestyle/lifestyle-news/wasted-plastic-upcycling-initiative-amsterdam-noord>>.

participants could observe as plastic bottles are being moved from their house to the landfill and they remain there for a long time. Many of them said that this led them to realize that their habits lead to a direct deterioration of the environment.¹⁵ Another application within Amsterdam is *Into Fresh Air*. It is location-based games application, through which players sent out to walk around. The aim of the game is to conquer 20 mountains of the world. The kilometres that a player travels on foot are converted to altitude meters of the selected mountain, and each 50 meters' application open a question, which has to be answered. The questions have a fun-learning character and the more meters a player passes; the more points he can get. The points are then added up and ranked among the other players in the game.¹⁶

Several prototypes of city games have also been tested in Amsterdam. *Food Loop* was a digital game in which players had to combine food with waste and with the waste treatment process. If they correctly combined the food with the type of waste and the method of recycling, they advanced to the next level. The higher the level, the more difficult the connection was, but also the closer to the reality of the circular economy. The digital entertainment *CarZilla* was tested at the most congested crossroad of Amsterdam and its essence it consisted in the fact that when people stood at the crossroads, the figure of *CarZilla* appeared on display near the traffic light. The display shows the value of health of *CarZilla*, which were destroyed each starting the car. However, when the cyclist stopped at the crossroads, *CarZilla*'s health improved. This type of digital entertainment made people think how car pollution impacts their health and whether they want to be a person who destroys the health of themselves and others or a person who heals them. The prototype of the city game was also *Contrainer*. It was a shelter for collecting water, which had a built-in swing with levers, through which the visitor could let the water flow, drain elsewhere or water the flowers. People could play with levers and had to figure out what the water would do when they used a different lever. The aim was to draw the attention of the inhabitants of the Amsterdam City Park to the importance of water management.¹⁷

Another city that uses elements of digital entertainment design is Bristol in England. For example, *Stop, Smile, Stroll* grabs people's attention before crossing pedestrians by displaying a compliment or message based on their facial expression using a digital mirror. It could grab their attention that there are on pedestrian and they should be careful. Through applications *Hello Lamp* people can communicate through text messages with the lamps and bus stops. It was location-based application through that, "city furniture" ask people questions about their interests, experiences in the locality or what they would do if they were mayor of the city. The aim was to get to know more about people in city and made them realize the city area or better identify with city. The project called *Urbanimals*, displays a digital projection of animals on the city's sidewalks, which attracts the attention of passers-by. People could chase the animals or imaginary stroking them. Another entertainment application *BikeTAG* uses sensors and LED lights for players on bicycles to create light trails in a predetermined environment. It was location-based application which with map could show the road to the target destiny and turn travel into fun, because cyclist has to avoid the elements that steal light. In the application, people could also find out how to get to their destination in the shortest possible way. The primary goal was to use the application as a tool to streamline movement around the city, later

¹⁵ STEVENSON, J.: *Making Our Rubbish Smarter with the Trash Track Initiative*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://360.here.com/2017/05/23/making-rubbish-smarter-trash-track-initiative/>>.

¹⁶ *Into Fresh Air*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://citygpsgame.nl/en/citygames/into-fresh-air/>>.

¹⁷ #1 *Circular City / Amsterdam*. [online]. 2021 [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<http://gamesforcities.com/challenges/circular-city/>>.

this game had the character of night races organized by the city. A project called *Knock, Knock* was created in Oxford. The principle of this entertainment element was based on doors that were in different streets of the city. When someone knocked on one door, the knock was heard on the other, and if someone heard it, he could open the door and possibly talk to the other person. The aim was to make locations more attractive for tourist, but also to create interesting way how foreign people could talk or share their experiences or information about city. The *Cheonggyecheon Stream* flows through the centre of Seoul in Korea, and its surroundings were transformed into an urban relaxing area in 2005. Within this zone, there is a digital entertainment *Dancing*, in which visitors can dance with the projection of animals such as the Gray Heron, which lived in this area. In addition to the educational character about animals, the game should also point out the issues of animal protection and the environment protection. The prototype of the game to increase the movement of the population, increase the interest of tourists or better socialization was the game *Dance Step City*, which was tested in the USA. The game takes place on sidewalks where dance steps were digitally projected. When the game was activated, the music turned on and people could dance by following the steps.¹⁸

Another prototype of city game is, for example, *Redesire*. It is digital game application which simulates the management of the city, where the player can choose their position such as mayor, investor or citizen and on that basis makes appropriate decisions and perform tasks. In city game *If I were Istanbul's Mayor*, the players were the real inhabitants of Istanbul, who voted with a traffic card to propose solutions to various priority areas and investments in the city, and the system deduced what type of mayor they would be. *City Hall* is a digital game application that educates players on city transparency. Players are city managers and make various budget decisions that affect the development of the game. *Age of Energy* was a digital game application tested by the people of Amsterdam and Grenoble and aimed to influence energy behaviour. The principle of the game was based on building a community in a post-apocalyptic world. The game does not require to pay money for progress, but to do something that saves energy, such as cleaning the freezer or turning off the lights, and with that compete with other players.¹⁹

The city of Trnava in Slovakia has two city digital games applications. Game *Powerful Belt* is a location-based game and has an educational character. The aim of game is to find the key to the city that was lost by city guard Paladius. Players walk around the city where they can find various historical figures, collect digital coins, answer questions and try to find the key. During game they learn interesting facts from history of city.²⁰ The second game is *Elf's Magic*, which was released for the first time at Christmas 2020. It is a location-based, fairy-tale game in which players try to help an elf that lives in an old shoe. Players walk around the city, completing quests and trying to find a home for the elf.²¹

¹⁸ *Playable City Projects*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.playablecity.com/projects/>>.

¹⁹ *#1 Circular City/Amsterdam*. [online]. 2021 [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<http://gamesforcities.com/challenges/circular-city/>>.

²⁰ *Interaktívna hra Mocný opasok vás prenesie do Trnavy v časoch stredoveku*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.trnava.sk/sk/aktualita/interaktivna-hra-mocny-opasok-vas-prenesie-do-trnavy-v-casoch-stredoveku>>.

²¹ *Adventnú Trnavu ovládne Škriatkove kúzlo. Vďaka nemu môžu Trnavčania vstúpiť do rozprávky*. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://www.trnava.sk/sk/aktualita/adventnu-trnavu-ovladne-skriatkove-kuzlo-vdaka-nemu-mozu-trnavciana-vstupit-do-rozpravky>>.

Conclusion

The game is as old as humanity itself. Games and entertainment based on digital technology currently rule and they are offered as one of the best ways to educate people in many fields. One of the possibilities is their application to the concept of Smart city, as a city that tries to improve the lives of inhabitants through technology. Games like *City Hall*, *Redesire* offer knowledge about how the city works, what processes take place in it and how these processes take place. They are therefore a way of raising awareness and thus of a possible interest in governance. *BikeTAG*, *Wasted*, *CarZilla*, *Age of Energy* or *Contrainer* can help change behaviour, increase green thinking, green waste management, energy efficiency or reduce the number of motor vehicles in cities. The entertainment as *Urbanimals* and *Dancing* draw attention to the need to protect the environment and endangered animal species. Entertainment like *Stop*, *Smile*, *Stroll* can draw pedestrians' attention to the fact that they are at a pedestrian crossing and should be careful when crossing it, which can reduce accidents. *Knock, Knock* helps greater socialization in today's digital age, where almost everyone looks at a mobile phone and gradually losing communication face to face. And games like *Dance Step City*, *Powerful Belt*, *Hello Lamp* can diversify the lives of residents, to force the inhabitants to move more, to help them to become more aware of the city environment, get to know it, identify with it more, or to see it in a different perspective. But it can also make the city more attractive to tourists and thus bring more money from tourism that the city can use to increase and improve its areas.

Games or entertainment applications have great potential to influence human thinking and thus change the usual patterns of behaviour what people have towards the city environment. They can make this change not only for children but also for adults. They can help to acquire new knowledge, habits and skills to build a society and an environment in which not only current but also future generations live comfortably. They can be a way to involve the general population in the functioning and management of the city, increasing its involvement as well as awareness. They are a way of spending free time, entertainment and at the same time they can support socialization, spending time of parents with children and thus strengthening their relationships. In the current corona crisis, they can be a way of not only spending free time but also educating the population and thus using this time to improve society. And last but not least they can in an unforced way help to realize what reactions the actions of the population provoke as well as the fact that individuals form a mass that can destroy but also renew and build.

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BEING DIGITAL WITH MY DAUGHTER: A CONTINUAL SEARCH FOR POSITIVE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL GAMES

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Abstract:

This article examines the thin ice of discussion concerning digital games and children. From the very beginning of – still very short – history of digital games, there have been voices risen up, drumming the drums of war against it, claiming that this phenomenon should not be existing anywhere near the young ones. Today, the 21st century being still in the beginning, these voices are still audible. Not so strong, but still very much alive. There have been many discussions about how digital games negatively affect the lives of people, especially the youngest of us, creating a narrative about violence and aggressive behaviour. It should be said that many of these were completely ignoring the complex nature of digital games in all of their shades, genres, not even talking about their mechanics, often created precisely for creating positive effects on players. I have been a gamer my whole life. We bought our first personal computer in the 1990s when I was around ten years old. I experienced the negative side of digital games from a different perspective: being completely and utterly misunderstood by parents, constantly being told that I spend too much time by a computer. And here I am, being nearly forty years old, academic writing about digital games and even designing sounds for them and teaching my students about it. The goal of this article is to explore the effects of digital games from the perspective of the father of seven years old daughter, who started to be a gamer even sooner than me. However subjective this abstract seems to appear, the objective here is to be as neutral and scholarly as possible. This article will aim to stay true to a traditional (and stereotypical) perception of digital games, studying so-called positive and negative effects of digital games, but will also focus on more specific aspects of this phenomenon, regarding game aesthetics, mechanics and gameplay and even offline/online aspect of games – all of this being a subject of communication with my daughter, with whom I have been playing digital games from her two years of life. This paper also serves as a survey of what can we learn about/from digital games and – what can we learn from our children, playing them. Lastly, this text is intended to create a foundation for anyone willing to explore this territory from a slightly different perspective, focusing on qualitative aspects of research, dismissing the old narrative, and bringing it to the actual reality of studying games by playing them.

Key words:

Aesthetics. Children. Communication. Digital Games. Game Mechanics. Gameplay. Genre. Negative Effects. Playing. Positive Effects.

Introduction: The Status Quo (In Theory and Practice)

Like all new technologies, digital games were always subject to critique. It seems unimaginable today, but their history spreads out to the late 1940s and 1950s when Ralph Baer first described his idea to build a TV set, that would be able to incorporate an interactive game into it¹ and after an atomic energy scientist William Higginbotham created what he called a tennis game during his open-house event for family and friends.² This game was created simply for educational reasons and to explain how gravity works. Later, it was called *A Tennis for Two* and is widely related as a first digital game. From that moment the new technologies emerged that were to change the perception of games in general. A new medium was born, slowly getting more attention and fame, being upgraded every year. The era of home consoles was to come and the idea of coin-devouring arcades was slowly developing. As with all the games, this newly born medium was naturally attractive for younger people and with that, the negative standpoints were slowly coming to life. New technologies always allured that part of the human psyche not willing to change or adapt to new things, in fact, the invention of the bicycle in the 18th century made worried men try to ban women from riding this devil's machine (pun intended).

¹ BERENS, K., HOWARD, G.: *The Rough Guide to Videogames*. London : Rough Guides, 2008, p. 3.

² BAER, R. H.: *Videogames: In the Beginning*. Springfield : Rolenta Press, 2005, p. 17.

Fast forward to 1992 – 1993, when the first *Mortal Kombat*³ and *Doom*⁴ were released. Although we can track negative critiques of digital games much further into history (according to Grossman, games like *Space Invaders*⁵ or *Asteroids*⁶ appear non-threatening today, but were characterized as violent in the 1980s⁷ – which by the way would be an interesting topic for research itself, since these games had the most primitive graphics and one could hardly talk about violence in this context), it is these two games that appear as a hallmark of ‘unacceptable’ and ‘violent’. The question is – what is violent? In the context of this article, I believe this word is a term adding to the narrative that digital games are bad. Also, this term was used so extensively in past decades, that it somehow stuck to the digital games, and at times it seems nobody really asks a question whether it was a correct attribution whatsoever. As Newmann mentions, although distinctions between aggressive and non-aggressive, violent and non-violent digital games are used freely in the various studies, there is no consistency in the definitions. When talking about games like *Doom* or *Mortal Kombat*, these phrases are measured in terms of representation.⁸ That is, of course, only logical. Visual representation of violence or even death in these games is somewhat visceral (although light-years away from today’s photorealistic standards). From the perspective of an adult researcher who was not growing with digital games, it is expected to take the stance of criticism, simply because of the potentially easily identifiable aspects of visuals. Decapitating finishing moves in *Mortal Kombat* and cutting through enemies with a chainsaw in *Doom* are definitely the right triggers for going into an examination of what could this do to children playing it. However, the situation slightly changes, when we ask the children themselves. As early as 2007, a group of researchers asked adolescent children (among the other questions) for the reasons for playing video games. Nearly 100% of all asked children (boys and girls) answered that to them, it is just fun.⁹

“Fun” is a word that is often overlooked. Digital games, video games – all of these variations have the term “games” in them. If we look at this from the perspective of children, what we find is the simplest definition: digital games are just fun (and maybe, it is also appropriate to note that the classic distinction between “games” and “play” is probably of no interest to children). If we were to compare a game of football and a digital version of it, we would probably see many similar aspects – one of which would be violence for sure. If you kick someone’s feet during the real football game because you were just scored a goal, thus being emotional (even angry) about it, the only difference is, that you actually hurt another person in real life. In the digital version (such as the FIFA series),¹⁰ you can do as many fouls as you want – digital avatars are never going to punch you back in anger. Strangely enough, nobody seems to be trying to ban football from children – quite the opposite. By the way, if we were to change football for its American version or even New Zealandian rugby, we could talk about many more wounds than just kick in the feet. When we make a small experiment and write keywords like “digital games” and “children” into a Google search, we will most likely get tens, if not hundreds of articles and studies about the negative effects of games on children (in fact, I made this search and more than half of the articles had words aggressive, violent or addiction

³ MIDWAY: *Mortal Kombat*. [digital game]. Chicago : Midway, 1992.

⁴ ID SOFTWARE: *Doom*. [digital game]. Mesquite : Id Software, 1993.

⁵ TAITO: *Space Invaders*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Taito, 1978.

⁶ ATARI: *Asteroids*. [digital game]. Sunnyvale : Atari, 1979.

⁷ CHORY-ASSAD, R., MASTRO, D.: *Violent Videogame Use and Hostility among High School Students and College Students*. Paper presented at Mass Communication Division of the National Communication Association annual meeting. Seattle, presented in November 2000.

⁸ NEWMANN, J.: *Videogames*. London : Routledge, 2004, p. 66.

⁹ See: OLSON, C. K. et. al.: Factors Correlated with Violent Video Game Use by Adolescent Boys and Girls. In *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2007, Vol. 41, p. 77-83.

¹⁰ ELECTRONIC ARTS: *FIFA (Series)*. [digital game]. Vancouver/Romania : EA Sports, since 1997.

in their names). Those dealing with positive aspects of digital games are still in a minority, although one would think otherwise in the 21st century. Many of these studies have to carve their way through the different channels (ever-growing number of game-related conferences, *TedX* talks, etc.) and what is showing the most vivid colours is the old ever-green: the undying myth of bad digital games, naturally spreading out to other variations (bad computers, bad tablets, etc.). According to Andrew K. Przybylski and Netta Wein (referring to an older article by A. Bandura from 1997), this could easily be because the main theoretical framework used to study the links between violent game engagement and aggression is still the general aggression model (GAM), which is an appetitive social learning theory that proposes that repeated exposure to violent media increases the accessibility of aggressive thoughts, which then increase the probability of aggressive cognitive schema, emotions, and behaviour.¹¹ With this said, it is not difficult to see often absurd associations between digital games and virtually any kind of undesirable behaviour of children – in the same study, Przybylski and Wein point out that it is aggressive individuals who gravitate towards violent games respectively. In other words, if someone is aggressive, we should, for example, first ask what kind of (family) background they have and maybe why they chose to play a violent game. This is, of course, a debate of its own and is beyond the scope of this article. However, I will argue that the research covering digital games and children is often heavily leaning towards quantitative design and that games – especially in the relationship with younger children – are to be played with them in the first place and only then should be subjected to a study. Also, the aim of this article is not to focus on negative effects, aggression, or violent behaviour (although a small portion of it is going to be explored), but rather an exploration of more worldly aspects of playing digital games.

1 The Approach and Definitions

As I suggested in the abstract, this article focuses on specific parts of digital games in connection with children. Since I am writing this paper in the time of Covid-19 still lurking around, the pandemic actually created even more time I could spend with my daughter, playing games together with her. I will analyse her way of dealing with several different games (of a number of different genres) studying her perception and communication with these games and try to answer several questions regarding aesthetics, gameplay/mechanics, the difference between offline and online gaming, as well as some specific areas of interest related to the genre of these games. Not only will be these questions aiming to answer how is she able to communicate with games themselves, but also to explore the idea of what can we learn about digital games, what can our children learn from them, what can we learn about our children, and ultimately, what can we learn about ourselves. The topics presented in the following chapters will not be strictly reduced to one strictly predefined category, but rather a set of overlapping ones. My idea of research regarding digital games and children is based on a simple presumption that the best results lie in the actual gameplay with the children – but not just playing the game, but being engaged in it and also talking to them while playing it.

1.1 The Gameplay and Mechanics

Before I delve into more specific parts of this text, however, I will try to define some of the terms mentioned above and also adjust them to my way of working with them. When talking about gameplay and mechanics, we usually kind-of know what we are talking about, but if we

¹¹ PRZYBYLSKI, A. K., WEINSTEIN, N.: *Violent Video Game Engagement Is Not Associated with Adolescent's Aggressive Behaviour: Evidence from a Registered Report*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.171474>>.

were to ask someone to specifically define these terms, the chances are they will struggle. It is one of these notions that gamers understand intuitively, but are oblivious to while being immersed in an actual game. G. King and T. Krzywinska define gameplay as the particular set of non-real-world tasks, goals or potentials set for the player's enjoyment within an on-screen arena, performed according to a set of pre-established rules and as a result of which a number of different outcomes are possible.¹² Some people define game mechanics as the rules and procedures that guide the player (as well as the game) response to the player's moves and actions. Through these mechanics, the way how the game is going to work is defined. Regarding the rules of a game, Jesper Juul says they provide the player with challenges that the player cannot trivially overcome. According to him, playing a game is an activity of improving skills in order to overcome these challenges, and playing a game is therefore fundamentally a learning experience. Though games may be different in structure, a player approaches every game with whatever repertoire of skills they have, and then improves these skills in the course of playing the game.¹³ Of course, there are also other definitions, usually involving the names of John Huizinga, Roger Caillois, or Espen Aarseth (whose thoughts on gameplay vs free play would be especially interesting in our next chapters). The truth is: we do not need them. Considering all my experience of playing digital games with my daughter, there is only one rule: being present, in the now. The game rules and mechanics are there to be explored, to be found, and to be communicated with. Remember, I have been doing this – now experiment – from her age of two¹⁴ – it was the age she could barely talk, not to mention reading. Also, some of the definitions could simply not be applied to this kind of research, because there are games (some of which we are going to talk about later), of which genre is barely fitting into any simplified category and the only rule of gameplay is working out the controls and just playing.

1.2 The Aesthetics

Although this term could be identified from many different points of view, I will try to use it more broadly and specifically at the same time, utilizing it as a substitution for another, more widely used terms. Some of these could include graphics or visuals of digital games, sound design and music, as well as specific parts of gameplay that contribute more to the aesthetic feeling of the game – for example, fluency/smoothness of movement of the main character, level of freedom in the game or the world design. My aim by doing this kind of reduction is rather pragmatic: in her very young age, my daughter is still not able to fully express herself when talking about specific subjects related to digital games. Even though she now fully understands the concept of graphics, “sound design” and similar notions, it is much easier (and sometimes even more effective) to talk more broadly and simplistically. This way the communication is clear and without unnecessary complications.

If I were to follow the concept utilized in the previous chapter, I could define some of these terms very easily. Being a sound designer myself, one of the best and simplest definitions of digital games is that of Karen Collins. According to her, the digital game¹⁵ refers to any game consumed on video screens, televisions, or coin-operated arcade consoles.¹⁶ Using the word screens, it is easy to attribute the sight into the equation. Graphics, therefore, refers to the visual

¹² KING, G., KRZYWINSKA, T.: *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders. Videogame Forms & Contexts*. London : I. B. Tauris, 2006, p. 9.

¹³ See: JUUL, J.: *Half-Real. Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2005.

¹⁴ Remark by the author: She was given her first iPad at that time, mostly using it for simple puzzle games and educational apps teaching her how to write letters, etc.

¹⁵ Remark by the author: Karen Collins uses the term “video games”.

¹⁶ COLLINS, K.: *Game Sound. An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2008, p. 3.

representation of any digital game and all the corresponding characteristics associated with it. When talking about visuals, it is possible to talk about different aspects of them: is the game 2D or 3D? Are the visuals photorealistic or does it use pixel-art graphics? Are there any visual effects like bloom, depth of field, or ray-tracing involved?

Of course, the aesthetics as a substitute for all of the above is much more complex than it seems. For example, it is difficult to talk about audio games from the perspective of visuals, simply because many of them have none of it. Also, it serves as a term reflecting on the emotional level of digital games. Some games I refer to in the next chapters are widely considered artistic. The debate about digital games and art is a long one and is – again – not in the scope of this article. Ian Bogost compares art in digital games to other art forms such as movies or painting – according to him, the biggest difference between those is the fact that in games, it is far less common to see a creator’s work evolve over time, partly because game makers tend to have less longevity than other sorts of artists, as well as because games are more industrialized and aesthetics is often curtailed by commercial necessity.¹⁷ However, considering our goals, this topic is not completely irrelevant. An emotional response is one of the things I slowly started to focus on throughout several years of playing games with my daughter. Even this term has several diverse points of view to be considered – her emotions are much more different when playing an online competitive game, where she dies constantly, and in the game, where she flies in an open world in the form of a bird.

1.3 The Offline and Online Aspect

This is probably the most elementary differentiation in my article. It is fairly easy to identify the nature of a digital game from the viewpoint of offline or online aspects. Offline digital games are – simply said – not involving the Internet connection in any way. This type of games is usually associated with terms like single player and similar notions, suggesting that the player can play these games alone. This however can be viewed from the opposite side as well – multiplayer style of play can be still offline, using different methods of doing that (the most common of these is probably split-screen mode, when the game simply divides the screen into two parts, thus allowing two players to play on the same computer/console, etc.). A simple definition of online games could be based on a plain inversion of offline games definition: online games need to be connected to the Internet or some other network to be played. In the last decades, the term MMORPG¹⁸ is probably the most widely discussed and is also going to be discussed in this paper to a small degree, but it should be said that this specific genre is probably one of the most complex ones. Of course, online digital games exist in a great number of classic genres from FPS¹⁹ shooters, MOBA,²⁰ or racing games, to more contemporary variations like online co-op psychological horror like *Phantasmophobia*²¹ or vehicular soccer games like *Rocket League*.²² In my article, I will also tackle the territory of more simple online digital games in which gameplay and mechanics are reduced to the single gameplay aspect (like eating as many apples you can with an ever-growing worm that you control). The most important feature of my differentiation between offline and online games, however, is the social aspect. Playing the game with actual people involved is something that has been attracting more and more interest of my daughter over years and is now one of the most dominant aspects of

¹⁷ BOGOST, I.: *How To Talk About Videogames*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2015, p. 11.

¹⁸ Remark by the author: Massively-Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games.

¹⁹ Remark by the author: FPS – First Person Shooter, combat heavy action game viewed from the first person view.

²⁰ Remark by the author: MOBA – Multiplayer Online Battle Arena, a subgenre of strategy games, where several teams of players battle against each other on a specific map.

²¹ KINETIC GAMES: *Phantasmophobia*. [digital game]. Southampton : Kinetic Games, 2020.

²² PSYONIX: *Rocket League*. [digital game]. San Diego : Psyonix, 2015.

her perception of digital games in general. The social aspect has many features to be considered – can you communicate with other players? Is the game competitive or more adventure-based? What kind of interaction with other players can you do in general?

1.4 The Genre, Selected Games, and Approach

In the context of this article, the genre itself is somewhat important, because it slightly changes the prism through which I study the interaction of my daughter with the games. Although we have been playing many games in the span of several years (and sometimes I was even testing her against the games which I initially thought are ‘too difficult’ for her), I had to choose a selected number of those so that they could fit in the scope and range of this paper. The digital games analysed in the following chapter fall into the categories of open-world RPGs, MMORPG, third-person perspective open-ended action sandbox, action-adventure, 3D platformer, snake multiplayer, and educational. The games I am going to be examining are *Shadow of the Colossus*²³ (original PS2 version), *Horizon – Zero Dawn*,²⁴ *Pine*,²⁵ *Animal Jam*,²⁶ *Goat Simulator*,²⁷ *Lego Jurassic World*,²⁸ *Snake Rivals*,²⁹ *A Short Hike*,³⁰ *Numbers*,³¹ and *Big Numbers*.³² The devices on which we were playing all of the listed games were PC, *PlayStation2*, *PlayStation4*, *iPad* tablet, and a standard smartphone.

I am not going to analyse all of the listed digital games separately, but rather put them into groups in which I will focus on specific aspects of them (as detailed in the previous chapters), as well as try to answer the questions posited at the beginning of chapter 2. I believe a more quantitative method of my approach would be counterproductive and in direct contrast compared to the whole idea of playing the games together with my daughter. I am also not rating or analysing the selected games from the perspective of how good or bad they are. One of the most essential methods was a simple observation and conclusions deduction based on the understanding of digital games in general. Also, the terminology I used in conversations with my daughter had to be limited so that she could easily understand my questions and ideas and also better express herself. Furthermore, it is important to mention she is what is often called a digital native. She was born to an era characterized by the ubiquitous presence of digital devices such as computers, smartphones, and tablets.

2 The Observation

Part 1: *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Pine*, *Horizon Zero Dawn*

The first group of games I focus on consists of *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Pine*, and *Horizon Zero Dawn*. One could argue that these games are each slightly different and even the genre is problematic. The first two is generally considered as action adventures with puzzle elements and the last of them is perceived in a more traditional sense as an open-world action RPG. However, there are some very simple RPG elements in the first two games as far as getting gradually better equipment or using an inventory counts. There are, however, several

²³ TEAM ICO: *Shadow of the Colossus*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Sony Computer Entertainment, 2005.

²⁴ GUERRILLA GAMES: *Horizon Zero Dawn*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2017.

²⁵ TWIRLBOUND: *Pine*. [digital game]. Breda : Kongregate, 2019.

²⁶ WILDWORKS: *Animal Jam – Play Wild!*. [digital game]. Draper, Utah : WildWorks, 2015.

²⁷ COFFEE STAIN STUDIOS: *Goat Simulator*. [digital game]. Skövde : Coffee Stain Studios, 2014 – 2019.

²⁸ TT FUSION: *Lego Jurassic World*. [digital game]. Burbank : Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, 2015.

²⁹ SUPERSOLID: *Snake Rivals*. [digital game]. London : Supersolid, 2019.

³⁰ ADAM ROBINSON-YU: *A Short Hike*. [digital game]. Toronto : Adam Robinson-Yu, 2019.

³¹ DRAGONBOX: *Numbers*. [digital game]. Oslo : Dragonbox, 2015.

³² DRAGONBOX: *Big Numbers*. [digital game]. Oslo : Dragonbox, 2016.

characteristics that are similar in all of these games. First of all, all of these games are played in third-person view (that means the player's perspective is positioned behind or around the main character, usually allowing to rotate the camera freely in all directions). Second, all of these games utilize the concept of open-world, meaning players can travel virtually anywhere on the map unless the game limits them (the limitation could be caused by many reasons – the player's character is not strong/levelled up enough to get there, the narrative itself blocks some paths/areas unless specific quests are completed first, etc.). Also, there is combat involved in all of these games (in both melee and ranged forms) and also fairly big freedom of movement allowing the player to jump, crouch, sneak, swim, climb and even ride mounts (usually in the form of mountable animals). All of the three games were also played in offline single-player mode.

Shadow of the Colossus was one of the first games my daughter played, that incorporated the free open-world design with a rotatable camera. It was played on *PlayStation 2* console, meaning she had to use Dual Shock controllers. This controller played a big role in all the other games she played afterward because it created a habit of controlling the camera with one hand/finger and the character's movement with another hand. Until today, she struggles to use a classic PC combination of controls using a keyboard with a mouse and if possible, uses an external controller connected to a computer instead, partly because her hands are still too small. The movement of the camera and (especially) of the playable character is one of the most important aspects of games she notices in every new game. It was one of my very first observations I made: the more freedom of movement and traveling she had, the better. Immediately after figuring out the controls, however, the next and probably the most dominant feature of her gameplay came into play: the exploration. The design component of the open-world represents and shapes the major part of her interaction with these games. In *Shadow of the Colossus*, this aspect was even more present, due to a fact that the player can ride a horse from the very beginning. The aspects of gameplay were then compressed to a simple play – every time she was playing this game, she was so focused on the fact she can ride a horse (from a slow gallop to sprint and even making some simple acrobatics on it) that she ignored all the elements present in the game, representing the primary content (which is making the way to a gigantic 'Colossi' and fighting them). The factor of exploration was essential in all three games. The vast open-world (although presented differently in all of these games) was there to be examined, travelled by, and immersed in. All the details that added to the realism of these digital games (such as the ability to swim in the water, leaving the horse idle just to see him drink from the well, or climbing up the hills or trees, slowly created the dominant aspect of my daughter's gameplay. Jason Rutter and Jo Bryce refer to Miller's definition of exploration and compare it to the exploration of the attic or the local caves as a child. The exploration might also include the player's exploration of the game mechanics (for example identification of the player's limits and boundaries of the play world).³³ Based on these definitions, it is fairly easy to recognize the importance of this element in nearly every game my daughter played.

Although all three games are from different years (*Shadow of the Colossus* being the oldest one from 2005), all had a huge impact on my daughter's emotional response. The washed-out minimalistic low-resolution graphics (compared to the other two) of *Shadow of the Colossus* left a similar feeling in her as the other two games, however, she was able to clearly identify the more contemporary/detailed and even photorealistic visuals of *Pine* and (especially) *Horizon Zero Dawn*. She was able to label all of these games with the words beautiful, as well as indicate sadness in specific scenes with emotional non-diegetic music accompanying them.

³³ RUTTER, J., BRYCE, J.: *Understanding Digital Games*. London : SAGE Publications, 2006, p. 80.

She was also able to recognize when the controls were more clumsy or more responsive. The most interesting observations, however, were related to somewhat different aspects of gameplay.

From the very beginning of playing digital games with my daughter, I noticed she naturally let herself immerse in them, taking on the role of the main character. It did not matter if the character was male (as in the *Shadow of the Colossus* and *Pine*) or female (as in *Horizon Zero Dawn*, although she was quicker to identify herself with Aloy – the main character from the last-mentioned). She simply became the character. What that means in more academic words is that she actually cemented herself in what Roger Caillois would call “mimicry”,³⁴ defined as a play involving make-believe, where the player takes on a new identity. What is more, she created what I would call a loop, in which she imprinted her own personality on the in-game character respectively, partially inverting mimicry. What that means, in reality, is that she was playing these games as if she was the character, but not forgetting about herself and her own skills and abilities. This was reflected in the manner she was exploring the world and communicating with its inhabitants (NPC characters). When first leaving the village after the opening sequence of *Pine*, she naturally started to explore the world, completely ignoring the quest markers placed on the map (or quite bluntly on the screen). This way she simply avoided the path that was supposed to lead the player to an NPC suggesting the next steps, ending up on the beach leading to a new village, this time occupied with hostile creatures. The usual player’s reaction would be to slowly penetrate the village, taking on the creatures and testing if our current equipment is strong enough to make us win the fight over them, possibly looting the place for equipment. Her reaction was completely opposite: identifying those creatures as hostile (thanks to the game’s mechanics rendering enemies red for a short period of time), she decided to completely avoid the village and venturing forward to the forests nearby for another exploration. After another encounter with an enemy creature, she did what she would do in real life: ran away. The same behaviour was notable while playing *Horizon Zero Dawn*, where she evaluated patrolling mechanical animals as too dangerous and refused to participate in a fight with them, in the favour of exploration and just playing the game. The most interesting situation took place while playing *Shadow of the Colossus*, where she not only refused to fight the giants (thus rejecting the central part of the game), but also, she felt sad and grieved after I showed her how to fight the first of them and even killing him. This game is particularly successful in showing the player the real consequences and even the tragedy of killing a living being, which, ultimately, confirmed my daughter’s decision not to kill a living being in those games.

Part 2: Goat Simulator and Lego Jurassic World

Placing these two games in a single group could, once more, cause some people to doubt my methodology. Genre-wise, these are entirely different games. *Goat Simulator* is an action sandbox type of game with an open-world design (although the open-world, in this case, means taking on one big map at a time, wreaking havoc on it) with absent narrative structure (although there are many ‘quests’ player can do). *Lego Jurassic World*, on the other hand, is one of the many Lego-themed games based on a specific movie. This particular game consists of the first four movies from the Jurassic Park universe – players can re-play the story of the movies throughout the levels, which are vaguely designed to reminiscent some of the scenes and areas of the original movie, even using originally recorded dialogues from the movies. It is labelled as action-adventure. What makes these two unlikely games placed in one group is the element of the local multi-player option (available in the split-screen mode), as well as the degree of freedom and possible creativity involved. In this case, the element of aesthetics is not so important as mechanics and gameplay.

³⁴ CAILLOIS, R.: *Man, Play and Games*. Illinois : University of Illinois Press, 2001, p. 19.

The *Goat Simulator* is one of these games that may evoke very different impressions in different people. Its gameplay is based on glitchy movement, utilizing ragdoll physics. The player can impersonate a goat (or many other animals and characters which can be unlocked by collecting trophies or completing specific quests and tasks) and can walk, jump, run (also on the walls), head-attack/kick anything, or fly (with selected characters). The most iconic feature of this game, however, is the player's ability to lick things. By licking virtually anything (from chair to people), a player can attach it to the goat and manipulate it as if it was being pulled (which opens up quite a lot of possibilities how to interact with the world). Most characters also have a special move, often involving absurd actions like changing anything into an explosive watermelon, attaching a human on top of the head, and using it as a helicopter, etc. In the PC version of the game, the players are allowed to mix these characteristics using so-called mutators into one goat. Having this amount of freedom, my daughter slowly started to develop so many unpredictable ways of playing, that it genuinely surprised even a lifelong gamer like me. Sometimes she pushed the limits of what the game allowed her to a point of breaking the game.

Lego Jurassic World slowly unlocks free maps, upon which the player can freely roam and explore initially locked locations. One of the many unlockable features in this game is the playable characters (again, distinguished not just graphically but also based on different special abilities they possess), playable dinosaurs, and drivable cars and motorbikes. This was, again, one of the features my daughter was most interested in because it offered freedom of movement, exploration, and even the possibility to build her own versions of dinosaurs (it is Lego, after all). Among the games I have chosen to explore in this article, *The Goat Simulator* and *Lego Jurassic World* are the first ones we could apply the violent digital games label. In the former, a player can attack and kick people or even throw explosives at them (they are then usually thrown away in an exaggerated physics simulation way), and in the latter, one of the key mechanics of gameplay is fighting (although *Lego Jurassic World* is probably the least combat-oriented game among other *Lego* games). Nevertheless, my daughter understood the fictional nature of this combat or even violence, because in both games it is presented in an absurd, even funny, and cartoonish manner. In *The Goat Simulator*, the whole concept is presented as funny, goofy and nonsensical, and in *Lego Jurassic World*, everything is built of Lego – so even if you destroy a playable character, it tumbles down into small Lego pieces.

The most important feature of these two games, however, was the opportunity to play them together in split-screen mode. In the *Goat Simulator*, she immediately started to create her own scenarios. Following the pattern discussed in Part 1 of this chapter, she identified herself with the goat she was playing with and she asked me to play as her in-game father. She even used the modification features of the game so that she was smaller and I was bigger. We were changing the scenarios regularly – sometimes I was a flamingo father, trying to teach her (a smaller flamingo – one of the playable characters) to fly. We climbed the tallest building (me, taking her there, using the licking mechanic), and there she was literally directing me how to play the role of the bird-father-teacher. Other times, we were playing a simple Tag – chasing games. Several times we actually became *YouTubers*, because she wanted me to set a screen-recording software including a microphone in front of us so that we capture our gameplay and our voices while playing (some of these videos will surely be the golden fond of our family videos in the future, but that is, of course, for another discussion). She understands these mechanics quite well, not just because I do it on regular basis because of my students and online classes, but also because she understands the concept of let us play gaming videos on *YouTube*.

In *Lego Jurassic World*, she embraced similar behaviour. This game, however, was one of those, in which she cared about the story. We were thus alternating between the main storyline and free-roam maps. When she figured out the mechanics associated with building and decorating her own versions of dinosaurs, she created a similar concept of playing with me as her in-game father-dinosaur. That way she – again – reduced the aspect of gameplay to just play and fun, because the bare idea of seeing me in the game as another character was one of the best things for her, not to mention the amount of fun we had together.

Part 3: *Animal Jam* and *Snake Rivals*

Putting these two games in a single group is probably the most logical combination in this chapter so far – although both are different genres, they share one primary characteristic. They are both online games and simply will not work without Internet connection. *Animal Jam* is, in a way, a true MMORPG, although intended for children and younger players. *Snake Rivals* is a 3D snake-based³⁵ game with simple gameplay, however, it was designed for modern devices like smartphones and tablets. The concept of an ever-growing snake that eats small apples is upgraded with the possibility of unlocking many more snake types and a large number of cosmetic upgrades, colours, and so on. This game could be considered as a competitive one because the player is always spawned to an arena full of other online players (the standard mode allows up to 50 players to spawn on a single map). As in the majority of *iOS/Android*-based games, players can invest real-world money to buy new snakes and upgrades. Fortunately, we have never used this option as most of the upgrades can be unlocked by free play. On the contrary, after long consideration, I created an account for my daughter in *Animal Jam*, paying several euros to unlock the premium content, as the game turned out to be the most favourite one of her for a long period of time.

The gameplay mechanics in *Snake Rivals* is probably the simplest to define. The player controls a small snake, sliding on the floor. Since the game is fully in 3D, the snake can go in all directions and is controlled by sliding the finger on the screen of the device. The main part of the game consists of eating the apples, which are procedurally generated and scattered across the map. The competitive aspect of this game is based on an effort to become the longest and biggest snake on the map, as well as on the possibility to eliminate other players by swiftly crossing their way – if another player's snake crashes into your (or vice versa), it dies and is respawned again, in the smallest form. Compared to *Snake Rivals*, is a much more complex game, mainly because it consists of a great number of smaller mini-games and activities. The fundamental part of gameplay is situated on a fairly big map (called *Jamaa*) divided into nine smaller areas distinguished by different world designs. There are also many places and buildings that the players can enter – some of these are shops with cosmetic equipment and some represent the places where players can hang out. Players can choose from three initial animals from the beginning and can customize their look (changing colours, clothes, etc.). The game offers many more animals to be played with, but they need to be bought with an in-game currency called gems. It is possible to earn those, as well as buy them with real money. The visual of this game is based on a hybrid isometric 3D view with no option to rotate the camera, however, a player is able to zoom in or out in some of the areas. *Animal Jam* includes many mini-games that can be played either in single-player mode (the player is playing against the computer) or against one or more other players. These games incorporate aspects of many different genres, ranging from simple horse racing or block-breaking to more complex ones like tower defence or even an option to build a custom 3D object with an in-game editor (this feature

³⁵ Snake is the usual name for a game based on a concept of player being a small snake, moving in all directions, eating dots/points, making the snake grow, thus rising the difficulty. This concept originated in game called *Blockade*, created in 1976.

was added just recently). Every player is given its own den – a house they can spend time in, customize, buy equipment for (furniture, garden objects, etc.) and arrange and modify to a degree of rotating and placing any of the available objects inside of it. This kind of personalization (players can even paint their own pictures and then hang them on the walls) coupled with the option of combining countless colour and cloth variations was one of the aspects of this game that sold my daughter. There are many more features in this game, but the most important from my perspective is the social one – as players can chat with each other.

“To Chat or Not to Chat”? That Is No Question at All

My daughter has been playing *Animal Jam* for more than two years now. I could definitely identify her as a pro player, as, during this era, she has probably explored every nook and cranny of this game, owns more than a thousand items, most of the playable animals, and sported every mini-game available. During the last year, however, she has been gradually engaging in real conversations with other online players. There is a chat option, which can be set to several modes using a so-called parent account. It basically means that parents can lock the chatting options and reduce them to simple predefined phrases, allow a limited chat (which carefully controls what is written, uses moderated list of words, and reduces possibly harmful conversation), or completely unlock the chat, allowing the kids to write anything except for the inappropriate and potentially unsafe language. What is most intriguing, however, is my daughter’s automatic switch to another language. Since she is following the same pattern of behaviour as with other games, she simply acts as one of the residents of fictional *Jamaa*. That means she was not even thinking about using our native language (which would be Slovakian) but instead naturally started to use English. What started as a very slow process of asking me for how to write the word X in English slowly evolved into her ability to naturally (although still a little bit pidgin-style) communicate with other online players in the English language and the gradual expansion of her vocabulary – without actively learning the language in school. Javier Corredor and Matthew Gaydos explain this phenomenon in their study about how gaming communities shape second-language literacy. According to them, language learning in gaming resembles few formal school practices but shares many aspects with how language is learned by native speakers. Language development in games is situated in the social context and cannot be separated from identity development. Rather, games afford new ways to communicate and support language and identity development through bilingual interactions in online environments that are socially relevant and free from geographical constraints.³⁶ In other words, online communication with other players, in a way, substituted standard communication she would otherwise use in conversations in real life.

Another important thing is that I created an account in *Animal Jam* as well, simply because I wanted to spend time with my daughter inside of her favourite game. The language aspect stays the same – she requires me to communicate exclusively in the English language using the chat. Besides that, following the redefined role-playing behaviour as mentioned in previous chapters, she creates her own stories in this game and directs me on how to act in these and even creating the specific roles for me. For example, she climbed up the tree with her in-game polar wolf and then acted as if she has fallen – only to engage in conversation with me and asking me to heal her and take her home. Interestingly enough, other players watching our conversation joined us and started to act make-believe play in this little scene as well (what, by the way, happened more than once). Other times, my daughter created activities or situations that were replicating things that happened to us the same day in real life. During Easter, she

³⁶ CORRENDOR, J., GAYDOS, M.: Language Games. How Gaming Communities Shape Second-Language Literacy. In GERBER, H. R., ABRAMS, S. S. (eds.): *Bridging Literacies with Videogames*. Rotterdam : Sense Publishers, 2014, p. 106.

bought several eggs (thematic item available during the Easter event), placed them across one of her dens (she owns several), and directed me to hunt for them, just like my friend did the day before in real life. Examples of this kind of behaviour would be countless.

The Dark Side of *Snake Rivals*

The time has come to finally address something that could be considered as a negative effect of digital games. The competitive aspect of *Snake Rivals* revealed the true nature of continuous dying in this kind of game. Even though my daughter is rather skilled in this game and is often able to destroy other player's snakes quite effectively, the nature of this game makes her snake die all the time as well. Since she is still too young, coping with this kind of emotion is often very difficult for her and she frequently loses it, angrily shouting at the screen and even smashing things with fists. This, however, resonated in me and reminded me of my walk through the world of *Dark Souls*³⁷ – one of my favourite games. The *Dark Souls* series is well known for its hard-core difficulty and even the most seasoned gaming veterans struggle to play this game without being angry or even 'rage-quitting'³⁸ from time to time. Since my daughter still loves playing *Snake Rivals* (the desire for unlocking new snakes and their accessories is still stronger than bitterness created by being frequently destroyed by other players), I decided to let her play it, but usually with me by her side (and I don't have to even mention the fact that after joining her in the form of a snake on the same server, she started to play this game as if I was her snake-father who is there to protect her from other online players). After asking her why does she still play this game despite it makes her angry all the time, she replied that *she is simply trying to get better* at it so she could be the longest snake more often (which, again, resonated in me intensively, remembering the "Git gud"³⁹ phrase used by skilled *Dark Souls* players that is often the only advice they give to less skilled ones). During another conversation with her, she revealed to me that she also has a *long-term goal* in this game: buying one of the snakes (*Uniconda* – a snake that resembles a white unicorn) that is simply too expensive for her right now. The snake costs 3000 coins (another in-game currency), but since earning the coins is a very slow process, she simply set out on a slow and painful journey to slowly earn enough coins to buy it (to this day, she has around 2,400 coins).

Another negative aspect of this game (although not so serious in my opinion) is a simple fact that some of the rewards offered to players are obtainable only by watching an advertisement. It is a common practice of many online digital games, especially those available for *iOS* and *Android* systems. As annoyed as she could ever be by the ads, my daughter always clicks on them, knowing she is going to get another tiny number of coins so she can buy her dream snake. I tried to turn this into a great opportunity for explaining to her how advertisement and marketing work, trying to create a basis for understanding much complicated things and problems (and how to avoid them) later in the future for her.

Part 4: *A Short Hike, Numbers/Big Numbers*

This is the last group of games I created – and again a little troubling one when we look at them from the perspective of the genre. *Numbers* and *Big Numbers* are educational games created for improving math skills, using cartoon-like characters and gaming principles resembling classic digital games – only to introduce children to the concepts of adding, subtracting, counting, working with big numbers, etc. *A Short Hike* is an indie adventure exploration game in which the player takes on the role of a small bird called Claire, trying to get to the highest mountain

³⁷ FROMSOFTWARE: *Dark Souls*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Namco Bandai Games, 2011.

³⁸ Remark by the author: Rage-quit represents an abrupt abandoning of the activity or pursuit that has become too frustrating, usually associated with digital games.

³⁹ Remark by the author: Meaning "get better".

in the area – just to catch the signal of his phone to make an important call to her mother. The call itself is also a point where a player finishes the main story of this game, which then leaves them an option to play and explore the world as long as they want. This game uses 3D isometric camera view combined with pixel-art graphics, introducing cute animal characters - which creates an impression that it is meant to be played by children and younger players. Conversations with NPC characters appear in the form of text. Although only *Numbers* and *Big Numbers* are officially labelled as educational games, I believe *A Short Hike* shows the potential of virtually any game to be educational.

Numbers and *Big Numbers* (let us just call these games *Numbers*, since they are made by the same company and the latter acts as an upgrade of the former) are epitomes of educational digital games. They offer a friendly interface and simple yet charming graphics that do not push players/children too much to the idea of learning math. On the contrary, children are presented with funny gaming concepts that introduce numbers as playful characters, placed in a classic game world design. The numbers themselves, as well as concepts of adding, subtracting, and so on, are slowly introduced during the gameplay so that children still stay focused on the idea of playing the game – using these methods as a means of play, not as something they are being taught at that moment (which could effectively ruin the whole idea of the educational game). Nonetheless, my daughter figured it out very quickly anyway. It was later very interesting to watch her every time she returned to these games by herself, trying to count with the game (and using her fingers as an abacus) and then secretly looking at me, as if she was trying to determine if I am watching her and feeling good about the fact, she is trying to learn math (which, by the way, was usually true).

A Short Hike is a different story. This was the first digital game we played and finished together. Since she was not as a good reader as she is today, I had to read – and translate – all the texts and conversations in this game to her so she could understand the story. She was genuinely interested in it, simply because of the wonderfully created visuals and cute animals as the main characters. One of the main gameplay mechanics of this game is flying. The player has to jump and then float/glide until the main character reaches the ground again. Climbing is the second most important mechanic, as it allows the players to get to initially inaccessible areas. One of the items players can find, scattered across the world, is a small feather. Each of these feathers upgrades the main character's ability to jump/climb higher, thus allowing it to fly longer distances. Near the end of the game (and after a big portion of world exploration), the players are able to fly for several minutes, since they can simply jump from the top of the mountains, gaining the option to float around the whole island. One of the most interesting aspects of this game is adaptive music, changing according to the specific areas, height, and length of the gliding session. The music is greatly contributing to the whole idea of this game – namely because it can be perceived as a movie. Although the game is presented in simplified pixel-art graphics and initially resembles a game designed for children, the reality is different. The story is – at least from my perspective – one of the key aspects of this game. As I was playing through it with my daughter, I realized that sound design and music were crucial to understanding the true identity of this game. The sound design was realistic and the music highly emotional. All the conversations in the game were also constructed as if they were told by adult people – not cute animal characters. The more we delved into the game, the more serious and even existential conversations appeared in it, climaxing in the final conversation of the main character with her mother. I realized this game tells a story about death and fear of loss. The realization was even more intense for me, simply because I went through the whole game along with my daughter – which, among other things, meant I wanted and also needed to explain everything in this story to her.

The Questions Answered (and Rejection of a Conclusion)

Instead of a standard conclusion at the end of any article, I decided to conclude it by answering the questions I posited in the beginning. Since I am going to continue to play digital games with my daughter, this is going to be a life-long exploration for me – making any final conclusions in this respect would not be too clever.

What Can We Learn about Digital Games from Our Children?

There could be a lot of things to this question. I will try to address those I think are most important to me, from simple to more complex ones. First: the graphics do not really matter. The only thing that matters is fun and immersion. The language of digital games (and digital media in general) for digital natives like my daughter is something that is slowly going to be at the same level as the native language itself. Today, children are born with digital devices and they will have a completely different understanding of it as us – the people of the audio-cassette or CD era. Even with the simplest graphics, the most complex stories can be told and the most complex messages conveyed. Another way round would be to make a little consideration about all the technologies we understand as new and potentially able to alter our future (for example virtual reality). From what I know today, my daughter would still choose to spend the day outside with her friends over playing games on her *iPad*. Also, another important thing in this context would be the correlation between the extent of personalization allowed in digital games and the desire to use this as expressing oneself and identifying with a character.

What Can Our Children Learn from Digital Games?

Much of this was systematically answered in previous chapters, however, there are several things I did not mention, simply because many of these things could be perceived as trivial. Still though, some of them I will repeat, and some of them I will try to outline. My daughter understands the space much better. Not just because she has a grasp on how compass works (many of her games use maps as a means of navigation), but also from the artistic altitude. One of the biggest passions of my daughter has always been drawing and painting. After she started to play more and more digital games (2D or 3D), her drawings started to incorporate the aspect of perspective. Not only is she able to draw different kinds of animals, buildings, etc., but she often puts them in three-dimensional perspective, being able to draw one specific thing from all the possible angles. Not only this: she also started to draw stories, resembling camera frames and different types of shot views (she can clearly distinguish between long shot, medium shot, close up, detail, different perspectives of the same scene, etc.), also writing many explanations on these drawings – sometimes in Slovak, sometimes in English. What more, she has a basic grasp of 3D modelling thanks to the 3D object editor in *Animal Jam*. Without any help, she was able to build her own models of giraffe – ones that actually look like a giraffe (giraffe is one of her favourite real-life toys). Recently I have been learning how to 3D model myself (using Blender software coupled with Unreal Engine 4). When my daughter came to my room and saw me trying to model some basic shapes, she started to direct me on how to build a house for her, even using simple but corresponding terminology (she understands the concept of object rotation, scale, duplicating, etc.). There are, of course, more complex subjects our children can learn about. As suggested in the previous chapter, some digital games present stories discussing serious messages and philosophical, even ethical questions. Killing in digital games is another serious topic that could be analysed separately – my daughter's refusal of eliminating the enemies (except for competitive games) would be an interesting topic of its own since I presuppose this behaviour will change one day (let us be honest here, one of the most fun parts of many digital games is the actual combat and ways in which players are able to eradicate the opponents). Also, when remembering the dark side of *Snake Rivals* chapter, we could tell that

children can learn how to cope with their negative emotions. The online aspect of gaming creates wholly another topic we could discuss, of which one of the main elements could be the social aspect. Talking to people online – at least from the perspective of my daughter – is not too different as talking to people in real life. For example, she learned (the hard way) she should probably not shout in games (as well as in real life) after many players (including me) explained to her that the all-caps style of writing over the Internet is not desirable unless it is really, REALLY necessary (again, pun intended). One of the most important things she learned from digital games is something so simple as to be able to distinguish between the fictional story and real life. This could also apply to the violence. Since I was always there with her, explaining all the things she experienced, I have simply no reason to expect her to hurt someone only because she is obliterating people for fun in *Goat Simulator*. She understands she is playing the game and the people on the screen are computer-generated models with scripted and limited intelligence.

What Can We Learn about Our Children and What Can We Learn about Ourselves?

As I mentioned in one of the chapters, to my seven years old daughter, being in the moment is important. Her way of understanding the concept of immersion is hard to imagine since I naturally took on the way to analyse rather than immerse. One of the most important realizations I have come up with was the assurance of the fact that I can trust her. All her activity slowly leads her to learn new things, new skills, abilities, or concepts, as far as her journey throughout the digital world is accompanied by her parents. She also trusts us and she knows she can rely on us, even though it sometimes means to overcome oneself – my wife (who I never mentioned in this article, but who has been there all the time as well) recently created an account in *Animal Jam* too, just to spend time with me and our daughter. In the context of this article, this is very important – she is the opposite of a gamer, being the all-life fan of Solitaire (cards game in Windows), recently embarking on the journey of hidden object⁴⁰ games. One of the other realizations I came across during my time spent in digital games with my daughter was how limited my perception of this phenomenon is compared to hers. Although I consider myself a skilled gamer and what some theorists would call an explorer type mixed with a completionist, I often had to painfully (and quietly) force myself not to disturb her, or suggest her where to go, how to play or to notice all the visual markers the game used to indicate pickable items on the ground and so on. Leaving aside all the other ideas I could go on about, after all the years spent playing digital games with my daughter, there is one thing that I learned is *the most* important for me as well as for her. All the time I spend during the playing sessions, I am not being digital with her. I am simply being with her.

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⁴⁰ Remark by the author: Genre of casual puzzle-like digital games in which the player must find items from a list that are hidden within a picture.

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CYBERSTALKING AND CYBERGROOMING AS RISKS OF COMMUNICATION IN CYBERSPACE AND THEIR LEGISLATIVE REGULATION BY TERMS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Abstract:

The paper deals with the issue of risk factors of communication in cyberspace with specific emphasis on cyberstalking and cybergrooming and has the character of a theoretical study. The main goal of the paper is to define selected risks of Internet communication, to identify the main characteristics of e-aggressors and to determine the legislative framework of cyberstalking and cybergrooming in the Slovak Republic. The first part of the paper defines the essential theoretical background of the researched phenomena from various approaches of authors. The paper also reflects on the typology of aggressors in cyberspace and fundamental demonstrations by which are these undesirable phenomena determined. In the second part, the authors submit the legislative inclusion of the researched issue and emphasize the importance of media education, preventive activities and projects, which can eliminate dangers associated with communication in cyberspace especially in the context of children users.

Key words:

Aggressor. Cybergrooming. Cyberspace. Cyberstalking. Legislation.

Introduction: Cyberstalking and Its Theoretical Basis

In the last few decades, cyberspace and the Internet have evolved rapidly, supporting the progress in almost every segment of society. The Internet is primarily responsible for the development of global trade, progress in the field of education, healthcare and simplification of global communication.¹ Although the Internet has made many a life easier, it also provided a space for a new way of aggressive behaviour, which exceeds the boundaries of the real world. The online space has become a great environment for a new, unique type of offenders, known as cyberstalkers. The term “stalking” refers to repeated, long-term, systematic and gradually escalating harassment, that can have a lot of versions, forms and also different intensity. The offenders can stalk and harass their victim for a long period of time. When this kind of negative activity is combined with the usage of Internet technologies, we speak of the so-called cyberstalking.² The realisation of cyberstalking is easier for the aggressor than stalking the victim in real life. In the real world, offline stalking requires much more time, as the victim is being watched by the stalker at the same time and in the same place. The behaviour of the aggressor, if they dedicate a lot of their time to stalking their victim, may be noticed by their loved ones or colleagues. The risk of the offender being exposed is higher in the real world. Cyberstalkers can stalk a victim anytime and anyplace if they have an Internet connection.

Although it is obvious that the two terms are related, they are not synonyms. “Cyberstalking” represents a new form of deviant behaviour, that can be distinguished from online stalking. Authors P. Bocij and L. McFarlane mention these important differences between these two types of behaviour: the motivation of the offender, the relationship between the stalker and their victim, geographical distance and the involvement of third parties.³ In the case of Internet

¹ PITTARO, M.: Cyberstalking: An Analysis of Online Harassment and Intimidation. In *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 180.

² KOPECKÝ, K.: *Stalking a cyberstalking nebezpečné pronásledování (studie)*. Olomouc : NET UNIVERSITY, 2010, p. 3.

³ BOCIJ, P., MCFARLANE, L.: Cyberstalking: The Technology of Hate. In *The Police Journal: Theory, Practise and Principles*, 2003, Vol. 76, No. 2, p. 22.

stalking, the motivation of the aggressor is more difficult to determine. Many cyberstalkers are ordinary people who would not commit any crime in the real world and they often do not realise their negative behaviour on the Internet. In the case of offline stalking, it is more likely that the aggressor and the victim have met at least once in real life. Cyberstalking can occur without this fact, although it is possible that the participants know each other personally. The geographical distance does not represent an obstacle in cyberspace. Cyberstalkers can easily pursue someone who lives in a different country or on a different continent. The accessibility of information and communications technology (ICT) enables the cyberstalker an easier engagement of other people who have not had any experience with this kind of situation into their activity. The term cyberstalking can be generally defined as a misuse of information communication technologies and digital media to pursue an individual or a group of people. E-aggressors use the Internet as a tool for persecution, harassment, threatening and inducing fear and anxiety in their victims. They most often harass and pursue their victims on social networks using chat messages, e-mails or other applications used for communication. Messages may include different contents, sexual innuendos, threats, blackmailing, vulgarisms, etc. J. Kolouch states that cyberstalkers can be characterised by perseverance, and systematicity, while it is not uncommon that the offender has created several false identities, that they use to stalk and contact victims.⁴

However, cyberstalking is not just obsessive persecution of a chosen victim on a social network or another online platform. It has become a serious problem in recent years. The perpetrator can also transfer their activities into the real world and actually jeopardize the life of their victim. In general, it can be said, that this behaviour threatens, causes fear and interferes with the personal rights of an individual. Cyberbullying.com notes that the offenders rarely persecute people they do not really know in the digital world. Cyberstalking is much more common among people, who know each other personally or professionally. Thus, the aggressor may be an ex-girlfriend or ex-boyfriend, former friend or former employee. In many cases, the perpetrators have had access to the victims' private information in the past.⁵ On the other hand, especially in the case of famous and well-known people, the stalker may also be an unknown individual. However, they are usually a great admirer of that famous someone and has certain information from their life. According to the theory of P. E. Mullen, we can divide stalkers and cyberstalkers into several groups based on their behaviour. Below, we lay down the characteristics applicable to perpetrators in an online environment:

- *The rejected stalker* is the most common type that we may encounter. It is usually a person that starts stalking their victim after the end of their close, yet not exclusively intimate relationship. They are not able to accept the end of the relationship and their behaviour is a result of a desire to renew the relationship, or to take revenge. In cyberspace, they can attack their target with messages, e-mails, phone calls, comments, etc.
- *The intimacy seeker* is a type of stalker whose main goal is to build a relationship with the person they persecute. They expect their object of interest to like them back. From the beginning, the stalker wrongly thinks, that their victim loves them. Even though the stalked person may not respond to the offender's messages, their feelings persist. The moment they are rejected, their behaviour changes. The stalker starts to threaten the victim, tries to hurt them, denigrate them, spread gossip about them and so on. In the case of online stalking, this type of stalkers is characteristic of big fans of various celebrities.
- *The resentful stalker* tries to distress and frighten their victim. Unlike the other types of stalkers, these e-aggressors are very well aware of their behaviour. This type of action is

⁴ KOLOUCH, J.: *Cybercrime*. Prague : CZ.NIC, 2016, p. 318.

⁵ HINDUJA, S.: *Cyberstalking*. [online]. [2020-11-30]. Available at: <<https://cyberbullying.org/cyberstalking>>.

usually based on the desire for revenge. They often attack person or people (organisations), who they believe hurt or harmed them. They want to feel a sense of power and authority. In the Internet environment, the aggressor may publicly spread lies about the victim or send them various intimidating messages and threats.

- *The predatory stalker* is characterised by offensive and aggressive sexual behaviour. The primary motivation is collecting private information about a potential target, later the desire for sexual satisfaction and domination over the victim. This type of stalking may be very dangerous in cyberspace. The aggressor can manipulate their victims, for example, to send them intimate photographs, which they can then make public. Another example of this dangerous behaviour is harassment by sending the aggressor's own intimate photographs, making video calls, messages on social networks or inappropriate comments.⁶

Cyberstalking of the victim does not have to be done by one person only; it may also be a group of people with the same intention – to harm the victim or organisation. J. Drahokoupilová gives a more detailed characterisation of cyberstalkers, as well as their division into groups based on the theory of P. Bocij and L. MacFarlane. The author differentiates several specific types of cyberstalkers:

- *Vindictive cyberstalkers* frequently use threats. According to the authors, up to a third of them may have a criminal record and two-thirds have already harassed someone in the past. Their computer and digital literacy are at a medium to high level. Their characteristic actions include sending threatening messages, unsettling and disturbing images, photographs or videos. These cyberstalkers may suffer from a serious personality disorder.
- *Composed cyberstalkers* harass their victim constantly. Their goal is not to establish a relationship with the victim, but to frighten them. As in the case of vindictive cyberstalkers, composed cyberstalkers have a medium to high level of computer literacy, but they do not suffer from any kind of personality disorder. It is characteristic of them to return to persecuting the same person, after a longer period of inactivity.
- *Intimate cyberstalkers* want to establish a closer relationship with their victim. Their digital computer literacy ranges from low to medium level. They use messages, web discussion groups or e-mails to contact their victim. They are divided into two sub-groups: Ex-intimates and The Infatuates. The characteristics of these sub-groups remind of two already mentioned types of stalkers – the rejected stalker and the intimacy seeker.
- The last type of cyberstalkers is *collective cyberstalker*. It is mostly the group of people who want revenge, spread their ideology, lead a competitive struggle, profit individually or they act unknowingly.⁷

In the beginning, cyberstalking can often seem like innocent communication between two or more participants. In this case, the aggressor does not have to act negatively towards his/her victim. He/she tries to gain their trust and build a close relationship. Based on this relationship, the aggressor is able to obtain private information from their victim, which they can later misuse. Cyberstalking may not always require direct communication between the aggressor and victim. There are often situations where some victims do not know they are being persecuted online. Offenders may monitor their targets using various methods and use the information they gained for many dangerous activities, such as identity theft, which they can later misuse and turn into real crime. In some cases, the line between cyberspace and real life can get blurry. In

⁶ See: MULLEN, P., PATHÉ, M., PURCELL, R.: The Management of Stalkers. In *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 2001, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 335-342.

⁷ DRAHOKOUPILOVÁ, J.: Cyberstalking. In *Masaryk Journal of Law and Technology*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 150-151.

his study, author K. Kopecký describes the basic manifestations of cyberstalking and stalking, which are:

- *Repeated and long-term attempts to contact the victim by letters, e-mails, Internet messages, etc.* whose content may be (in the beginning) pleasant, but also offensive and intimidating. In an effort to contact the victim, the aggressor uses a wide range of emotions (threatening, blackmailing, evoking feelings of guilt, etc.).
- *Demonstration of power and strength of a stalker* that takes care to use direct or indirect threats in their messages and cause growing fear of their victim. Threats of direct violence or death are not an exception.
- *The realisation of threats.* If the attempts of the stalker/cyberstalker are failing, they may try to fulfil their threats, destroy the victim's property and so on.
- *The stalker pretends to be a victim* and acts like the victim wants revenge on them, and may file a criminal complaint against them. They try to convince society and turn it to their side.
- *Attempt to damage the victim's reputation* and denigrate them, for example by spreading false information among the victim's close relatives, friends, or colleagues. In the case of cyberstalking, the aggressor may create a fake website, where they would publish this information and spread it further via Internet communication channels.⁸

1 Cybergrooming and Its Theoretical Basis

The usage of communication and information technologies has become an everyday ritual among adolescents and young people in recent years. The emergence of new forms of cyber aggression was also a response to the popularity of social networks, websites, Internet discussions, blogs and vlogs. Cybergrooming is one of them. Cyberstalking and cybergrooming are two different phenomena; however, they share some similarities. In both cases, the offenders use digital media and information communication technologies for their attacks. Their relationships with a victim are formed mainly on the basis of an imbalance of forces and the attacks are, in both cases, usually intentional and repeating.⁹ However, unlike other types of cyberbullying, the aggressor of cybergrooming is usually an adult, while the victim is a young person, often even a child. Therefore, it is a type of aggression that is initiated by adults against minors. Of course, it is possible that adults may also become victims. J. Kolouch defines "cybergrooming" as psychological manipulation with an individual, realized through the Internet and information and communication technologies. Its purpose is to evoke a false trust in a victim and to persuade them to a personal meeting that can lead to sexual abuse.¹⁰ At the beginning, the conversation may seem innocent; the aggressor may hide their true identity, pretend to be a peer of the victim or a well-known personality. Cybergroomers try to adapt their way of communication to the age, sex and hobbies of their target in order to gain their trust. Young people can encounter cybergrooming often on various communication and information platforms, such as social networks, Internet dating sites, direct messages, or public chat. According to K. Kopecký, Internet predators may also use advertising portals, except the environment of Internet communication, to contact victims. There, they offer various work or career development opportunities (e.g. modelling). They also frequently visit websites with content that is aimed at a child user. The aggressors prefer to choose children as victims, as it is easier to manipulate them and achieve their goals. In general, it is a child that is easily

⁸ KOPECKÝ, K.: *Stalking a kyberstalking nebezpečné pronásledování (studie)*. Olomouc : NET UNIVERSITY, 2010, p. 4.

⁹ WACHS, S., WOLF, K., PAN, C.: Cybergrooming: Risk Factors, Coping Strategies and Associations with Cyberbullying. In *Psicothema*, 2012, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 629.

¹⁰ KOLOUCH, J.: *Cybercrime*. Prague : CZ.NIC, 2016, p. 312-313.

accessible and vulnerable. It is mostly signalled by the amount of shared data, information, photographs, the will to communicate with unknown people, high level of trust, communication about sensitive topics, the experience of disappointment, loneliness, the will to meet the aggressor and agreeing with the terms of meeting that were established by the aggressor.¹¹ The process of manipulation of children using Internet communication may be differentiated into several stages:

- *Preparation of the contact* – the aggressor can make the victim trust them by assuming the position of a person that understands the victim, sympathizes with their problems and tries to solve them. Cybergroomer wants to act like a good friend towards a child. They may often communicate with the child about different problems and sorrows. Widespread tactics may include creating a false identity, when the offender provides the victim with false information about themselves. The identity of the aggressor may be static or dynamic. If they use a static identity, they create one Internet profile that they use to contact victims. In the second case, the attacker constantly changes and adapts the information that they share on a fake profile according to the hobbies and interests of the victim. The aggressor may pretend to be a representative of a company that could be interesting to the victim.
- *Establishing and deepening the relationship with the victim* – the attacker constantly contacts the victim, continues to build a trusting virtual relationship. They may also start sending financial or material gifts to the victim. According to the author, an effect known as “mirroring” is characteristic of the aggressor’s behaviour. It is basically repeating and copying of interests or problems – they act as a mirror image of the victim. The goal is to create a feeling of friendship and understanding. Cybergroomers are very good “psychologists – manipulators”, who are aware of the vulnerability of their target. They try to empathetically “experience” all the stimuli with the victim. At this stage, the attacker also gains important information about the victim. After some time, they may start to send sexually explicit links to the child.
- *Preparing for a personal appointment* – at this stage of communication the aggressor has obtained all the important information about the victim and they plan their personal meeting. In some cases, the attacker may also reveal their true identity and age. An example the author provides is that the aggressor, acting as a minor, tells the victim that they can no longer use the computer but their older sibling or parent will continue the communication instead of them. If the victim refuses to meet the attacker, they start to threaten the victim by publishing the personal information or intimate photographs, that they had obtained in the initial stages of their virtual conversation.
- *A personal meeting* – can take place anywhere outdoors or directly in the home environment of the offender. The first meeting may seem innocent to the victim, so the aggressor can continue to build a trusting relationship. The child may start to believe that the aggressor wants to help them and not hurt them. The attack can occur after several meetings. Cybergroomer has a chance to sexually harass or abuse the child during these meetings. The consequences of these encounters cause many personal problems for the victims (depression, insomnia, stress, self-destruction, suicide attempts) or an inability to establish and experience a romantic relationship in the future.¹²

The main goal of the attacker is a personal meeting with the minor, with whom they build a trusting relationship through Internet communication. S. Wachs et.al. define “cybergroomer” as someone, who is at least seven years older than the victim. The victim met them exclusively

¹¹ *Kybergrooming*. [online]. [2020-12-09]. Available at: <<https://www.eisionline.org/index.php/sk/ss-zlpas-blog/94-kybergrooming>>.

¹² KOPECKÝ, K.: *Cybergrooming: Danger of Cyberspace*. Olomouc : NET UNIVERSITY, 2010, p. 5-8.

through Internet communication, where, in the beginning, the attacker was interested in the victim's personal life. Over time, however, they start to focus on sexual topics and begin to put pressure on the victim to meet in person.¹³ This process may last for several weeks or longer. Cybergroomers are extremely patient. Based on their behaviour and communication in the Internet environment, we can differentiate at least three different types of cybergroomers:

- The first type of the perpetrator has a feeling of some kind of devotion to the victim – “*Distorted Attachment*”. They have a distorted idea of their relationship with the victim. They believe that there is a romantic, consensual relationship between them and the minor. This type of cybergroomer is characterised by the fact that they do not hide their true identity, or rather reveals the true identity in a short period of time. They devote a lot of their time to communicating with the victim before a personal meeting takes place.
- The second type of perpetrator – “*Adaptable Offender*” is characterised by using multiple fake identities, adapting each identity to correspond with the interests of the target as much as possible. This type of aggressor does not have to harass the victim with indecent photographs but they consider the victim to be sexually mature.
- The last type – “*Hyper-Sexual Offender*” often harasses the victim with sexual content or messages with sexual undertones. They may have a serious mental problem or disorder. Their aim does not solely have to be to meet the minor but in particular to satisfy their sexual needs. It is likely of them to target teenage victims.¹⁴

The process of selecting a victim by the offender depends on the child's nature. Cybergroomer usually chooses a minor that can be manipulated easily. Victims with various personal problems or a feeling of loneliness are an easy target for the attackers. Often the child is unaware of the dangers of cyberspace, which is, of course, an advantage for online aggressors. According to K. Kopecký, the aggressors are most likely to choose child victims, who:

- have low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence;
- have emotional problems or problems within the family;
- are naïve and excessively trusting toward the aggressor;
- are adolescents/teenagers.¹⁵

It is much easier for the cybergroomer to contact and isolate (physically and mentally) a child with low self-esteem, or deals with various troubles within their household or among peers. The advantage of the aggressor is, of course, the naivety and trustworthiness of the victim. They especially pay attention to adolescent children. At the time when a teenager is becoming interested in human sexuality and is willing to talk about it, they become also a potential target for the cybergroomer. In many cases the child keeps the relationship with the perpetrator in secret, even though they consider it to be positive. The advantage of the attacker may also be the fact, that the child is not under parental supervision on the Internet. E-aggressors often use the specific character of cyberspace and its properties for their activities, such as supposed anonymity, disinhibitory effect, solipsistic introjection and many more.¹⁶ Among the well-known and medialised examples of cybergrooming is a case from the Czech Republic. The perpetrator, Pavel Hovorka, a porter by profession, abused about twenty young boys. In 2005, his first victim won a “Dítě VIP” competition organised by him. The prize was a stay in Prague.

¹³ WACHS, S., WOLF, K., PAN, C.: Cybergrooming: Risk Factors, Coping Strategies and Associations with Cyberbullying. In *Psicothema*, 2012, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 630.

¹⁴ *Cybergrooming*. [online]. [2020-12-12]. Available at: <<https://www.childsafenet.org/new-page-15>>.

¹⁵ KOPECKÝ, K.: *Cybergrooming: Danger of Cyberspace*. Olomouc : NET UNIVERSITY, 2010, p. 4.

¹⁶ HLADÍKOVÁ, V.: Komunikácia v kyberpriestore a jej špecifiká. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSNÁKOVÁ, L., RYBANSKÝ, R., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2018: Realita a mediálne bubliny*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 63.

In July 2005, the boy spend several days in Hovorka's work, where, according to prosecutors, he was raped by the perpetrator. Later the aggressor focused on meeting boys through Internet servers, at the beginning Hovorka was communicating only through messages and calls. Gradually, the victim was invited to the perpetrator's workplace, where the boys were repeatedly raped. Hovorka blackmailed his victims – young boys, he offered them money in exchange for sex, threatened them with exposing their sexual orientation and other personal information such as naked photographs. The court has found Hovorka guilty of seven cases of sexual abuse and thirteen cases of extortion. Hovorka denied his guilt for the whole time. He was sentenced to eight years in prison.¹⁷

2 Prevention and Legislation of Cyber Attacks

Technological inventions, websites, or social networks have changed our lives. With an ever-increasing number of users, the risk of meeting of Internet aggressors has multiplied. The web, as well as communication platforms and social networks themselves, do not currently restrict the behaviour of cyberbullies, or other users, who like to harass, stalk or harm the lives of others in any other way. Therefore, it can be stated that one of the most efficient strategies for defence against these attacks is an early prevention. The most vulnerable people in the Internet environment are young people – adolescents and children. Many of them are in constant contact with their peers and they use social networks for communication with their friends. They also share a large amount of sensitive information on the social networks. According to a 2016 survey, up to 25 % of teenagers stated that they were repeatedly bullied through phone calls, text messages, or the Internet. Furthermore, the survey revealed that:

- 52% of young people have had experience with cyberbullying;
- 11% stated that their private photographs have been published without their consent;
- 10 % adolescents have already received threatening, abusive or hateful messages;
- 55 % of all young people, who use social media, were a witness of direct online bullying.¹⁸

The following points, which are listed below in connection to prevention and protection against unwanted Internet attacks of predators may be applied to already mentioned forms of cyberbullying (cyberstalking, cybergrooming, etc.). Czech Internet portal bezpecnyinternet.cz has published advice for safe use of social networks, where it summarizes the most important information and tips for safe use of social networks in ten points:

- Do not share an address, or phone number on a public profile.
- Do not send intimate photographs to anyone.
- Keep your passwords secret and do not reveal them to anyone, no even your loved ones.
- Do not reply to vulgar, rude messages or e-mails.
- Do not arrange meetings over the Internet with unknown people, without the knowledge of someone close.
- Do not believe every information you find on the Internet.
- Terminate a conversation with someone, with who you do not want to communicate anymore.
- Do not share information, such as the holiday departure date.
- Be careful when using a webcam, the party can be recording the call.

¹⁷ *Zneužil přes dvacet chlapců, dostal osm let.* [online]. [2020-12-12]. Available at: <https://www.novinky.cz/krimi/clanek/zneužil-pres-dvacet-chlapcu-dostal-osm-let-40218520>.

¹⁸ See: MARZANO, G.: Topical Issues of Cyberbullying Prevention. In *International Journal of Interactive Communication Systems and Technologies*, 2020, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 31-50.

- Read the terms of use before confirming anything.¹⁹

Many situations in which any form of cyberbullying has taken place could be prevented, if only the user of the Internet or social networks have followed the mentioned points. Of course these are not the only ways to defend against cyberbullying. E. Hollá in this concept emphasizes: *“First and foremost it is important not to respond to violence with violence. Do not react to aggressive, vulgar and degrading messages. Many times, the person behind electronic bullying is sure he/she has hurt the victim and is waiting for a reaction.”*²⁰ Neither the child nor the teenager has to realize, that with their respond and subsequent communication with the aggressor, they are increasing the probability of becoming a victim of cyberbullying. In his study focusing on cyberstalking, K. Kopecký also emphasizes possible ways to defend against Internet persecution. He divides possible ways of defence into private and institutional. Private defence options include: breaking the contact with the offender, avoiding places, where you can meet them, trying to somehow record and document the attacks as proofs, informing a loved one, finding help, stop going out alone, having legal means of defence and mobile phone for your security and not sharing personal information. Institutional defence options include contacting professional institutions or police.²¹ Prevention of cyber attacks also lies in raising the awareness of children, and also adults, about the dangers and risks of using the Internet and social networks. Young users can be advised not to be fooled by online attackers, and to monitor for possible discrepancies (unexpected change of age). If a child is already communicating with an unknown person it is necessary and important to think about why an unknown adult would want to maintain a relationship with the child, set personal boundaries, regarding sending and receiving of sexual content, do not share personal information or photographs with an unknown Internet user, do not meet with anyone unknown without telling parents, be careful in communication with unknown users.

In the context of parents an application of media education undoubtedly comes first. There are various strategies for parental mediation and it is up to the parents, which of them they will use. The basis of media education is communication with the child about their activities on the Internet, with whom they are in contact and what kind of information and data does the child share in cyberspace. It is also important and advised to place the computer in a place, where the parent can supervise the child. Above all, it is important to inform children, in detail, about the risks of using digital media and Internet communication. A web portal bezpecnenainternete.sk has published information for parents on what to do if they find out their child is a victim of cyberbullying. It is important to be a support to the child. It is appropriate to acknowledge the child with the steps a parent is going to take in dealing with the bullying. Next, it is also recommended to keep all the possible evidence of the conversation between the aggressor and the child – all the messages, photographs, phone call recordings, etc. after saving the evidence, it is not advised to communicate further with the offender, it is best to block them and remove them from contacts. If the bullying continues, the best step is to report the user to the administrator and use the evidence gathered to resolve the incident with law enforcement.²²

¹⁹ *Rady pro bezpečné používání sociálních sítí.* [online]. [2020-12-13]. Available at: <<http://www.bezpecnyinternet.cz/zacatecnik/socialni-site/rady.aspx>>.

²⁰ HOLLÁ, K.: *Elektronické šikanovanie.* Bratislava : IRIS, 2010, p. 77.

²¹ KOPECKÝ, K.: *Stalking a kyberstalking nebezpečné pronásledování (studie).* Olomouc : NET UNIVERSITY, 2010, p. 12.

²² *Psychologička Tomková: Túžbou obetí šikanovania obvykle nie je pomsta, ale to, aby sa škaredé správanie skončilo.* [online]. [2020-12-17]. Available at: <<https://bezpecnenanete.eset.com/sk/rodicia-a-deti/psychologicka-tomkova-tuzbou-obeti-sikanovania-obvykle-nie-je-pomsta-ale-to-aby-sa-skarede-spravanie-skoncilo/>>.

3 Legal Protection against Cybernetic Attacks and Various Forms of Cyberbullying in Slovakia

Since the period, when the Internet began to be used to commit different types of negative activities, it is possible to observe a certain effort for legal regulations and possible sanctions for this type of crime. In his publication, J. Kolouch presents several documents dealing with the issue of cybercrime. One of the first documents adopted at the international level is United Nations Manual on the prevention and control of computer-related crime. At European level, the most important legal documents of the Council of Europe are the Convention on Cybercrime and its additional protocol.²³ The Additional Protocol drawn to this Convention consists of preamble and 16 articles divided to four chapters and deals in particular with the issue of racism and xenophobia spread by computer systems. According to the website of the Council of Europe, the Slovak Republic has signed the Convention on Cybercrime on the 4th February 2005. The Convention was ratified on the 8th January 2008 and entered into force on the 1st May 2008.²⁴ The Additional Protocol was signed by the Slovak Republic on the 17th December 2019, but has not been yet ratified or entered into force.²⁵ Thus, cyberbullying is not defined as a crime in the legislation of the Slovak Republic. Forms and manifestations of cyberbullying therefore usually fall under other crimes. Crimes, according to which acts of cyberbullying could be also assessed are included in the articles of the Criminal Code. The second chapter of the Criminal Code focuses on crimes against freedom and human dignity, including extortion or blackmailing (§189). Blackmailing is often used by the aggressors in cyberspace. For this crime, the offender faces a prison sentence of at least two or six years, a maximum of twenty to twenty-five years, or life imprisonment if they cause the victim a serious harm to their health. Furthermore, cyberbullying can assess to the criminal offences of compulsion (§190) and rough compulsion (§191). As in the case of blackmailing, the offender can be sentenced to a life in prison.²⁶

Cyberbullying can also lead to more serious crimes, such as sexual abuse, especially in the case of cybergrooming, where the perpetrator's motivation is a personal meeting with a person, or a child, with whom they had been communicating on the Internet for a longer period of time. Many Internet predators will use the personal meeting for sexual harassment or sexual abuse. These crimes are defined in Articles §199 to §202 of the Criminal Code. Imprisonment ranges from six months to twenty years. Abuse by means of electronic communication for the purpose of meeting a person under the age of 15 years with the intention to sexually harass them is defined in the article §201a. The sentence of imprisonment for this crime ranges from six months to three years.²⁷ Other crimes on basis of which we could also define inappropriate and dangerous behaviour of attackers on the Internet and social networks, are included in the ninth chapter of the Criminal Code. These are crimes against rights and freedom of others, namely dangerous threats (§360) and dangerous persecution (§360a). For the mention crimes the perpetrator faces the penalty of imprisonment for six months to three years. The production, preservation and dissemination of child pornography (§368 – §370) are criminal offenses, punishable by up to twenty years of imprisonment. An offender can be also imprisoned for

²³ KOLOUCH, J.: *Cybercrime*. Prague : CZ.NIC, 2016, p. 332-333.

²⁴ *Chart of Signatures and Ratifications of Treaty 185*. [online]. [2020-12-17]. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/185/signatures?p_auth=52IIThu4>.

²⁵ *Chart of Signatures and Ratifications of Treaty 189*. [online]. [2020-12-17]. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/189/signatures?p_auth=52IIThu4>.

²⁶ *Trestný zákon*. [online]. [2020-12-17]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2005-300>>.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

defamation (§373) for up to two years.²⁸ In the Criminal Code it is possible to find crimes, based on which it is also possible to assess offenses committed in the Internet environment (damage of the rights of others – §375, §376, threatening of morality – §371, §372, threatening the moral education of youth – §211, support and promotion groups aimed at the suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms – §421, §422, incitement of national, racial and ethnic hatred – §424). The solving of these serious violations is much more demanding and often overlooked. The current regulation of cyberbullying does not take the form of explicit legal regulation in Slovakia. Therefore, we appreciate the current draft amendment to the Criminal Code, which is currently in the approval process. This legislative change is undoubtedly also necessary in this pandemic period, in which our society is in. A large number of activities have shifted to the digital space, making cyberbullying an even more significant problem. The amendment to the Criminal Code, if approved, could be effective and entry into force from the 1st July 2021.

Conclusion

Children are an easy prey for Internet predators, as they are naturally easier to influence, more naïve and more curious than adults. During adolescence, they go through various periods when they feel that no one understands them, they want to belong somewhere, find a partner and make new friends. At present, this search makes it easier for them to use the Internet and social networks. Of course, the aggressors are aware of this fact and they can use it to their advantage. Therefore, it is important that children and teenagers know about the risks the communication in cyberspace and working with digital technologies bring. The most popular communication platforms and social networks are paying more and more attention to the problem of online bullying. Many of them introduce new ways to solve and better protect their users from online attacks by aggressors. However, the truth is, that much more needs to be done, especially for children and adolescents, who may be victims of cyberbullying on a daily basis. If a given company does not combine its responsibilities, it is up to the users to act responsibly and think about security in the online world. In this context it is important to emphasize the dimension of media education in the family and the constant self-education and increase of media and digital literacy especially among parents. It is the family environment that may have the most significant impact on the elimination of negative communication phenomena in cyberspace.

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²⁸ *Trestný zákon*. [online]. [2020-12-17]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2005-300>>.

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DIGITAL GAME AS AN ARTISTIC MIMESIS AND A CULT BRAND

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Abstract:

This paper will analyse the issue of the digital game as a modern art and as a brand. In the first part of the paper, the construct of culture in the context of popular culture will be preliminarily determined. Then, culture in a broader interdisciplinary sense will be considered, starting from William's theory of culture, Eagleton's perspective of culture, and Griswold's theory of the cultural object. The second part will analyse Huizinga's theory, which shows the game as the basic core of human expression, and Barthes' theory of myth on the example of the digital game *The Walking Dead*. Digital games are viewed from the aspect of marketing semiotics where they are presented as cultural brands, cultural objects, and cultural signs. Ultimately, we will implement Kapferer's theory of brand identity on digital game identity. The digital game is thus viewed as a brand, and its main characters as brand extensions. The aim of this paper is to present, research and analyse the phenomenon of digital game as an art, but also as a cultural brand. The contribution of the work is manifested in the interdisciplinary approach of cultural theory, media pedagogy, semiotics, and marketing. Digital game is viewed in the context of art where mimesis is understood as an artistic experience of reality.

Key words:

Art. Brand. Culture. Digital Game. Mimesis. Sign. The Walking Dead.

Introduction

Looking at digital games *in medias res*, the question arises: Are digital games an art? The question of art has never had an easy answer. In fact, the question of culture also has no simple answer. The term culture contains the tension between creation and creation.¹ Judging by Williams,² this is one of the most difficult questions in English, and it is very similar in most languages. The concept of culture encompasses the concepts of society, civilization, tradition, identity and even life itself. Culture is a phenomenon of human civilization that requires special attention. And it is in this attention, in this research of cultural phenomena, such as digital games, that new questions arise instead of answers. Is art part of culture or is culture part of art? Can we draw the line between art and claim that something is or is not art? On what basis do we claim that a work of art is special? After all, can we view a work of art as a product or service? If we do that, we have abolished uniqueness and put a price on the work of art. *Ars poetica* becomes *ars marketing*. A work of art, a cultural object³ of a society, is then viewed exclusively from the aspect of marketing and the laws of supply and demand.⁴ But let's get back to the fundamental question: Are digital games an art? Art is a term we associate with something that is sublime. Here we do not mean only the tragedy (*τραγωδία*), which originated in ancient Greece and has a sublime style and catharsis,⁵ but the experience of one's own self in relation to a work of art. It could be Goethe's *Faust*, Dali's *The Persistence of Memory*, Michelangelo's *David*, Bach's *Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV1068*, Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, Taniguchi's *A Distant Neighbourhood*, or the digital game *A Plague Tale Innocence*. Art is not limited to one medium, it is universal. What art has in common is the construct of sublimity, which in relational experience is recognized in the relationship between the individual and the work of art itself. Ultimately, it is necessary to reverse the

¹ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 12.

² WILLIAMS, R.: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 87.

³ GRISWOLD, W.: *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. London : Sage Publications, 2013, p. 15.

⁴ KOTLER, P., KELLER, K. L.: *Marketing Management*. New Jersey : Pearson, 2012, p. 8-9.

⁵ SOLAR, M.: *Teorija književnosti*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 1996, p. 236.

question in the introduction and ask it differently: Why do we think digital games cannot be art? The paper discusses the question of whether and to what extent digital games are an art. Specifically, can we view the digital game as a work of art? What makes a work of art so universal and what is the core of art? This raises a key question: What, other than entertainment, is behind the digital game? Don't theatre, film, comics, music, and literature also have fun elements? This brings us to the second part of the paper in which we discuss whether art, like culture, can be a product? If art and culture are products, what about the construct of uniqueness? The question of the artistic status of digital games is very complex. It is also an analysis of the society and the idea of the culture in which we live. It is not just a postmodern distinction between Culture and culture.⁶ It is a recognition of art that is above *homo faber* and *homo ludens*.

1 Analysis of Culture and Art: Digital Games as Mimesis

Before analysing culture in the context of digital games, let us briefly list a few sociological, cultural-theoretical, philosophical, and anthropological views. First, it should be noted that culture is learned selectively. Culture cannot be understood as a collection of facts, but as an interpretation of those facts. This means that the content of culture is conditioned by learning, it is selective and not determined by heritage. A culture is the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by members of a particular society.⁷ In this sense, culture is determined by society because it is shared by people in the community.⁸ However, culture is also conceptual because it encompasses certain ideas, behaviours, and attitudes. Of course, culture is also dynamic because it changes and depends on a certain period. The very idea of culture in modern society becomes a kind of substitute for transcendence.⁹ What is specific in such an understanding of culture stems from the difference between nature and culture. In the context of nature, we mean a real, organizationally determined determination that has not changed.¹⁰ This determination, in other words, means that culture must take some form¹¹ that is later introduced into a society with specific notions. In the context of civilization and culture, here we mean the spiritual, material development¹² that occurs when civilization itself becomes contradictory. What does that mean? By the phrase contradictory, we mean progress in one direction, where interest develops, and 'deprives' another interest, and only then does the value notion of culture emerge.¹³ We view such culture as a transcendent dimension of civilization, and civilization as a condition of organized social life.¹⁴

Here it is necessary to make a distinction between structure and culture. Structure is, from a sociological aspect,¹⁵ a phenomenon that creates categories. However, culture is also part of

⁶ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 50-54.

⁷ USUNIER, J. C.: *Marketing Across Cultures*. Harlow : Prentice Hall, 2000, p. 4.

⁸ WILLIAMS, R.: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 91.

⁹ SCHWEITZER, A.: *Ehrfurcht for dem Leben*. Munich : C. H. Beck'sche Reihe, 1997, p. 48.

¹⁰ EAGLETON, T.: *Culture*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2016, p. 20.

¹¹ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 13.

¹² WILLIAMS, R.: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 89.

¹³ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 14-21.

¹⁴ SCHWEITZER, A.: *Kultur und Ethik*. Munich : C. H. Beck'sche Reihe, 1996, p. 330.

¹⁵ BLAU, M. P.: *Structural Contexts of Opportunities*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 21-36.

that social structure,¹⁶ but also an experiential component.¹⁷ Metaphorically speaking, we are like clay in our own hand.¹⁸ Does this mean that culture is the totality of artistic and intellectual work that later manifests itself in the form of a cultural product? In short, yes. According to the theory of the analysis of culture,¹⁹ we observe culture through three categories: a) ideal, b) documented, and c) social. The ideal culture²⁰ represents the state of man's perfection in relation to certain absolute or universal values. In other words, such an "ideal" culture represents the relationship between discovering and describing values in works that represent a specific human condition. The second category of culture 'documented'²¹ is a set of works of mind and imagination in which the thoughts and experiences of individuals are recorded. This would mean that such a culture is a critical analysis of certain works of art because it is used to describe and evaluate the specifics of a cultural work. And finally, the third category, 'social' culture,²² is a special way of life in which certain meanings and values are expressed in institutions, behaviour, and opinion. But, regardless of the analysis of cultural phenomena, such as: digital games, movies, comics or literature, here we mean the culture of living as a cultural process. It would be more accurate to talk about the ontological status of culture because it implies its structure²³ from which, ultimately, its functionality follows. In Table 1, according to Williams's theory,²⁴ we present an analysis of digital games in the context of cultural categories, which are observed from the aspect of Barthes's myth theory²⁵ and brand theory.²⁶

Table 1: Analysis of digital games and cultural categories

Category	Ideal	Documented	Social
Characteristic	Sublime Values	Creativity, Imagination	Genre
Elements	Education, family	How to play a digital game	Stress, survival
Digital game	<i>A Plague Tale Innocence</i>	<i>The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt</i>	<i>Heavy Rain</i>

Source: Own processing.

As can be seen from the analysis of 'ideal' culture, we view culture as a sublime notion of art that Eagleton distinguishes by writing the notion of culture in capital letters:²⁷ therefore, Culture as a sublime idea, high culture, and culture as popular culture, lifestyle. According to Williams,²⁸ by the example of timeless values, and in the context of digital games, we can analyse the notion of love and family. If we accept such a culture, then the analysis is established by describing life values. In this context, *The Walking Dead*²⁹ is also a cultural construct because it describes and emphasizes the life values of upbringing, family, and sacrifice because universal digital states are portrayed in this digital game. However, according to the 'documented' category, the analysis of culture is critical because it values the

¹⁶ STOLEY, K.: *The Basics of Sociology*. London : Greenwood Press, 2005, p. 43-49.

¹⁷ WILLIAMS, R.: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York : Oxford University, 1985, p. 87-93.

¹⁸ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 13-15.

¹⁹ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61-94.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 61.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 62.

²² Ibidem, p. 62-63.

²³ BLAU, M., P.: *Structural Contexts of Opportunities*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 21-27.

²⁴ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61-94.

²⁵ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 142-147.

²⁶ For more information, see: KAPFERER, J. N.: *The New Strategic Brand Management*. London : Kogan Page, 2008, p. 171-197; KELLER, K. L., APERIA, T., GEORGSON, M.: *Strategic Brand Management*. London : Pearson, 2008, p. 42-56.

²⁷ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 46.

²⁸ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 63.

²⁹ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2019.

nature of thought and experience, form, and convention. In this context, the same digital game is still a cultural construct, but also a product³⁰ because the process of the best that is imagined in the context of media pedagogy³¹ is shown in the game. Performance in this case is a specific and recognizable way of making a digital game. Finally, the ‘social’ category clarifies the implicit and explicit values in the way of life of the main characters arising from the genre definition. However, according to the last category cited by Williams,³² we can also include the notion of cultural production because it encompasses members of society who are genre specific. In other words, such an observation of culture as a way of life, behaviour and opinion includes in its analysis tradition, society, institutions, but also the organization of the production of cultural objects.³³ What connects culture and structure can be observed according to Griswold’s Cultural Diamond.³⁴ In this context, we define Cultural Diamond as a framework of cultural relations that starts from four relations: a) social world, b) cultural object, c) producers, and d) receivers. The most important term in this framework is “cultural object” which implies a socially meaningful expression that is audible, visible or tangible or that can be articulated. We view the cultural object as symbolic elements of cultural tradition, specifically the digital game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.³⁵ It could be the game itself, the main character Geralt, a digital game publisher, author Sapkowski, a witcher wolf medallion or two swords on his back. From the aspect of brand theory,³⁶ the construct of a cultural object goes even further than the concept itself because it encompasses all elements of the identity of the brand *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, and they can be viewed according to: recognizable music, acting, script, huge world, narratological construction, appearance of the main character, complex relationships of supporting characters, specific games in the game, like Gwent. Observing the model of a cultural object on the example of a theatrical play,³⁷ the connection between the author and the viewer is identical as between the digital game and the user. It is particularly interesting that the relationship between the publisher of the digital game and the game itself depends on internal factors, and the relationship between the consumer and the world of the digital game depends on external factors. Looking at these two relationships as a production and consumer dimension, then we understand digital games in a cultural aspect.

Therefore, culture can be analysed through the emphasis on ‘ideal’ universal values, through recorded values, all the way to the effort to study the special meaning of values that allow a better understanding of cultural development. More simply, *The Walking Dead* depicts a symbol of parental care portrayed in play through the metaphor of the apocalypse. The same symbol can also be found in *A Plague Tale Innocence*,³⁸ with the role of care shifting to Amicia, unlike *The Walking Dead* where that role is taken over first by Lee and at the end of the entire Clementine series. The common motive structure, as well as the denotation level of the sister taking on the role of caring, is visible in both games. Amicia de Rune is the protagonist and primary playable character of *A Plague Tale: Innocence* just like Clementine is the protagonist and primary playable character of *The Walking Dead* series. Williams says

³⁰ JUKIĆ, D.: To Brand or Not to Brand: The Perception of Brand Image in the Digital Games Industry. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 30.

³¹ BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 38-56.

³² WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 62.

³³ GRISWOLD, W.: *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. London : Sage Publications, 2013, p. 15-24.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 94.

³⁵ CD PROJEKT RED: *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. [digital game]. Warsaw : CD Projekt, 2015.

³⁶ KELLER, K. L., APERIA, T., GEORGEON, M.: *Strategic Brand Management*. London : Pearson, 2008, p. 42-87.

³⁷ JUKIĆ, D.: Dreams and Reality in Culture Marketing: Theatre Sphere. In SOLÍK, M., RYBANSKÝ, R. (eds): *Megatrends and Media: Reality and Media Bubbles*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 425.

³⁸ ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale Innocence*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2019.

all three categories of culture should be included in interpersonal relationships. Each of the categories separately is not good, although they are in relation to each other.³⁹ To confirm this, let us analyse the digital game *Life Is Strange 2*.⁴⁰ If we look at the game only in the first category, the so-called “ideal” category (Table 1) by analysing absolute values, we come to brotherly love. However, if we perform the analysis according to another category “documented”, then we shift the focus to narration and specific visual design. Both analyses are good at the same time, but also bad because they are separate. They are good because they show what is the cultural object⁴¹ of a digital game, but they are bad because they show only one segment. The first category indicates brotherly love, respect for diversity, sacrifice, and courage, and the second a way of expressing characters, plot, and visual design. It is obvious that individual analyses are incomplete. Likewise, if we analyse only the third category, then we observe the digital game in the context of the social environment that shows a work of art. Also, in a sociological sense, the psychosocial construct of the characters and their behaviour in society is analysed. In other words, according to the third category, the emphasis in *Life Is Strange 2* would be society’s relationship to the individual.

If art is a part of society, then outside of art there is no solid whole to which we give priority.⁴² In marketing terms, we then understand art as a form of activity, like trade or production. If we single out art and culture, we notice that other cultural objects are reflected in it. This also means that the very separation of an artistic activity indicates that without that activity a cultural environment could not be realized.⁴³ Only in this sense does art express a component of structure. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish art and not to give preference to certain arts, but to study them in relation to each other. As an example of this we can cite the elements of intermediality in digital games.⁴⁴ Such a form of intermediality and intertextuality can be hidden, as in the digital game *Silent Hill: Downpour*,⁴⁵ or it can serve as a motto that appears at the beginning of each episode, as in *Resident Evil: Revelations 2*.⁴⁶ Of course, intertextuality has its origins in literature, and it is considered as a matter of text directly non-transferable to the art of digital gaming. Such forms can be a kind of homage to cultural ideas, works or thoughts that stretch in the digital game. Intermediality in the digital game has a similar premise and starts from the usability of visual and auditory elements of music, film, comics, and other digital games. Although there are common ones in digital games: parodies, imitations, travesties and pastiches,⁴⁷ this form of paratext often occurs equally in literature and film. This is, after all, one of the elements of recognizing the characteristics of a work of art because it refers to other role models. Thus, it is obvious that digital games are cultural constructs that can be analysed through all three categories,⁴⁸ but they are also co-creators of social style and a reflection of social wills, perceptions, ideologies, thoughts, and worldviews. Finally, can we view digital games as art? If we view the notion of art as a human activity in which aesthetic experience and the process of creation itself come to expression, then digital games are art. On the other hand, if we view art as an expression of human creativity in a

³⁹ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61-66.

⁴⁰ DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life Is Strange 2*. [digital game]. London : Square Enix, 2018.

⁴¹ GRISWOLD, W.: *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. London : Sage Publications, 2013, p. 15-24.

⁴² WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61.

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 63.

⁴⁴ MAGO, Z.: Easter Eggs in Digital Games as a Form of Textual Transcendence (Case Study). In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 53.

⁴⁵ VATURA GAMES: *Silent Hill: Downpour*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Konami, 2012.

⁴⁶ CAPCOM: *Resident Evil: Revelations 2*. [digital game]. Osaka : Capcom, 2015.

⁴⁷ MAGO, Z.: Easter Eggs in Digital Games as a Form of Textual Transcendence (Case Study). In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 53.

⁴⁸ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 62.

visual or auditory form, such as: painting, film, sculpture, books, and music, then the digital game can again be viewed in the context of art. Of course, if we understand art as a special form of the artist's vision and experience of the world, a kind of artefact, then digital games can still be classified in the above phrase. Of course, not all digital games are an artistic achievement, an artefact of a cultural object. To decide which digital games are art, we will first determine what makes art. Only then will we have a clear distinction between the digital game as a work of art and the digital game as entertainment. Contemporary art, such as film, comics, or digital play, can be viewed according to the dimensions of the art they emphasize. With such an understanding of art, like the understanding of Culture as an idea and culture as a practice,⁴⁹ we can analyse Art from art. Thus, we view the art of digital gaming as a) aesthetic pleasure, b) emotionality, c) artefact, and d) universality. In other words, we find a work of art in digital games in its aesthetic, psychological, humanistic, and social elements. If the game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* satisfies all the elements, and all elements of art are clearly seen according to their specifics, Table 2 provides an overview of these elements that can serve as a model for the analysis of artistic elements in digital games.

Table 2: Elements of art in digital games

Aesthetic Pleasure	Emotionality	Artefact	Universality
Landscape	Delight	Creativity, imagination	Message
Animation of characters	Sadness	Mode of execution	Idea
Mimesis	Catharsis	Intertextuality	Thought

Source: Own processing.

Art provides a certain aesthetic pleasure⁵⁰ and that is the *substantial difference*.⁵¹ We should point out that the very notion of aesthetics is used here as a feature of the properties of the creative process that derive from the beauty inherent in art.⁵² In this sense, aesthetics becomes an image of the creation of art and such beauty is determined not only on individual objects, but as a whole form.⁵³ The work of art starts from aesthetic pleasure, according to which the form itself is an important determinant of the work of art, and the work reflects all the artistic beauty. From the aspect of gamer aesthetic pleasure, one of the ways of indicators of enjoyment in digital game aesthetics is at the moment when the user still enjoys the game, listens to the soundtrack, watches movies that are intermedially related to the game or reads books that are thematically related. And just such a way of observing art is like the realm of form,⁵⁴ but still not in a semiotic sense.⁵⁵ Thus, aesthetic pleasure denotes the categories of landscape (beauties of virtual landscapes), animations of characters (facial expressions), and mimesis (imitation of nature in the broadest sense of the word). As an example, let's cite the facial expressions in *Detroit: Become Human*,⁵⁶ the landscapes in *Red Dead Redemption 2*⁵⁷ or *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, or as an overall imitation of nature.

⁴⁹ For more information, see: EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 50-54; EAGLETON, T.: *Culture*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2016, p. 149-155; WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61-94.

⁵⁰ BEARDSLEY, M. C.: *The Aesthetic Point of View*. Ithaca, London : Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 299.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 315.

⁵² MARCUSE, H.: *Estetska dimenzija: Eseji o umjetnosti i kulturi*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 1981, p. 220.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 125.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 158.

⁵⁵ BARTHESE, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 145-151.

⁵⁶ QUANTIC DREAM: *Detroit: Become Human*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2019.

⁵⁷ ROCKSTAR STUDIOS: *Red Dead Redemption 2*. [digital game]. New York : Rockstar Games, 2018.

Emotional elements in artistic digital games are manifested in the categories of elation, sadness, and catharsis. The two basic emotions of happiness and sadness that artwork contains and that it evokes in the gamer are taken over. Catharsis (κάθαρσις)⁵⁸ is set as a model of emotional influence,⁵⁹ that is, as an aesthetic purification, liberation. Emotional elements evoke empathy and are set, either as a choice, such as in *The Walking Dead*, or as a set action at the very beginning of a digital game, as is the case with *The Last of Us*.⁶⁰ Consequently, digital games like *The Walking Dead*, *Heavy Rain*,⁶¹ or *The Last of Us* confirm emotional elements, connection to the characters, gloom and sadness in a post-apocalyptic world, or happiness and purification after the game is over. The elements of the artefact start from the hypothesis that all arts are unique, original and that there are no common patterns of works of art. The characteristics of a work of art are found in Dutton.⁶² These characteristics can be summarized as aesthetic pleasure, recognizable style, emotional saturation, and intellectual challenge. It all exists in digital games. Admittedly, Dutton⁶³ lists recognizable characteristics that bring together about 12 specific qualities, categories,⁶⁴ and experiences. Works of art are usually designed to combine different experiences, perceptions, experiences, and aesthetic pleasures. Precisely because of this, the metaphor of the internal combustion engine⁶⁵ reveals to us that art, but also the artist, is not an end in itself, but in its creation of artwork it affects society and the individual. Precisely in the above, the artistic value of digital games is manifested in the combination of intertextuality and reference to other works as well as in the way of performance, the originality of the game itself, the world, the narratological composition or the way of performance. As an example, we can compare *The Last of Us*, which features artistic and technical performances, or *Heavy Rain*, which shows creativity in creating interactive drama. And finally, the fourth element we present in Table 2, shows the universality of the digital game. It is also an element that complements the theory of culture because it encompasses Culture as an idea, i.e., an artistic structure that has a message in its artistic expression, but also culture as a product of society. The best example is the analysis of *Heavy Rain* or *The Walking Dead* according to myth theory in which a deeper, denotative level of signifier is revealed. In particular, the pedagogical role of parenting and guardianship from the aspect of the father-son relationship or from the aspect of the guardian-child relationship. Also, universality as an element of art in the digital game is the very idea that is transmitted by complete realization. Such an idea can be hidden or literal. After all, the main thought can stretch, not just in one game, but in all the sequels. Eagleton says similarly⁶⁶ when he argues that culture was a way for us to embrace shared values. It is a form of universal artistic subjectivity. At that point in the consumption of artistic culture, users leave their notions and assume universal subjectivities. Thus, the view of Art as sublime and Culture as ideas, and the products of culture as brands⁶⁷ and art as commodities,⁶⁸ brings us to

⁵⁸ ARISTOTLE: *O pjesničkom umijeću*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 2005, p. 14-18.

⁵⁹ BEARDSLEY, M. C.: *The Aesthetic Point of View*. Ithaca, London : Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 301.

⁶⁰ NAUGHTY DOG: *The Last of Us*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2014.

⁶¹ QUANTIC DREAM: *Heavy Rain*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2010.

⁶² DUTTON, D.: *The Art Instinct Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*. London : Bloomsbury Press, 2009, p. 58.

⁶³ DUTTON, D.: A Naturalist Definition of Art. In *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2006, Vol. 64, No. 3, p. 369-373.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 368.

⁶⁵ DUTTON, D.: *The Art Instinct Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*. London : Bloomsbury Press, 2009, p. 97.

⁶⁶ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 50-56.

⁶⁷ JUKIĆ, D.: To Brand or Not to Brand: The Perception of Brand Image in the Digital Games Industry. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 30.

⁶⁸ COLBERT, F.: *Marketing Culture and the Arts*. Montreal : HEC Montreal, 2012, p. 17-21.

a new question. If a work of art allows us to see the world with different eyes,⁶⁹ does that mean that we experience the artist's reality as an imitation? The very notion of imitation (mimesis) is one of the mainstays in art that shows the world around us. The conception of mimesis as art arose from the understanding that philosophy is above art. In this context, Aristotle changes the meaning of mimesis⁷⁰ as an imitation of the world, which Plato otherwise considered, and presents mimesis as the artist's view of reality. In this way, the artist's view of the world can represent a new experience of reality. This, of course, agrees with Kupare's view of art,⁷¹ according to which art is the act of the creative man *homo creans*.⁷²

Works of art are created in the real world, but are the result of imagination, one's own experience of self, identity, or image of society, even if it shows the real world. In this context, mimesis can be viewed in two ways: as an imitation of the real world in a digital game or as a character from a game that serves as a personification of mimesis, i.e., a real picture of the world. So, on the example of *The Walking Dead*, we can select elements of art and categories of culture in the digital world. This means that, according to Barthes,⁷³ the myth is understood as a message. From this a myth cannot be an object, a myth is a way of signifying. Thus, it means that the myth has no substantive boundaries but formal ones. In other words, the mythical statement arises from the mimesis already shown in the digital game. In the case of *The Walking Dead*, the connotative level of the myth is Clementine growing up. In that sense, digital games can be a myth because they are suggestive. According to Barthes' theory, the myth is produced on a connotative level.⁷⁴ The connotation depends on the aspect of the vision, the culture of the user and the location. On the other hand, the user is put to the test because in the role of Clementine he chooses the world of reality with all the dilemmas, emotional elements, aesthetic pleasure and, ultimately, the message that the digital game conveys. Does this mean that monsters are scarier than digital ones, or that the real monster is hidden behind the myth of an abandoned child? Thus, the monster motive becomes a copy of the monster metaphor, and the main character from the world of imagination the personification of mimesis. Such a picture of the world shown in a digital game could not be less valuable than the real world. This leads us to the conclusion that the notion of mimicry can be different if we observe one and the same thought, image, or phenomenon within the same context of a work of art. However, mimesis contains different means of imitation, the subject of imitation and the way of imitation.⁷⁵ Therefore, digital games can be considered as work of art if they satisfy the elements of art (Table 2), but also a cultural work because they encompass categories of culture (Table 1). With such an understanding, digital play can be analysed by semiotic analysis according to Barthes theory⁷⁶ in which we view the sign as a myth and analyse the mythic structure as a message.

⁶⁹ DUTTON, D.: *The Art Instinct Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*. London : Bloomsbury Press, 2009, p. 235.

⁷⁰ ARISTOTLE: *O pjesničkom umijeću*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 2005, p. 7-10.

⁷¹ KUPAREO, R.: *Um i umjetnost*. Zagreb : Glas Koncila, 2007, p. 279-295.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 280.

⁷³ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 143-144.

⁷⁵ ARISTOTLE: *O pjesničkom umijeću*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 2005, p. 10.

⁷⁶ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 141-181.

2 Decoding Culture: Marketing-Semiotic Aspect

In postmodern society, culture is closely linked to the aesthetics of comfort, consumer lifestyle, hedonism, and the mass media. Therefore, the theory of culture is the study of the relationship between the components of a way of life.⁷⁷ Aesthetics that came to life as a perceptual experience only later specialized in art. According to Eagleton,⁷⁸ aesthetics in postmodernism understands culture as everyday life. Here it is necessary to look at culture in a broader sense because popular culture belongs to mass culture. This points us to the conclusion that culture is not a constant concept, it is a 'living organism' that is changing. The reception of cultural facilities is not the same over time. What was once a subculture for the masses is today a culture, and what is cultural today can be forgotten in the future. This is especially evident in literary works that were read in a certain period and later replaced by some others. In other words, we can dissect culture using forms of behaviour, and we analyse the content of culture itself from that meaning. Williams states similarly⁷⁹ when he claims that culture is a signifying system through which one communicates and reproduces. After all, according to the theory of cultural analysis,⁸⁰ the tradition of culture sustains development, and its purpose must not be only Culture⁸¹ in the broadest sense of the word, such culture should be studied. Therefore, 'documentary' analysis collects cultural works and displays them. However, the problem is that such an analysis leads to a social analysis because it starts from a selective tradition. The selective tradition of a period in art is different from the period itself, just as the culture of that period differs from the culture of living.

Art for art's sake (*l'art pour l'art*) does not mean that art has any special content that would go beyond human thoughts, feelings. Art cannot be just sensuality, a physical 'stimulus' of something that is pleasant in the passive sense of the word.⁸² Art must be an expression of transcendent activity, in other words, that which inspires others. The artist creates a form that is new and individual. In that sense, his interpretation is not a mimesis, but a new view of phenomena, forms, and things. In this way, the digital game becomes a new work of art that becomes a symbol of universal meaning and feelings that transcend space and time and rise to the level of art.⁸³ Art is *virtus intellectualis*.⁸⁴ According to Table 2, which lists the elements of art in games, it is obvious that all four elements are necessary to confirm with certainty, both culturally-theoretically and philosophically-semiotically, that certain digital games are artwork. According to Kupare's understanding of art and mind,⁸⁵ they are indeed essential elements of aesthetic pleasure and artefact because they emphasize the cultural component. Also, emotionality and universality are imposed as key elements in distinguishing works. Dutton⁸⁶ also cites aesthetic pleasure and specific style. However, the universality of a work does not always need to be interpreted in the context of the transmitted meaning. Of course, universality is intertwined with the idea of a work or a message, but it does not have to be hidden in a metaphorical sense. In other words, not every digital game has to have a hidden meaning to be understood as a work of art. It may have intertextuality, stylistic figures, but its

⁷⁷ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 63-64.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 41.

⁷⁹ WILLIAMS, R.: *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan : Parthian, 2013, p. 61-66.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 61-94.

⁸¹ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 46.

⁸² KUPAREO, R.: *Um i umjetnost*. Zagreb : Glas Koncila, 2007, p. 57.

⁸³ ARISTOTLE: *O pjesničkom umijeću*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 2005, p. 7-10.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 58.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 51-76.

⁸⁶ DUTTON, D.: A Naturalist Definition of Art. In *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 2006, Vol. 64, No. 3, p. 369-373.

meaning does not have to be symbolic. In particular, the digital game *Uncharted* has elements of art, but no metaphor is needed for their emotional component. Indeed, the main character Nathan Drake has a classic combination of literary and film hero with a very layered psychological and sociological component. When in the digital world there is a greater similarity between concepts, we do not need a metaphor, as opposed to less similarity in concepts, when very often an allegory, an abstraction or even a symbol is necessary. Take for example the statement: *He is Romeo*, or *She is Clementine*. The first phrase is likely to be understood by everyone, even those who have never read Shakespeare, and the second phrase can only be understood by a person who is familiar with the entire *The Walking Dead* series. This brings us to another, much more important phenomenon, and it refers to the fact that in the context of digital play, allegory is a 'fragile' symbol, more precisely a sign. When the similarity in the metaphor is so close that it gives the impression, or rather, the 'illusion'⁸⁷ of identity between the signs, then the artistic symbol appears.

We can rightly ask ourselves: Can a digital game be a sign? According to Huizinga, the game is older than the culture.⁸⁸ The game is a meaningful function and at its very core the game suggests an urge for confirmation. In other words, every game has meaning. What is the connection between the game and the culture? Game is a factor of culture.⁸⁹ First, from the very understanding of the game as something that is natural to people, i.e., the notion of play as a meaningful form of human activity. Almost all human activities are interwoven with play.⁹⁰ The game is based on the handling of certain creations, on the depiction of reality in images, shapes and meaning. Surviving moments are transformed into art forms. From this aspect, we understand the observation of digital games as culture because, not only are they a product of a cultural object, but also human action in the digital game itself is a kind of game. The connection between digital gaming and culture is understood as a higher form of gaming. However, according to Huizinga,⁹¹ the game is a free act. If it arises from pleasure, it becomes a necessity. Formal features of the game such as: freedom, cultural act, place, duration, and repeatability can also be applied to digital games. The hallmark of digital game freedom is an escape from reality, an adventure, an exit from real life into a "temporary sphere"⁹² that ultimately overwhelms. On the other hand, we understand the cultural act as another feature as a lifestyle in Eagleton's sense,⁹³ as a culture of living. And it is precisely this "ornament of life"⁹⁴ that complements life and becomes necessary. The notion of place and duration starts from the assumption that every digital game has certain boundaries of time and space. The game begins and ends, and at some point, it stops. Huizinga argues that such a game remains in memory as a spiritual creation, and it can always be repeated.⁹⁵ It is identical for digital games because they can be repeated, and this feature of repeatability is at the same time the core of the game, but also its addition. Regardless of watching the game of seduction, dance, theatre, rhetoric, poetry, every game has meaning, and at its core has elements of the unreal. It's the same with digital games. This is also the biggest problem why digital games are the subject of criticism because they start from the main element of the game: rest and entertainment. After all, according to Huizinga's theory, man is playing for pleasure and

⁸⁷ KUPAREO, R.: *Um i umjetnost*. Zagreb : Glas Koncila, 2007, p. 61.

⁸⁸ HUIZINGA, J.: *Homo ludens: O podrijetlu kulture u igri*. Zagreb : Naprijed, 1992, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 12.

⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁹² Ibidem, p. 15.

⁹³ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 41-46.

⁹⁴ HUIZINGA, J.: *Homo ludens: O podrijetlu kulture u igri*. Zagreb : Naprijed, 1992, p. 15.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 16.

relaxation, but he can also play above that level: for the sake of beauty and sublimity.⁹⁶ From the semiotic aspect,⁹⁷ structuralism has different features, but it connects the elements more than the elements themselves, regardless of whether the elements thus understood transfer meaning. Simply put, the structure of a digital game is a network of relationships that connect interdependent elements. In that sense, we are talking about the structural code, not just the semiotic structure. Also, in terms of marketing communication, we view the brand itself in a similar structural code where the brand represents meaning. This is because, according to brand theory, the brand itself cannot be meaningless, just as the structure of a sign, to convey meaning, cannot stand alone, but depends on other mechanisms (codes). In this sense, we will further observe the brand from a semiotic aspect based on the notion of a sign, which, together with associated actions, creates meaning. A brand is a sign system that engages the consumer in a symbolic process of need-fulfilment, differentiates the brand from competitors, and adds measurable value to a product offering.⁹⁸ In this sense, the digital game as a process of meaning, communication and culture represents the very object of culture. Also, a sign is not just a mirror of culture, but is a unit of culture because it forms the meaning of cultural communication. The game alludes to the biological instinct of imitation. It is precisely this way of imitating the artist that represents the mimesis of the digital game as a representation of society, culture, and a specific state. According to the semiotic understanding of the text, we understand the text as an object with a system of its own structural features that can be described by form and content. By text, we mean the content of the digital game itself. Therefore, the role of the gamer, i.e., the recipient, is in updating the text. The advantage of research is no longer the reception of the game itself, but its meaning, i.e., the functions of construction or deconstruction at the time of playing a digital game. The image of the sign itself is in constant interpretive circulation with other signs.

Metaphorically speaking, such a relationship ‘floats’ in the realm of other signs and only in interpretation does it gain meaning. The critical discourse of such an analysis can be viewed as a particular metalanguage that is useful for analysing the forms and structures of the digital game. In this context, the digital game, as a cultural and artistic work, is subject to semiotic interpretation and can be viewed as a symbol. According to Eagleton,⁹⁹ its decoding culture, but from a marketing standpoint, it’s more about double decoding. We mean the product of a specific culture and as a universal cultural object. This also confirms Williams’s understanding of culture because for him culture is the link between civilization and universal humanity. In other words, we can understand the digital game as the spirit of humanity in a specific work.¹⁰⁰ For the digital game to become a myth, it is necessary to accept the theory according to which the myth is a communication system, i.e., message.¹⁰¹ Barthes’s theory relies on de Saussure’s theory,¹⁰² implementing two levels of notation: denotation and connotation. Denotation implies a literal meaning, and connotation an associative one. According to Barthes’s theory, the myth is produced on a connotative level.¹⁰³ According to Barthes,¹⁰⁴ semiotic analysis is a trans linguistic activity that decodes codes and starts from problems of meaning. Therefore, marketing semiotics looks at multidisciplinary culture,

⁹⁶ HUIZINGA, J.: *Homo ludens: O podrijetlu kulture u igri*. Zagreb : Naprijed, 1992, p. 24.

⁹⁷ JOHANSEN, J. D., LARSEN, S. E.: *Uvod u semiotiku*. Zagreb : Croatia Liber, 2000, p. 29.

⁹⁸ OSWALD, L.R.: *Marketing Semiotics: Signs, Strategies, and Brand Value*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 41.

⁹⁹ EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 46-51.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, p. 143.

¹⁰¹ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143.

¹⁰² DE SAUSSURE, F.: *Tečaj opće lingvistike*. Zagreb : ArTresor, 2000, p. 98.

¹⁰³ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 147.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, p. 144.

consumption, and communication in the marketplace. The brand is a very complex symbol. For its positioning, it is necessary to observe it through a complete marketing mix of benefits, which we call the proposed value of the brand.¹⁰⁵ Adding symbolic meaning to brands expands the understanding of cultural brands. Postmodern marketing is the foundation of such consumer change. When a brand is a means of communication, it conveys a specific message. However, the recipient of the message receives only those brand identity elements that the sender wants. The concept of sign is observed here in accordance with de Saussure's theory.¹⁰⁶ The sign combines the term and the acoustic image into one. The sign denotes the whole, while the word signifier denotes the term, and the word signified denotes the acoustic image. One of the most important ways to create meaning in a consumer society comes from brands. Because brand meaning lies in consumer impressions, brand image becomes an important factor in analysing, managing, and understanding the core of the brand. Brand identity is intertwined with consumer identity. The emotional component of the brand is very important and even when the consumer does not like the brand it can serve as a tool with which we determine the opposite of what the consumer does not like. We perceive the brand through a set of human characteristics, which also applies to digital games. Much of the meaning is influenced by the symbols that consumers perceive. Many marketing images have no literal connection to the product. Consumers use brands to develop their social identities. Brands have learned meanings and consumers rely on the elements of brand identity that give it meaning.

Brand identity¹⁰⁷ implies constructs of personality, self-image and relationship that are, at their core, like the semiotics of the digital game. Consumers develop brand attachment, cult brands affirm the above,¹⁰⁸ and brand loyalty¹⁰⁹ also represents the denotational level of the brand sign. In other words, consumers believe, adore, and identify with the brand precisely based on the myth portrayed in the digital game. This means that the signified is, as a thing or idea we are trying to evoke in the consumer's mind a projection of the signifier. Semiotics plays a central role in much of the newer challenging theory of consumer behaviour.¹¹⁰ Thus, we view the digital game as a specific brand that uses elements of semiotics, but also elements of integrated marketing communication.¹¹¹ New relationships are created between the digital game and the image by creating new connections between the brand and the benefits. Characters such as Geralt of Rivia, Nathan Drake, Clementine, Ezio Auditore da Firenze, John Marston have 'artificial' associations between symbols and the real world. However, these associations represent the mythological construct of the digital brand. These are cult brands that, with their recognizability, have created the worlds of other brands, opened the way to intermediality and created a community of consumers. Individual characters, such as Geralt, may appear in other games as bearers of the brand extension. Barthes developed his semiotic analysis of the sign systems of culture precisely according to de Saussure's theory. However, according to Barthes's theory of sign analysis, the possibility of hypothetical levels of meaning enters both 'above' and 'below' the sign. From a marketing semiotic point of view, structure and codes are the main problems of the semiotics of the digital game sign in

¹⁰⁵ KOTLER, P., ARMSTRONG, G.: *Principles of Marketing*. New Jersey : Pearson, 2007, p. 231-238.

¹⁰⁶ DE SAUSSURE, F.: *Tečaj opće lingvistike*. Zagreb : ArTresor, 2000, p. 98.

¹⁰⁷ KAPFERER, J. N.: *The New Strategic Brand Management*. London : Kogan Page, 2008, p. 171-197.

¹⁰⁸ ACOSTA, P. M., DEVASAGAYAM, R.: Brand Cult: Extending the Notion of Brand Communities. In *Marketing Management Journal*, 2010, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 168.

¹⁰⁹ AAKER, J. L.: Dimensions of Brand Personality. In *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1997, Vol. 34, No. 3, p. 347-356.

¹¹⁰ SOLOMON, R. M. et al.: *Consumer Behaviour, a European Perspective*. Hoboken : Prentice Hall, 2009, p. 136.

¹¹¹ KESIĆ, T.: *Integrirana marketinška komunikacija*. Zagreb : Opinio, 2003, p. 28-34.

relation to the representation system and its decoding. Let us compare Figure 1, which shows the meaning of the small, helpless Clementine, with Figure 2, which shows a slightly older Clementine who has now taken on the role of guardian.



Figure 1: Clementine in First Season TWD

Source: Author's screenshot taken from: TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2014.



Figure 2: Clementine in The Final Season TWD

Source: Author's screenshot taken from: TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2019.

As can be seen from Figure 1 and Figure 2, the focus is on the main character of *The Walking Dead* series which follows the growing up, maturation and metamorphosis of a small insecure and helpless person to a safe, self-aware, and responsible person. From the marketing aspect, all forms of brand identity elements¹¹² are retained in both examples, specifically the baseball cap, T-shirt, graphic presentation, voice acting, as well as the complete attitudes, behaviour,

¹¹² AAKER, D, A.: *Building Strong Brands*. New York : Free Press, 1996, p. 27.

and perceptions of the main character. Also, the narratological structure is deepened with elements of reminiscence, homage, intertextuality and creating the identity of the main character as the bearer of the whole, not only digital game, but also the label of the corporate brand. At the same time, it is possible to create a brand extension in which the character of Clementine can appear as a separate brand, a cameo character in another game or as an accompanying brand. From a semiotic point of view, Figure 1 shows an insecure, frightened Lee-dependent child who, according to Barthes's myth theory, can be interpreted as a connotative sign of growing up, while in Figure 2 the complete structure is repeated and rounded because now Clementine takes on the role of caring person who takes care of a small child. It is interesting that according to Huizinga's theory, we come to a complete whole here because we can repeat the game, reinterpret it, but also present it as a pleasure. What was in the first season is rounded off in the symbolism of life, as it is portrayed as a connotative sign of maturing and growing up. At the beginning of the first season, in the first episode, Clementine appears in a scene with a tree house, and in the last season she appears in the car holding the steering wheel firmly.

Conclusion

The value of digital games from a cultural and artistic aspect is unquestionable. Of course, we need to be aware that not all digital games have artistic value, like all movies, music or books are not art. Digital games can be analysed and interpreted from the aspect of art only if they show all four elements of art listed in Table 2. Accordingly, digital games are subject to interpretation that is characteristic of cultural-theoretical models. Such an understanding of digital games opens a place for: anthropological, psychological, social, pedagogical, literary, and semiotic interpretations. The paper presents the digital game as a cultural value of modern society, but also as an artistic artefact that represents a cult brand. Digital games are also a cultural object because they create a community of gamers, researchers, cultural-theoretical analysts, society and generate an economic climate for the development of other activities. In particular, the development of digital games not only enriches the cultural environment of society, but also develops other related activities such as: film, music, literature, cultural industry, and has a long-term impact on the development of society through synergy of marketing, trade, logistics, but also affects informatics and finance. Digital games, from a marketing point of view, share a common premise of brand identity because by creating recognition, reliability, and quality. Digital game creators not only develop a cultural icon, but they also develop a brand that 'lives' in the consumer's mind for many years and even the brand does no longer exists. The digital game in postmodernism very easily becomes a brand with all the peculiarities of brand theory such as: attachment, personality, market value and the like. Finally, the paper interdisciplinary presents the digital game as an artistic artefact that has elements of mimesis because it mimics reality, but, at the same time creates a new, digital reality. Also, the power of digital gaming is manifested, not only in beautiful visual landscapes, social entertainment or escape from reality, but in the very core of game theory, according to which it is the "ornament of life". Precisely, such a spiritual creation, a factor of the culture of modern society, which arises from pleasure and turns into a primordial need, represents one of the ways of semiotic communication.

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WHEN GAME IS THE EXERCISE AND EXERCISE IS THE GAME: DESIGN ANALYSIS OF RING FIT ADVENTURE

Miroslav Macák

Abstract:

During the lockdown, it can be hard to keep up a healthy lifestyle. There is a plethora of peripherals and exercise routines, but it can be hard to stay motivated in keeping up with them, especially for someone, who had no prior experience with routine exercise. Even though combining gamification, or even digital games themselves with fitness activities is not a new concept, the game from Nintendo, Ring Fit Adventure, managed to strike a surprising balance, that is new to this sphere of media. It is both an effective fitness training tool and engaging and fun digital game. The paper aims to explore the digital game design choices of Ring Fit Adventure and assess, how effective they are in keeping the players motivated to exercise, as well as how well they work as game mechanics on their own.

Key words:

Active Lifestyle. Exergaming. Fitness Games. Game Mechanics. Nintendo. Ring Fit Adventure.

Introduction: Digital Games for Healthier Lifestyle

Digital games are rarely connected with health benefits. On the contrary, they are mostly seen as an activity that requires the player to sit in one place for prolonged amount of time. And while that is undeniably true in most cases, there are digital games and applications that go against this principle and require their players or users to engage in physical activity. Nowadays, we can routinely see gamified applications in daily use. People wear smart-watches connected with their smartphones, that track their physical activity and they gain points by reaching certain goals. However, there is also a sub-set of dedicated digital-games that aim to directly or indirectly improve physical activity and well-being of their players. This branch of digital games is called “exergaming”, and it focuses on combining gameplay experience with exercise or active body movement. Exergaming can be seen as an innovative and exciting strategy to increase physical activity and reduce obesity.¹ It not only provides substantial activity, especially for people not used to traditional exercising, but also a form of appealing entertainment. Exergames and their innovative approaches to exercise has even been discussed as having a potential in schools during physical education, as enriching addition.² While “exergaming” was not a well known concept among general public until recently, Arto Laikari in his paper from 2009 stated, that “*recent product releases by game console manufactures and exercise companies have shown that the exergame market is open and consumers are willing to adopt these new concepts in to use*” as well as predicted emergence of promising business opportunities within five years of its publishing.³ This prediction was right to an extent, albeit the biggest impact on the appeal of exergaming can be attributed to the widespread of COVID-19. People were looking for ways to exercise within their homes, and these digital games provided just that. In this paper, we will be taking a look at the current exergaming hit, *Ring Fit Adventure*.⁴ We will examine how well this title blends the active and the ludic, as well as compare its design principles with prior exergames.

¹ SWEEN, J. et al.: The Role of Exergaming in Improving Physical Activity: A Review. In *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2014, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 869.

² Should “Exergaming”, or Interactive Video Technology, Be Included in Physical Education?. In *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 2009, Vol. 80, No. 1, p. 13.

³ LAIKARI, A.: Exergaming – Gaming for Health: A Bridge between Real World and Virtual Communities. In *IEEE: 13th International Symposium on Consumer Electronics (ISCE)*. Kyoto : IEEE, 2009, p. 665, 668.

⁴ NINTENDO EDP: *Ring Fit Adventure*. [digital game]. Kyoto : Nintendo, 2019.

1 Exergaming: What Worked Out and What Did Not

Roots of exergaming can be traced to the second console generation, consisting of alternative controllers for *Atari 2600* (*Foot Craz*, *Joyboard*), followed by *NES Power Pad* and *Roll & Rocker* during third console generation. Fourth console generation also had its share of motion-based controllers, e.g., *Sega Activator*. Ian Bogost states, however, that pre-history of exergaming can be dated even further back to the age of arcades. His reasoning is, that arcade cabinets were made to be played standing upright. Players not only had to stay stationary for up to 30 minutes at a time, but they also had to commute to the arcades, often by bicycle or on foot.⁵ The aforementioned early attempts can be considered failures, because of a few factors. The technology was still in the experimental phase and player inputs were often wrongly registered, or not registered at all. Another major reason is, that these peripherals were marketed for general use with any game on the console. Instead of enhancing the experience, they proved a hinderance to the players, who were not able to control the games properly and could quickly get frustrated with the control setup.

A breakthrough in exergame design came in a form of *Dance Dance Revolution*⁶ by *Konami*. A dance pad with arrows corresponded with on-screen commands and players had to put their feet on arrows shown on screen. The dance pad was not made as an all-purpose controller, but rather as a peripheral for specific game, that could not function without it as intended. The series is still popular to this day, with sizable cult following and dedicated fans. DDR set up the precedence of paired game and peripheral. This became a trend during sixth and seventh console generation, alongside rise of motion-controls and movement capture technologies. *PlayStation Eye Toy*, and *Xbox Kinect* used their proprietary cameras to track movement of the player, which in turn affected played games. Instead of a single game, however, these peripherals had their own dedicated catalogue of titles. While less problematic than all-purpose controller, there were still quality concerns regarding those titles. Those with lesser budget were often marred by technical issues, most often bad input and command recognition. So-far exergaming was highly experimental, yet highly problematic and was often connected with aforementioned issues.

The precedence was somewhat changed by the success of *Nintendo Wii*. The console broadened the range of console players by being accessible to casual players.⁷ The console was built with motion-controls in mind, so to that end, most of its library could be considered exergaming to a degree. However, its dedicated first-party exergame, *Wii Fit*⁸ was a major financial and critical success, selling over 22 million copies.⁹ It was also third best-selling *Wii* game that was not bundled with the console. While not the first fitness-dedicated digital game, it was headlining such a widespread success and showed mainstream potential of exergaming. Outside of standard *Wii Mote* controller, the game used *Wii Balance Board* that could track weight and pressure. *Wii Fit* consisted of interactive exercises, that could be divided into four categories: aerobics, balance games, strength training and yoga. They could

⁵ BOGOST, I.: The Rhetoric of Exergaming. In *Digital Arts & Culture 2005 Conference: Digital Experience: Design, Aesthetics, Practice*. Copenhagen : IT-University of Copenhagen, 2005. No pagination. [online]. [2021-07-11]. Available at: <<http://bogost.com/downloads/I.%20Boogst%20The%20Rhetoric%20of%20Exergaming.pdf>>.

⁶ KONAMI, BEMANI: *Dance Dance Revolution*. [digital game]. Ginza : Konami, 1998.

⁷ For more information, see: JUUL, J.: *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2009.

⁸ NINTENDO EAD: *Wii Fit*. [digital game]. Kyoto : Nintendo, 2007.

⁹ *Top Selling Title Sales Units*. [online]. [2021-07-11]. Available at: <<https://www.nintendo.co.jp/ir/en/finance/software/wii.html>>.

be further divided into two groups: minigames, that used player avatar (*Mii*) and had more playful tone; exercises, where the player had to follow on-screen instruction of *Wii Fit Trainer* (grey female figure without prominent facial features). The tone of aforementioned activity groups was somewhat clashing, but it did not deter from the overall success of the game. Later on, *Wii Fit* received an expanded successor in form of *Wii Fit U*¹⁰ for *Nintendo Wii U*. The legacy of this franchise is also visible in the cross-over fighting game series *Super Smash Bros.* (*Nintendo*, 1999 – present), where *Wii Fit Trainer* was introduced as a playable fighter in the series fourth iteration and is also present in the latest entry.

Digital games as a form of physical activity were established even further by success of augmented reality game *Pokémon GO*.¹¹ While the game itself does not provide direct physical exercises, it requires its players to move to the points of interest. There have already been studies conducted in regards to *Pokémon GO* and its impact on well-being. A study by Tim Althoff et al. points out that an engaged user can increase their average physical activity by 26%.¹² The biggest help to *Pokémon GO* was undoubtedly its brand recognition, as *Pokémon* is currently highest grossing multimedia franchise. However, with the spread of COVID-19, the game had to undergo several changes to stay relevant and fun during the plethora of lockdowns and social isolation.¹³ This time period helped our analysed title, *Ring Fit Adventure*, as people were looking for entertaining ways to stay active while indoors. The interest in the product was so high, that the game was even sold out globally for a time during the pandemic.¹⁴ In the next chapter, we will be looking at aspects that helped solidify *Ring Fit Adventure* as the go-to exergame during the pandemic.

2 Ring Fit Adventure, Putting the Game in Exergaming

As we have stated in previous chapters, *Nintendo* has a sizable history with fitness oriented digital games and accessories, however, the main design flaw of their prior production is, that they feel more like a training and less like a game. *Ring Fit Adventure* rectifies this in a plethora of ways. In the following text, we will analyse game design choices present in the title and explain how they are intertwined with the core fitness aspect of the game. Similar to their previous games, *Ring Fit Adventure* has its own mandatory peripherals. The titular ring controller addon, into which the player slides their *Joycon* controller. It then senses both pushing and pulling force on the sides of the ring, as well as any motion done with it (whether circular motion akin to moving the car wheel, or moving the whole controller around). Second peripheral is a cloth strap, into which player places their other *Joycon* and attaches the strap to their leg. This helps with detection of any leg movements, such as walking, running or squatting. Said peripherals work exclusively with *Ring Fit Adventure* and at the time of writing of this article, there is no other software compatible with them. To navigate the menu

¹⁰ NINTENDO EAD: *Wii Fit U*. [digital game]. Kyoto : Nintendo, 2013.

¹¹ NIAN TIC, NINTENDO, THE POKÉMON COMPANY: *Pokémon GO*. [digital game]. San Francisco, Kyoto : Niantic, Nintendo, 2007.

¹² See: ALTHOFF, T., WHITE, R. W., HORVITZ, E.: Influence of Pokémon Go on Physical Activity: Study and Implications. In *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2016, Vol. 18, No. 12, p. 1-8. [online]. [2021-07-11]. Available at: <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5174727/>>.

¹³ For more information about *Pokémon GO* changes during the pandemic, see: MACÁK, M.: How Pokémon GO Deals with COVID-19: The Lockdown Conundrum. In K VETANOVÁ, Z., BEŽÁKOVÁ, Z., MADLEŇÁK, A. (eds.): *Marketing Identity COVID-2.0*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2020, p. 374-384.

¹⁴ SARKAR, S.: *Ring Fit Adventure Is Sold Out Everywhere, Nintendo Confirms*. [online]. [2021-07-11]. Available at: <<https://www.polygon.com/2020/3/13/21177214/ring-fit-adventure-sold-out-stock-coronavirus-nintendo-switch>>.

players can either use motion controls, or they can use standard controller slotted into the ring. During the active gameplay, motion control is mandatory.

The most immediate thing players can observe is the overall aesthetics. Previous fitness games from *Nintendo* (and most exergames in general) mostly utilized clean and to-the-point look consisting of singular colours and geometrical shapes. This gave out serious, but a bit sterile look to those games. *Ring Fit Adventure* on the other hand provides players with colourful and vibrant world right off the start. The game no longer takes place in a single fitness room, but is instead set in a semi-linear cell-shaded world. The scenery itself varies between different environments, such as grasslands, forests or rocky canyons. Call-backs to the older visual style of *Nintendo* fitness games can be seen in instructional videos that are aimed to show the player what to do and how to do it. In those a faceless silhouette of a person called Tipp demonstrate what the player should do in front of a plain white background. After the initial setup, the game starts up with an introductory cutscene, that provides the player their first motivation to embark on the adventure and also introduces the main cast of characters. The story itself is simple for everyone to follow, yet characters are charming enough to keep the player's interest. A player character finds a sentient magic ring, interacts with it and releases a demon Dragaux, that was sealed within. Afterwards, player character is tasked with defeating said demon and recovering the rings powers. Players slowly uncover, that Dragaux was once rings friend, but was possessed by a dark power, and thus ring wants to save him from its influence. Dragaux also keeps taunting the player between levels and during encounters, so to keep player motivated to defeat him. Prior exergames were heavily focused on the exercise itself, and seldom incorporated any story elements.

Players also have opportunity to customize their avatar. The first part of the customization happens at the start of the game. At that point, the player can choose whether the character will be male or female, as well as their skin and eye colour. At this point, a voice of the ring can also be chosen (masculine or feminine). This customization is very rudimentary, but despite that, it allows player to better identify with their avatar. At later point in the game, additional equipment can be obtained either by purchasing from in-game shop or as a reward for completing tasks. There are three equipment slots that player can utilize; upper body, lower body and shoes. Equipping any piece of clothing also changes the appearance of the avatar. Mixing and matching equipment depending on the looks is, however, not advisable, as each piece of equipment has specific stat and some are mathematically better than others, so if a player finds a piece of clothing that they like a look of, they may be discouraged to equip it, as it may decrease their character performance.

The main gameplay-loop is centred around Adventure Mode. Here, the player follows the story on a semi-linear level-select maps. Most of the levels consists of two portions, running and fighting. Player character is placed on a linear trail and in order to move forward, the player, equipped with motion-sensing controllers must run in place, so the character can mimic players movements. The standard running is altered in some parts of the game, so as to imitate player running up the stairs, through water or against moving conveyor belts (the game provides silent mode for running portions, and requires lighter movements). Later on, the level-traversing is expanded even more by adding alternative movement methods, such as kayaking across the water (player has to press the ring against his abdomen and swing from side to side), sliding on ziplines (player has to press and hold the ring above the head), jumping across ravines using swings or jumping-pads (player has to do squats), etc. Outside of running, player can utilize the titular ring to interact with the environment. By pressing the ring, player avatar shoots out a gust of wind, that can be used to break crates which contain

items and currency or open doors. Alternatively, player can aim the ring downwards before pressing to have his avatar propel itself into the air. This can be either used to avoid obstacles, reach bonus items or get to alternative paths. Thus, player is encouraged to pay attention to the surroundings while exercising, as most of the items are not directly on the main path. Furthermore, by pulling on the ring, player avatar vacuums the surrounding areas and obtains all items within reach. While running on the trail, enemies are displayed as white ghosts and when player avatar collides with them, they enter the battle screen akin to the one that can be found in traditional turn-based JRPGs. During the battle, the player chooses from various attack to defeat the enemy group in the most efficient manner. Every attack is colour-coded and specific colours represent a certain body area or a type of exercise that will take place during the attack (red – arms, blue – legs, yellow – torso, green – balance). After selecting the attack, the player has to perform selected exercise certain number of times, depending on their difficulty setting. The damage they deal depends on how well they follow the instructions. During the enemy turn, the player can mitigate (and later on even avoid) damage taken by pressing the ring against their abdomen. Most enemies are also color-coded and, after unlocking the ability, using the attack of the same colour as the enemy deals increased damage. This can also be described as a simplified system of ‘elemental weaknesses’ that is a staple in many modern JRPGs; for example, used in *Pokémon* (Game Freak, 1996 – present) and *Megami Tensei/Persona* (Atlus, 1987 – present).

Similarities with role-playing games do not end there. Player character gains experience points for every action they partake in. After reaching a certain threshold, they earn a level. Levelling up increases attack power, defence and occasionally awards additional point of health. Furthermore, in the later parts of the game, player gets access to an expanding ‘talent tree’. After that point in game, each level also awards a talent point, which, alongside the in-game currency, can be spent to unlock bonuses from the tree. They vary from passive attack and defence bonuses, through new attacks to unique bonuses, such as chance for extra turn after using attack of a certain colour. Through these talents, in combination with equipment, the player can customize their play experience according to the playstyle that suits them the most. This progression system is thus much closer to traditional role-playing games, than other exergames.

Various minigames are present through the entire game. When a player finds a chest in the level, they have to open it by doing squats, or in some cases, the chest can be a ‘mimic’¹⁵ and player has to catch it first, before opening it. Some minigames even take place as their own separate levels. They are score-based exercised, where player has to do designated task within a time-limit. They are usually variations for general exercises with unique visual setting. They can either ask player to do variations of squats, press on ring to shoot air blasts into targets, or just do a set of exercises as well as possible. These are not mandatory to proceed in the story, but they award player with currency or items. Players can also craft consumables (smoothies) from items collected during gameplay or bought in store. Their effects vary from a simple healing item to changing all attacks to a selected colour. Their crafting is also combined with a small minigame, where the player has to press on the ring to ‘squeeze’ the fruits and vegetables into the smoothie. Crafting is a standard part of modern digital games. *Ring Fit Adventure* expands upon standard formula of collecting resources and turning them into items by adding a physical interaction into the process. Crafting smoothies can also be seen as encouraging the player to healthier eating, as they are mostly crafted from fruit and vegetable

¹⁵ Remark by the author: Mimic is a trope in fantasy media (mostly games). It is a creature disguised as a treasure chest, or other mundane object. Upon interaction, it attacks the character. *Ring Fit Adventure* breaks this trope by having the chest run away from player instead.

and are shown as beneficial to the player's avatar. There are even some unconventional combinations, that can make the player think more creatively about their foods. Outside of the Adventure Mode, there are additional modes where players can choose specific exercises, or a rhythm minigame. These, however, are optional and many players may not even find it necessary to try them out, as Adventure Mode provides enough gameplay and exercise experience.

Conclusion

Ring Fit Adventure has been great financial success so far, selling over 10 million units, with 7 million of those being sold from April 2020 to March 2021.¹⁶ This success can hardly be called unfounded. *Ring Fit Adventure* was the prime exergaming title available during the COVID-19 pandemic. The game does not only feature exercise activities for the sake of exercising, but embellishes them in such a way, that creates intriguing and entertaining gameplay. Exercise minigames, that are usually the main feature of exergames are just a part of larger ludic experience in *Ring Fit Adventure*. The game combines motion controls and fitness accessories standard for this type of games with elements of role-playing digital games, such as character customization, gaining power through levelling and turn-based battles as seen in Eastern works. Defeating an enemy with exercise also provides positive feedback, which simulates, that the player defeated the enemy with his own strength. The systems are deep enough to engage a core player, yet they are unveiled one at a time with substantial time gaps in between, that allows even casual players to learn and master them. Both fresh and playful story and visual style help the game to stay appealing even after prolonged periods of time and variety of activities make prolonged play-sessions more enjoyable. *Ring Fit Adventure* is a game that helped many people stay active during the lockdown, or even introduced exercising to core and hardcore digital game players. It blends well both exercise and gaming, thus it can be seen as exemplar exergame. It does not fall behind on neither of them, which is a rare trait for this type of games. It is indeed a game, that became the exercise, and exercise, that became the game.

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¹⁶ DENZER, T. J.: *Ring Fit Adventure Has Sold 10 Million Copies Since Launch*. [online]. [2021-07-11]. Available at: <<https://www.shacknews.com/article/124238/ring-fit-adventure-has-sold-10-million-copies-since-launch>>.

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REFLECTION OF MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN GAMES IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT AND UPCOMING MEDIA TRENDS

Zdenko Mago

Abstract:

Spider-Man, as one of the most famous and popular comic superheroes, has been adapted into digital games since the early 1980s. Recent movies about (or including) Spider-Man paid even more attention to this superhero, making him an eventual centre in the further development of pop-cultural artefacts. The study analyses digital-game adaptations of Spider-Man in order to reflect current and upcoming trends within media set by popular culture, including the impact of license rights ownership and the forthcoming plan of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The study focuses particularly on aspects concerning the cross- and transmedia storytelling and in-game advertising, or rather its absence, in Marvel's Spider-Man digital games as possible indicators of these trends, while applying the gaming platform to analysis as an additional factor.

Key words:

Digital Games. In-Game Advertising. Multiverse. Popular Culture. Spider-Man. Superhero.

Introduction

The first synergies of comics and digital games are not obvious but played an important role in game development origins, particularly concerning an effort to implement the narrative component into gameplay. Retail boxes with digital games included short-range comics, which provided narrative anchoring or introduction to games unable to present stories due to graphic and processing limitations. Later, comics' tie-ins were also sold separately to bridge the narrative gap between digital game sequels or to expand game stories via transmedia narratives and media crossovers. From a structural/design point of view, the comic format belongs to common forms of digital game cutscenes (e.g., *Max Payne*)¹ and even gameplays (e.g., *Comix Zone*),² and vice versa, game tropes are applied to comics narratives (e.g., the *Scott Pilgrim* series). Sharing the same platforms of consumption and distribution led to hybridizing comics and games to the creation of hypercomics and comics games (e.g., *Redhawk*).³ Simultaneously, digital games based on successful comics series and comics based on successful digital game franchises began to appear.⁴ The last one is, perhaps, the most important relationship because the frequency of creating game adaptations of comics is even today still increasing, particularly due to the increasing cultural, media, and economic importance of the superhero thematic.⁵ Since the first superhero digital game *Superman*⁶ from 1979, a number of others were developed and published. Significant resurgence nowadays came with *Batman: Arkham*⁷ series and later

¹ REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT: *Max Payne*. [digital game]. New York : Gathering of Developers, 2001.

² SEGA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE: *Comix Zone*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Sega, 1995.

³ SILHOUETTE SOFTWARE: *Redhawk*. [digital game]. Melbourne : Melbourne House, 1986.

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⁵ For more information, see: RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Teoretické aspekty filmov o superhrdinoch*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 145-149.

⁶ ATARI: *Superman*. [digital game]. New York : Atari, 1979.

⁷ ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS et al.: *Batman: Arkham (Series)*. [digital game]. Burbank : Eidos Interactive, 2009, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, since 2009.

*Marvel's Spider-Man*⁸ which is also the current culmination of dozens of titles adapting this comics superhero since 1982.

The study aims to reflect Spider-Man's digital games in the context of current and upcoming media trends and determine their impact on media production within popular culture. To achieve this goal, we utilize a combined method of qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis carried out within two analytical categories: cross- and transmedia storytelling and in-game advertising. At the same time, we apply an additional factor concerning the availability for gaming platforms across the analysis because it has cross-sectional effects. The research material consists of the two latest Spider-Man games, *Marvel's Spider-Man* and *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales*,⁹ which highly reflect the current digital-gaming sector and popular culture, and according to the market, critics, and users belong to the best digital games ever based on comics. Overall, this issue is even more current and gaining in importance with the fact that Spider-Man and parts of his universe, or rather the multiverse, are the planned foundations on which the forthcoming phase of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) are now being built.

1 Spider-Man and Digital Games

Comics superhero Spider-Man first appeared in Marvel's *Amazing Fantasy #15* in August 1962, created by Stan Lee and illustrated by Steve Ditko. He received his own series, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, launched several months later in March 1963, and became the comic book superstar of the '60s. According to S. Mondello, Spider-Man became widely popular due to his characteristics. As a human, his age and the common problems associated with it appealed to young readers, who could identify with it. As a superhero, he has unique skills, compared to other comics superheroes, and represents an 'American patriot'.¹⁰ In addition, like many others (e.g., Superman, Batman), he is an orphan who became a superhero, however, he lives, attends school, and fights crime in New York City, not in a fictive city like Metropolis or Gotham City.¹¹ The first game adaptation of Spider-Man the superhero, titled *Spider-Man*,¹² was created by Parker Brothers in 1982 for the Atari 2600. Similar to most other very first comics adaptations, this game used abstract variations of the comics' motifs that turned into simple ludic forms, in this case, mechanics typical for vertical scrolling action games. Efforts to also adapt superhero comics' narrative patterns into gameplays occurred later.¹³ The next 18 Spider-Man titles were created by various developers and publishers for various platforms, but since 2000 the situation has changed, again with a game entitled *Spider-Man*.¹⁴ According to D. Mieth, in many ways, this game "provides a rough blueprint

⁸ INSOMNIAC GAMES: *Marvel's Spider-Man*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

⁹ INSOMNIAC GAMES: *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2020.

¹⁰ Remark by the author: Among other things, like other solely morally 'good guy' heroes, Superman and Captain America, the original Spider-Man costume also consists of blue, red, and white, the colours of the United States flag.

¹¹ MONDELLO, S.: Spider-Man: Superhero in the Liberal Tradition. In *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 1976, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 232-234.

¹² PARKER BROTHERS: *Spider-Man*. [digital game]. Beverly : Parker Brothers, 1982.

¹³ RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N.: Comics and Videogames. In RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N. (eds.): *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*. London, New York : Routledge, 2021, p. 1.

¹⁴ NEVERSOFT: *Spider-Man*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2000.

for modern superhero games like *Batman: Arkham Asylum (2009)* that introduce their own universe while referencing previous iterations across various media”.¹⁵

From 2000 to 2014, except for three mobile titles, all of Spider-Man’s digital-game adaptations (meaning 15 of 18) were published by a single famous US third-party producer and publisher, Activision, which held exclusive rights to publish Spider-Man games.¹⁶ Many of the important digital games from this period were based on movie adaptations of Spider-Man by Sony Pictures and its subsidiary Columbia Pictures – the Sam Raimi series with Tobey Maguire (2003 – 2007), and the Marc Webb series with Andrew Garfield (2012 – 2014). As Sony owned the film rights to Spider-Man and also had its own gaming platform, PlayStation, these games were primarily the result of a marketing strategy. The first of these games, *Spider-Man*¹⁷ from 2002, was even released a month before the premiere of the film that it reflected.¹⁸ This is actually a common practice concerning current movie advergaming,¹⁹ although by no means to such a gameplay extent. The digital games *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*²⁰ and its sequel *Spider-Man: Edge of Time*,²¹ featuring together the Amazing Spider-Man, Ultimate Spider-Man, Spider-Man 2099, and Spider-Man Noir, processed the topic of creating the Spider-Man multiverse, before releasing the comics series *Spider-verse* in 2014. Another breakpoint is then represented by the releasing of the game *Marvel’s Spider-Man* in 2018, this time exclusively for the PlayStation 4 platform. The notable positive reception from both critics and users has escalated the success of the game, which quickly became one of the best superhero games as well as comic book-based games of all time.²² Finally in 2020, *Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales* was released as one of the very first games for the new PlayStation 5.

2 Marvel’s Spider-Man and Miles Morales

Marvel’s Spider-Man introduces a new universe for this popular comic superhero. Peter Parker, as Spider-Man in a new suit, is fighting crime across the highly realistic open-world of New York’s Manhattan to the background of a thrilling story. He faces many famous supervillains like Kingpin, Rhino, Scorpion, Shocker, Electro, Vulture, and Doctor Octopus, and at the same time takes on less-mainstream foes such as Hammerhead, Tombstone, Taskmaster, Screwball, Mister Negative, and the antiheroine Black Cat. The current popular culture trend set particularly by MCU and other superhero franchises, to assemble heroes and

¹⁵ MIETH, D.: Many Spider-Men Are Better than One: Referencing as a Narrative Strategy. In RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N. (eds.): *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*. London, New York : Routledge, 2021, p. 142.

¹⁶ LIEBL, M.: *Does Sony Own the Video Game Rights to Spider-Man?*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://apptrigger.com/2020/08/03/spider-man-video-games/>>.

¹⁷ TREYARCH: *Spider-Man*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2002.

¹⁸ MENG, C.: Study on the Transmedia Storytelling Practice of “Spider-Man”. In LIU, L., WANG, P. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium on Social Science (ISSS 2019)*. Amsterdam, Paris : Atlantis Press, 2020, p. 255-256. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200312.047>>.

¹⁹ MAGO, Z.: *World of Advergaming: Digitálne hry ako nástroje reklamy*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 10.

²⁰ BEENOX: *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2010.

²¹ BEENOX: *Spider-Man: Edge of Time*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2011.

²² Remark by the author: On average, the second place in the rankings, according to: SHEA, B.: *The Top 10 Superhero Games of All Time*. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <<https://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2013/12/19/the-best-super-hero-games-of-all-time.aspx>>; *10 Best Video Games Based on Comic Books*. [online]. [2021-04-29]. Available at: <<https://whatculture.com/comics/10-best-video-games-based-on-comic-books?page=10>>.

villains into powerful teams (Avengers, Guardians of the Galaxy, Justice League, Suicide Squad, X-Force, etc.), is also reflected in this game when Doctor Octopus creates a team of six supervillains known as the Sinister Six. In addition to the superhero side, the game also adds depth to the human side of Peter Parker, e.g., volunteering at the homeless shelter F.E.A.S.T., working as an assistant of Dr. Octavius developing advanced prosthetic limbs, the complicated relationships with his former girlfriend Mary Jane Watts (M. J.), with his aunt May, with Captain Yuri Watanabe from NYPD, or with Miles Morales, empathizing with his loss of his father and trying to help him. His most intense relationship though represents the relationship with his friend and mentor, Dr. Otto Octavius, while facing his transformation from a personal idol into a supervillain. After the game's release in September 2018, one of three episodic DLCs was published monthly (The Heist, Turf Wars, Silver Lining), which together made a DLC collection *Marvel's Spider-Man: The City that Never Sleeps*²³ sold separately or, later in 2019, as part of *Marvel's Spider-Man: Game of the Year Edition*.

The sequel, *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales*, is rather an extension than a full-featured game (e.g., the average gameplay length is almost 13 hours, which is about 21.5 hours less than *Marvel's Spider-Man*).²⁴ Miles Morales has already appeared in *Marvel's Spider-Man*, where his father, NYPD Officer Jefferson Davis, died during the Demon attack on the re-election event of Mayor Osborne, and he was bitten by a new sort of genetically-enhanced spider created by Norman Osborne. At the end of *Marvel's Spider-Man*, Miles shows his abilities to Peter Parker, who revealed to him he is Spider-Man in return. The game starts with Peter mentoring Miles, but shortly afterward he announces to him that he is going on holiday with Mary Jane and entrusts him with the safety of the city. As the only Spider-Man in the city, he has to deal with a high-tech conflict between the Roxxon Energy Corporation and the Underground led by Tinkerer, and as it will turn out, Phin Mason, Miles' old friend, seeking revenge for her brother's death. Unlike Peter Parker, Miles Morales has also new powers in addition to classic Spider-Man abilities –camouflage and bio-electricity (e.g., Venom Strike), and as a younger African-American-Hispanic superhero living in Harlem, he fits into the current pop-cultural inclination (even policy) regarding a more diverse cast of protagonists of different gender, races, ethnicities, and LGBTQ+.²⁵ Besides exceeding expectations of the Spider-Man loyal fandom, he is thus attracting additional target groups. Apart from comics and digital games, the Miles Morales character has been mostly popularized by the awarded animated movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.²⁶ Although the same company is behind the film and the game, there is no actual connection between their storylines, which may possibly cross each other one day, because Miles Morales is an important part of the Spider-Man multiverse, or so-called *Spider-Verse*, linking alternative versions of Spider-Man from various comics, digital games, and movies in order to fight common enemies together.²⁷

²³ INSOMNIAC GAMES: *Marvel's Spider-Man: The City that Never Sleeps*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

²⁴ Remark by the author: The average length of playing is combining all playstyles (main story, main + extra, completionist). The data is obtained from: *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://howlongtobeat.com/game?id=79859>>.

²⁵ WORLDS, M., MILLER, C.: Miles Morales: Spider-Man and Reimagining the Canon for Racial Justice. In *English Journal*, 2019, Vol. 108, No. 4, p. 45.

²⁶ PERSICHETTI, B., RAMSEY, P., ROTHMAN, R. (Directors): *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. [DVD]. Culver City : Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2019.

²⁷ MARTÍNEZ, M. I. P.: On Comics, Narratives and Transmedia Multiverses: Re-Envisioning the Wall-Crawler in *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. In *Miguel Hernández Communication Journal*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 204-206.

Marvel's Spider-Man creates its own alternative universe introduced shortly after the game's launch in the comics' series *Spider-Geddon* as *Earth-1048*, creating Marvel's *Gameverse* that is outside the main Marvel Universe (Earth-616), MCU (Earth-199999), and even the original universe of Miles Morales (Earth-1610).²⁸ From an economic point of view, the platform exclusivity, 'own' Spider-Man mythology, original stories, and cross-media bridges seem to be a sort of strategy of Sony to become a major player within the entire Spider-Man medial macro-franchise,²⁹ also in consideration of the complicated relationships concerning license rights for Spider-Man.³⁰ Although Spider-Man portrayed by Tom Holland appears in the MCU, Sony owns the license rights to Spider-Man's film adaptations.³¹ This, of course, expands the possibilities of cross- and transmedia storytelling for its games as well, which, in addition, is ensured by the exclusivity of the gaming platform. In this context, J. Radošinská talks about the phenomenon of the so-called *Sony Marvel's Universe* (SMU) that will include more superheroes from Marvel Comics owned by Sony,³² and apparently interconnected by Spider-Man.

2.1 Cross- and Transmedia Storytelling Aspects

Although, according to N. Villani, *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions* is the direct ancestor of Marvel's Spider-Man in many ways,³³ there are surprisingly many mutual means of expression, iconography, and parallels with the first game adaptations for PlayStation, *Spider-Man* (2000) and *Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro*.³⁴ For example, Spider-Man is using a hydrant to put out a fire; fight sequences situated in the elevator shaft, and the subway/train, a fight with a helicopter across the city; availability of alternate Spider-Man costumes; even including Stan Lee as a narrator of the first two games, and the non-playing character (NPC) and a statue in Marvel's Spider-Man games, etc. In *Spider-Man* (2000), the ground level of the city is overrun by toxic gas above which Spider-Man must keep himself at a certain height in order not to die. While in this game it is a creative way to avoid the need to create a much larger city environment and, at the same time, retain certain free roam feelings for players, in Marvel's Spider-Man, the same principle is used during the fight with Scorpion when Spider-Man is hallucinating after being poisoned (see Picture 1). The intentionality of this link or if it is just a tribute to the first Spider-Man games for PlayStation could be revealed by a more extensive content analysis of all released Spider-Man games.

²⁸ MARNELL, B.: *A Guide to the Many Marvel Multiverses*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://www.marvel.com/articles/comics/a-guide-to-the-many-marvel-multiverses>>.

²⁹ VILLANI, N.: Marvel's Spider-Man: "Ragnoverso" Crossmediale. In *H-ermes. Journal of Communication*, 2020, No. 18, p. 83. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1285/i22840753n18p73>>.

³⁰ For more information, see: LIEBL, M.: *Does Sony Own the Video Game Rights to Spider-Man?*. [online]. [2021-05-11]. Available at: <<https://apptrigger.com/2020/08/03/spider-man-video-games/>>.

³¹ RADOŠINSKÁ, J., KVETANOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L.: *Globalizovaný filmový priemysel*. Prague : Wolters Kluwer, 2020, p. 209.

³² RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Teoretické aspekty filmov o superhrdinoch*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 147.

³³ VILLANI, N.: Marvel's Spider-Man: "Ragnoverso" Crossmediale. In *H-ermes. Journal of Communication*, 2020, No. 18, p. 81. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1285/i22840753n18p73>>.

³⁴ VICARIOUS VISIONS: *Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2001.



Picture 1: The story-related inaccessible Manhattan ground level

Source: Author's screenshots taken from: NEVERSOFT: *Spider-Man*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2000; INSOMNIAC GAMES: *Marvel's Spider-Man*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

N. Villani claims that the mutual signification between a played character and the environment surrounding them becomes a key element not only for the gaming experience but also for an opportunity to emphasize the centrality of cross-media storytelling, especially concerning the next development *Marvel's Avengers*.³⁵ Based on that, he considers *Avengers Tower* in *Marvel's Spider-Man* as an aspect “capable of forming the foundations for a real gameverse and capable of making Sony the holder of the effective monopoly of the character in a multi-platform perspective”.³⁶ This approach also confirms the announcement that Spider-Man will be added to *Marvel's Avengers* as a playable character, but solely for the PlayStation versions to preserve *Marvel's Spider-Man* platform exclusivity.³⁷ On the other hand, *Sanctum Sanctorum* related to Doctor Strange and, except for comics, shown only in the MCU is situated in Manhattan in *Marvel's Spider-Man* (even at the right address), as well. Doctor Strange was not included in the game *Marvel's Avengers* and appeared just as a supporting character in the tie-in book *Marvel's Avengers: The Extinction Key*.³⁸ Together with the Avengers Tower, the Damage Control HQ building, the Wakandan Embassy, and all costumes of MCU's Spider-Man, this indicates a stronger connection with the MCU, possibly as a backdoor in case of the successful cooperation between Sony and Disney in the future. Spider-Man's costumes in Sony films and some other references to those films in the game³⁹ actually act the same because the anticipated creation of a multiverse within the MCU in the near future should include all movie Spider-Men. A certain argument for reconsideration could be the missing Baxter Building (the comics headquarters of the *Fantastic Four*) in the game's New York, albeit it can be found in both mentioned games, *Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro*. Generally, Spider-Man has a long-term common comics history with this superhero team, and, in addition, related costumes are part of *Marvel's Spider-Man* suit collection (Bombastic Bag-Man Suit, Future Foundation Suit), and the *Fantastic Four* should additionally introduce themselves into the MCU in 2023.

³⁵ CRYSTAL DYNAMICS: *Marvel's Avengers*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2020.

³⁶ VILLANI, N.: *Marvel's Spider-Man: “Ragnoverso” Crossmediale*. In *H-ermes. Journal of Communication*, 2020, No. 18, p. 89. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1285/i22840753n18p73>>.

³⁷ GILLIAM, R.: *Spider-Man in Marvel's Avengers Will Be Exclusive to PlayStation*. [online]. [2021-04-28]. Available at: <<https://www.polygon.com/2020/8/3/21352816/spider-man-marvels-avengers-post-launch-hero-exclusive-launch-2021>>.

³⁸ For more information, see: KEYES, G.: *Marvel's Avengers: The Extinction Key*. London : Titan Books, 2020.

³⁹ Remark by the author: When Spider-Man tries to stop the train with his webs like Tobey Maguire in the movie *Spider-Man 2*, his attempt fails, and he comments it by “*That totally worked last time*”.

2.2 In-Game Advertising Aspects

Overall, both games, Marvel's Spider-Man and Miles Morales, contain no commercial in-game advertising, except for only a few references to their developer Insomniac Games, e.g., branch store, logo integrated in some devices like keyboards, a ceiling chandelier in a mall in the form of the logo. Taking into account the rarity, the size of the game world, as well as the implicit character, this self-promotion is rather a form of Easter egg than ordinary in-game advertising, however, it can still generate awareness, additionally boosted by gamers' participation in sharing discovered in-game 'secrets'. In any case, more extensive in-game advertising was highly expected in these titles, not just because of the games' publisher themselves. Sony is known for the frequent integration of its brand into its own media products in the form of product placement (or in-game advertising concerning digital games). This includes smartphones, laptops, game consoles, and other typical Sony products, for example, headphones and a sign in Times Square in the movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. Similarly, in the recently released *The Last of Us Part II*,⁴⁰ also in the PlayStation console exclusive games such as Marvel's Spider-Man games, gamers can encounter several PlayStation 3 consoles with typical DualShock controllers, some other exclusive games for this platform, NPC using PlayStation Vita, and even a store with exhibited smartphones from Sony. Marvel's Spider-Man and Miles Morales take place in the modern present, but devices (including commonly used smartphones) are not branded, including the classic and portable game consoles placed in games. Sony does not usually miss such an opportunity, especially when it comes to the platform exclusivity of these games. The reason for the general absence of real brands/products in-game advertising is, therefore, itself a topic for further discussion.

In accordance with V. Šisler, New York belongs to the kind of environments which are characteristic of the presence of advertisements or rather require them to maintain their authenticity and realism in digital games.⁴¹ Manhattan in Marvel's Spider-Man games naturally includes various forms of advertising completing the virtual look of the city, but except for the mentioned infrequent self-promotion, all explicitly exposed ads are fake, thus promoting fake brands, products, movies (see Picture 2). A fictional telecommunications company, Colexco, even replaces the famous MetLife building. This is actually common practice within digital games because game creators rarely have enough different advertisers to fill such places oversaturated with advertising, such as Times Square without looking like a single brand takeover or just plainly ridiculous. Sometimes, fake ads are combined with real ads to supplement the palette of advertising patterns/textures, as in the game *Spider-Man: Web of Shadows*,⁴² where, in addition to fictitious advertising, the chewing gum Wrigley's 5 was promoted as well. Fake advertising, however, brings both pros and cons. On one hand, star brands can simply stand out above fake ads, but regional and generally less-known brands can merge with them. As with a low frequency of real ads occurrence, in-game advertising explicitness is decreasing, and gamers' attention lacks.⁴³

⁴⁰ NAUGHTY DOG: *The Last of Us Part II*. [digital game]. Tokyo, San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2020.

⁴¹ ŠISLER, V.: *Krásný nový svět virtuální reklamy*. In *LEVEL*, 2005, No. 123, p. 30.

⁴² SHABA GAMES et al.: *Spider-Man: Web of Shadows*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2008.

⁴³ MAGO, Z.: *World of Advergaming: Digitálne hry ako nástroje reklamy*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 39, 52-57.



Picture 2: Fake (brands) advertisements on Times Square in Marvel's Spider-Man

Source: Author's screenshot taken from: INSOMNIAC GAMES: *Marvel's Spider-Man*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

Taking into account the factor of the settings of the alternative world of Marvel's Spider-Man games, Earth-1048, as well as the eventual future development of their own or possible interaction into the existing multiverse, Spider-verse, or Gameverse, an absence of more extensive commercial in-game advertising might be understood as a differentiation indicator of distinct universes. This means the alternative reality Earth-1048 contains its own brands or brand variations from our reality. Similarly, it was presented as such in the film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. When the launch of Kingpin's machine draws Peter Parker from another dimension to the dimension of Miles Morales (originally Earth-1610), Parker's flashbacks, among others, also depicts the same moments of his life but with alternative surroundings. One of the most explicit examples is the brand Coca-Cola and its variation Koca-Soda (see Picture 3). However, in the case of brand parodies of real brands, we could argue a degree of recognition in terms of product displacement and implicit in-game advertising.⁴⁴ Actually, the only real brand that remained in the alternative dimension of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* was Sony, so it is in line with the approach concerning self/cross-promotion which we revealed within Marvel's Spider-Man games.

⁴⁴ For more information, see: MAGO, Z.: Implicitný in-game advertising: Nástroj pre self-promotion a cross-promotion v digitálnych hrách. In *Analýza a výskum v marketingovej komunikácii*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 30-38; MAGO, Z.: Self- and Cross-Promotion within Digital Games. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MATÚŠ, J., MENDELOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: Brands We Love – Part I*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 341-343.



Picture 3: Variations of the same brand in *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* distinguishing different Earths of Spider-Man Multiverse

Source: Author's screenshots taken from: PERSICETTI, B., RAMSEY, P., ROTHMAN, R. (Directors): *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. [DVD]. Culver City : Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2019.

A certain argumentation might build on the mentioned connection to the first Spider-Man games for PlayStation. Alike, both those games contain almost solely advertisements for their creators, specifically billboards of Neversoft, Vicarious Visions, and Activision. In the first game, however, there were also billboards of the game *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*,⁴⁵ but it is a game from the same creators released in the same year, so it is rather in line with the concept of self/cross-promotion than classic commercial in-game advertising. This deviation can be explained after adding another factor to the analysis – the availability of games for different devices. While *Spider-Man* (2000) was released for multiple platforms in addition to PlayStation, the second game, *Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro*, was already a PlayStation exclusive like Marvel's Spider-Man games. This approach likely indicates the background of the recent decision that Spider-Man from Marvel's Spider-Man will be available in Marvel's Avengers exclusively for the PlayStation versions.

Conclusion and Discussion

Historical synergies between comics and digital games, as well as their increasing convergence in terms of current cultural and media landscapes, do not belong to frequent research interests of comics studies nor game studies, as might be expected considering the move of artefacts emerging from that synergy to the mainstream, and their subsequent overall impact on media and popular culture.⁴⁶ This is represented by the latest games featuring the superhero Spider-Man, *Marvel's Spider-Man* and its sequel *Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales*, which are deservedly considered as the best game comic adaptations by both players and critics. Their current as well as their potential impact on media production within the popular culture is also notable. Unlike other Spider-Man digital games, *Marvel's Spider-Man* represents a self-reliant and consistent continuity for this superhero by building on the equal importance of both alter-egos, Peter Parker and Spider-Man,⁴⁷ and the ethnic diversity and

⁴⁵ NEVERSOFT: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2000.

⁴⁶ RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N.: Comics and Videogames. In RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N. (eds.): *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*. London, New York : Routledge, 2021, p. 1-2.

⁴⁷ MIETH, D.: Many Spider-Men Are Better Than One: Referencing as a Narrative Strategy. In RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N. (eds.): *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*. London, New York : Routledge, 2021, p. 143.

new Spider-Man abilities of Miles Morales together with the popularity of his character from the movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* is expanding the fan base, similar to the circumstances of the film *Black Panther*.⁴⁸ The original game storyline and the entire world, described in the follow-up comic book series Spider-Geddon as Earth-1048, presents many famous and new characters related to Spider-Man and includes the currently popular trend of assembling heroes and villains into powerful teams, in this case, the Sinister Six.

Alternative Spider-Man suits available in these games pay tribute to the ‘mythology’, particularly appeal to loyal fans, cross-promote other Marvel branded media products in which Spider-Man appears (including all versions of the SMU and MCU Spider-Man costumes), and four original game costumes build an autonomous identity across media. Besides an aesthetic function, in this way all suits contribute to creating some roots for cross- and transmedia storytelling.⁴⁹ This might be implemented in various ways in the future, since, taking into account the ownership of the license rights, there is (so far only) a comic book Spider-Verse, a movie SMU and MCU, or a gaming Gameverse. This confirms the presence (e.g., Avengers Tower, Sanctum Sanctorum, Wakandan Embassy) and absence (Baxter Building) of several game world landmarks, which, on the other hand, may lead fans to the distinct ‘Insomniverse’ from other Spider-Verses.⁵⁰ The autonomy of Marvel’s Spider-Man universe is also indicated by the absence of commercial in-game advertising, except for the infrequent self-/cross-promotion of both games’ creators. At the same time, this implementation points to a close relation to the first Spider-Man games for the PlayStation, and thus an important role played by the factor of platform exclusivity. Overall, Marvel’s Spider-Man games are configured as a monopoly stance by Sony,⁵¹ confirmed also by its recent acquisition of Insomniac Games and by the announcement that Marvel’s Spider-Man character will be available exclusively in PlayStation versions of the game Marvel’s Avengers. The implementation of the Spider-Man multiverse into superhero media production might, however, lead much further than the massive interconnections of media artefacts based on one comics publisher. Perhaps, even to the mainstream cooperation between rival popular culture industry titans like Marvel Comics and DC Comics, especially when these companies have already mutually collaborated, as represented by the comic book *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man* from 1976. In any case, the superhero thematic will obviously belong to the most profitable part of media production within popular culture in the coming years,⁵² including digital games.

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⁴⁸ RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Teoretické aspekty filmov o superhrdinoch*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 145. See also: COOGLER, R. (Director): *Black Panther* [DVD]. Burbank : Marvel Studios, 2018.

⁴⁹ VILLANI, N.: Marvel’s Spider-Man: “Ragnoverso” Crossmediale. In *H-ermes. Journal of Communication*, 2020, No. 18, p. 78-79. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1285/i22840753n18p73>>.

⁵⁰ MIETH, D.: Many Spider-Men Are Better Than One: Referencing as a Narrative Strategy. In RAUSCHER, A., STEIN, D., THON, J.-N. (eds.): *Comics and Videogames: From Hybrid Medialities to Transmedia Expansions*. London, New York : Routledge, 2021, p. 144.

⁵¹ VILLANI, N.: Marvel’s Spider-Man: “Ragnoverso” Crossmediale. In *H-ermes. Journal of Communication*, 2020, No. 18, p. 84. [online]. [2021-03-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1285/i22840753n18p73>>.

⁵² RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Teoretické aspekty filmov o superhrdinoch*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 147.

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WHY WE NEED FICTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC? VIDEOGAMES: A SKETCH FOR A GENRE TYPOLOGY

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Abstract:

Fiction is an invention that allows humankind to expand, and a state of affairs that can be analysed from several different points of view. While pondering the purpose of this invention, we must consider the different uses it is designed for, and recognise the differences between fiction in everyday life, fiction in literature, and virtual reality. By incorporating factual, historical and verified material evidence, fiction inspires the reader to continually question the boundaries of fiction and fact using quotability, editing and collaging. The profusion of archive documents relating to important world events, wars, genocides, depressions, collective traumas and diseases, interwoven with the space of fiction, requires an active reader who will be able to follow all the elements of the work of literature, understand the author's engaged position, and consciously develop one of his own. The transmedial narratology theory, on the other hand, analyses how different media build story worlds, the implications on their recipients, and the opportunities for subversion. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been situations when fiction was able to better explain what was going on in the world than science. Gaming, fiction and fictionalisation explain and help predict the outcome or result. The truth is no longer an absolute concept, but depends on its interpreter. In the present context, when social rules are less clear or are completely incomprehensible, a return to games and fiction is a principle that helps us better understand our environment and other people's reactions. The artificially created world plays an important role in this. Contrary to our tradition, based on Aristotle's postulates, our idea of the virtual now means that we see perfection as means to repair the imperfect world. There are no mistakes in virtual worlds. We choose and love virtual persons because they never let us down. We are inclined to avoid the real life and its negative aspects, such as habits, illness, aging and death, and immerse ourselves in videogames as an escape during the pandemic. The paper discusses the relationship between adaptation and emulation of new media, genre positioning of videogames in the literary and media genealogy, and their role during the long-lasting social isolation we have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents us with a double thesis: videogames can be used as a tool for social criticism, and the boundary between reality and virtual reality will eventually become immaterial.

Key words:

Faction. Fiction. Genre. New Media. Videogames. Virtuality.

Introduction: Is the Internet Just Another Metanarrative?

Social distancing, self-isolation, (social) isolation and quarantine¹ are the most frequently occurring expressions in the media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed during the pandemic have inevitably had a serious effect on the mental health of the population. The emotional and behavioural response to the COVID-19 pandemic is multifaceted, relying on personal and inherent factors in addition to external ones. It seems, however, that people's reactions to the current circumstances share some common overarching elements, including significantly heightened feelings of impaired functioning, boredom, stigma, anxiety, phobia, frustration and anger.² Children and youth are a particularly

¹ See: BROOKS, S. K. et al.: The Psychological Impact of Quarantine and How to Reduce It: Rapid Review of the Evidence. In *The Lancet*, 2020, Vol. 395, No. 10227, p. 912-920. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930460-8>>.

² For more information, see: AHMADI, K., RAMEZANI, M. A.: Iranian Emotional Experience and Expression during the COVID-19 Crisis. In *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 2020, Vol. 32, No. 5, p. 285-286. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1010539520937097>>; PFEFFERBAUM, B., NORTH, C. S.: Mental Health and the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 2020, Vol. 383, No. 6, p. 510-512. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2008017>>; RESTUBOG, S. L., OCAMPO, A. C. G., WANG, L.: Taking Control amidst the Chaos: Emotion Regulation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 119, p. 1-6. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at:

vulnerable group, since being forced to stay at home limits the social interactions that are crucial for the formation of their identity and for their well-being at this age. Reduced physical activity, loneliness and boredom can have long-term effects.³ “In an era when metaphysical and existential certainties are in a state of crisis, when people are being uprooted and alienated and are losing their sense of what this world means, (...) ideology inevitably has a certain hypnotic charm,”⁴ Václav Havel wrote in his excellent essay, *The Power of the Powerless*. To wandering humankind it offers an immediately available home: all one has to do is accept it, and suddenly everything becomes clear once more, life takes on new meaning, and all mysteries, unanswered questions, anxiety, and loneliness vanish. Of course, one pays dearly for this low-rent home: the price is abdication of one’s own reason, conscience, and responsibility, for an essential aspect of this ideology is the consignment of reason and conscience to a higher authority. The principle involved here is that the center of power is identical with the center of truth,⁵ while the speech of ideology gradually transforms into “a world of appearances, a mere ritual, a formalized language deprived of semantic contact with reality and transformed into a system of ritual signs that replace reality with pseudo-reality”.⁶ Jean-François Lyotard declared the state of postmodernism back in the 1980s, underlining that modernism had been consigned to the past, and did not belong in the present anymore.⁷ To put it simply, in 1976, Lyotard wrote *The Postmodern Condition*, in which he argues that mistrust towards metanarratives is in fact a postmodern trait. The postmodern condition is reflected in mistrust towards obsolete metanarratives (French: *Méta-récits*), the crisis of metaphysical philosophy, sensitivity to differences, and tolerance of the incomparable, with the incomparable being the very thing that ‘escapes’ modernism. Václav Havel’s *The Power of the Powerless*, written in 1978, is discussion of communism, which is definitely one of Lyotard’s metanarratives, but its theses are still applicable. Havel noted that people become alienated when humanity is in a crisis, losing the sense of purpose of their existence, as well as the purpose of the society’s and the world’s existence. In such times, according to Havel, ideology gains a hypnotic attraction. All people have to do is entrust their reason and conscience to a higher instance. The speech of ideology gradually transforms into a world of phenomena, a ritual, whereas language transforms into a system of ritual signs,

<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001879120300658?via%3Dihub>>; SHER, L.: COVID-19, Anxiety, Sleep Disturbances and Suicide. In *Sleep Medicine*, 2020, Vol. 70, p. 124. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S138994572030188X?via%3Dihub>>; TEUFEL, M. et al.: Not All World Leaders Use Twitter in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact of the Way of Angela Merkel on Psychological Distress, Behaviour and Risk Perception. In *Journal of Public Health*, 2020, Vol. 42, No. 3, p. 644-646. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/article/42/3/644/5835923>>.

³ For more information, see: FEGERT, J. M. et al.: Challenges and Burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic for Child and Adolescent Mental Health: A Narrative Review to Highlight Clinical and Research Needs in the Acute Phase and the Long Return to Normality. In *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 20, p. 1-11. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13034-020-00329-3.pdf>>; JIAO, W. Y. et al.: Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children during the COVID-19 Epidemic. In *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 2020, Vol. 221, p. 264-266. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.jpeds.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0022-3476%2820%2930336-X>>.

⁴ HAVEL, V.: *The Power of the Powerless*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-power-of-the-powerless-vaclav-havel-2011-12-23>>.

⁵ CEROVAC, K.: *Korupcija jezika*. Released on 16th May 2017. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://blog.dnevnik.hr/vjerairazum/oznaka/korupcija>>.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ See, for example: LYOTARD, J. F.: *Postmoderno stanje*. Zagreb : Ibis-grafika, 2005, p. 31-36, 39-44, 44-53, 54-88; LYOTARD, J. F.: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 3-6, 9-13, 14-59.

replacing reality with a pseudo-reality. Ideology is a precise system, logically structured and very flexible at its core, almost like a secularized religion.⁸

Reflecting on the Internet, we ask ourselves, is it not just another metanarrative, whose end Lyotard had prophesised? Is the Internet not structured like any other ideology, precise and logical, a network that has no beginning, and no end? We live in times of existential uncertainty, when the Internet, which, as we concluded, is structured like an ideology, gains a hypnotic attraction. While the functioning of our everyday lives has been substantially impaired, the Internet provides comfort and an escape from our troubles. The mother of all networks, the Internet is both magnetic and scary in its infinity, offering access to an immense diversity of content. Videogames, hailed as the medium of the 21st century, are an iconic fixture and a paradigmatic ‘product’ on the Internet. As we isolate during the pandemic, in addition to being extensions of ourselves, they have become the cloak we put on to roam the world: a world in which the line between reality and virtuality has become blurred, merging them into a combination of both.

Entertainment and art production tools have become available to an increasing number of people, and traditional art forms have become somewhat of a hobby, no different from new forms of entertainment, like videogames, maintains Ružić.⁹ In the essays collected in *Kritika relativizma ukusa* (in English *Critique of the Relativity of Taste*),¹⁰ Milivoj Solar, the most distinguished Croatian literary theorist and critic, discussed more than just literature, using his critiques to dissect the general contemporary social and cultural landscape. Everyone is entitled to have their ‘taste’ and judgement nowadays. From a perspective of marked relativism, from which postmodernism views the problem of taste, Milivoj Solar considers it a possible cause of literary communication. He agrees with Benedetto Croce’s position that taste is the result of individual intuition and therefore cannot be authentic because it always depends on agreement with others. This is true – taste is always shared, in a manner of speaking – but the fundamental spark of taste requires personal intuition, even an understanding of the area in question, which is not required to accept fashions, for instance.¹¹ The age of modern media literacy and availability of technology has popularized a number of distribution channels for creative formats. However, it does not escape Solar’s attention that a substantial number of modern ‘creators’ do not really participate in the processes of creation of new forms of art: they are merely observers and consumers of emerging media formats. He underlines the following: “*Radical relativism and alleged pluralism of tastes are thus paradoxes of postmodernity: if the modern loser has no real idea of what he likes, and what he does not, since he likes one thing today, and will like something else entirely tomorrow, as fashions may have it, special literary communication is about to collapse, if it has not already.*”¹² Taste implies expectation of what we like, recognition, and experience. Solar considers experience a very important element of taste, and it is formed through education: “*taste does not exist if the power to recognise things of worth has not been developed through education*”.¹³ Many trigger-happy critics, as Boris Ružić points out, are inclined to criticise modern games for their value-equating tendency – ideology in its purest form – the possibility

⁸ CEROVAC, K.: *Korupcija jezika*. Released on 16th May 2017. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://blog.dnevnik.hr/vjerairazum/oznaka/korupcija>>.

⁹ RUŽIĆ, B.: *Videoigre su dobre za vas*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.tportal.hr/tehnolo/clanak/videoigre-su-dobre-za-vas-20120516>>.

¹⁰ See: SOLAR, M.: *Kritika relativizma ukusa: Predavanja o ukusu, moralu i poetici*. Zagreb : Matica hrvatska, 2011, p. 7-19.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 95.

¹² Ibidem, p. 161.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 146.

for all of us to appropriate the gaming imagery and pay too much attention to something that is nominally “bad for us”.¹⁴ In support of his thesis, Ružić offers the example of Steven Berlin Johnson, who tackled the said scenario of discrimination of new art forms by canonical cultural patterns. In his influential study *Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter*,¹⁵ Johnson develops the concept of the so-called “sleeper curve”, based on Woody Allen’s film, whose main protagonist wakes up two hundred years in the future to discover that all things that were traditionally viewed as bad were in fact good. He gets his point across very explicitly and clearly on the example of computer games: the games played by the modern youths stimulate the brain, improve cognitive processes, and encourage socialisation, whereas their critics usually invoke archaic arguments about social isolation, or dumbing repetitive actions in front of the screen. “It’s not what you’re thinking about when you’re playing a game, it’s the way you’re thinking that matters,”¹⁶ says Johnson. In his affirmation of videogames, Ružić concludes, the central role belongs to young people who perceive and process hypertext information differently from the people who have not been immersed in various forms of electronic entertainment from the earliest age. He will go so far as to question the established education processes, advocating the thesis that the current learning principles correspond to the 19th century authoritarian relationship between the student and the teacher, where knowledge was conveyed automatically and dogmatically. Such processes have reached the end of their practicability in the modern constellation. Instead of dedicated study of economics in secondary schools, perhaps we could learn an aspect of this old science while playing one of the iterations of the popular *Civilization* franchise. Johnson confesses that the children he observed know much more about managing the budgets of virtual countries than he does, and master new intellectual and motoric challenges much more easily than he is able to. If we return to Peterlić,¹⁷ Ružić maintains, and acknowledge that the inauguration of each new media phenomenon is accompanied by the lack of understanding of its tools, products and effects, the “spirit of the times” that accompanies computer games becomes understandable. Be that as it may, the imperative of their analysis has to go beyond analysing content, and touch upon general cultural effects. Games are not entertainment for leisure time any more than books, films or music are. The analysis of media content and popular formats therefore has to think outside of the box of fascination with the new interface, and move towards trying to understand the mirror relationship between the real and the fictional world.¹⁸

1 Interplay: Fiction as Reality – Reality as Fiction

The distinction between fiction and reality, and conditions under which things classify as one or the other, is an old question that has been approached from various angles in the past, tearing schools of philosophy apart, and sparking discussions in literature, psychiatry, and more recently also in physics, biology and neurology, especially in brain research. Any ideology subsists on assumptions, on fictions, as does any religion: what it considers fiction, and what it considers reality is the very thing that sets religions apart from others. Our age, the

¹⁴ RUŽIĆ, B.: *Videoigre su dobre za vas*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.tportal.hr/tehno/clanak/videoigre-su-dobre-za-vas-20120516>>.

¹⁵ See: JOHNSON, S. B.: *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*. New York : Riverhead Books, 2005, p. 14-23.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

¹⁷ PETERLIĆ, A.: *Osnove teorije filma*. Zagreb : Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2001, p. 73.

¹⁸ RUŽIĆ, B.: *Videoigre su dobre za vas*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.tportal.hr/tehno/clanak/videoigre-su-dobre-za-vas-20120516>>.

media age, has added a new layer to the debates on fiction and reality. The version of reality that the media are feeding to us is deceptive, alienating us from the actual reality.¹⁹ Fiction is an invention that allows humankind to expand, and a state of affairs that can be analysed from several different viewpoints. While pondering the purpose of this invention, we must consider the different uses it is designed for, and recognise the differences between fiction in everyday life, fiction in literature, and virtual reality. These types of fiction are not the same, of course, consisting of different forms depending on their function, and thus implicitly exposing the different needs they cater to. The link between fiction and function is not a new revelation. It has always been at the forefront of any attempt to derive fiction from a poor perspective of deception and misconception. Since deceptions are generally used for a specific purpose, even a negative charge proves that fiction is defined by its use. This means that deception decides whether the judgment is positive or negative: the intention clearly defines the function, and therefore also defines the form. The process results from two significant attempts in the 19th century, by Jeremy Bentham²⁰ and Hans Vaihinger,²¹ whose intention had been to rehabilitate fiction. In his discussion, Bentham introduced “fictional entities” to the epistemology of unchangeable modalities for a given nature of reality. Vaihinger systematized it, exalting fiction as the basis for the structure of reality. Bentham believed “fictional entities” could be differentiated from “real entities” based on the fact that “real entities” were given, even though they could only be spotted through the manner of their existence, which is, in fact, a “fictional entity”. Vaihinger believed that fiction, as a constituent part of reality, was “consciously false”, but that it had to be extracted from these realities. To him, almost anything was fiction, separate from human emotions, which were ultimately needed as realities to prevent the world from being “drawn into” fiction. However, Bentham and Vaihinger’s individual theses about the use of fiction are not important in this context: the important thing is that their widely recognised concepts of the function of fiction produced some very precise definitions. Precision, or accuracy, was easy to explain throughout history: in case of fiction, it could be explained by the rehabilitation of oppositions in a tradition that left no doubt whatsoever rather than by its negative nature (which applied in particular to empirical tradition), and Vaihinger indeed felt the need to sit on his work for several decades, because he believed the time was not yet right for it to be understood. But if we view fiction as a way of explaining, even as a way of accepting an idea around a fact, a reality, it deteriorates to what it had been many times before, historically and mythologically – “the fiction of agreement”, the phenomenon that Bacon considered a psychological satisfaction of the human mind in creating a security where it is denied by the nature of things.²² The idea about fiction as “fiction of agreement” means to identify it with the functions of explanation, which not only limit it to a single use, but also include it in the creation of the object itself. In Bentham's view, fiction is therefore a manner of existence of reality, while in Vaihinger’s view, it is the basis for the creation of reality. Even if we do not consider these definitions to be “fiction of agreement”, they still provide a basis for something outside of themselves. Indirectly, this means that the nature of use defines what fiction is, and that there is an interaction of reciprocal diversity between fiction and its use.

¹⁹ GRUBER, M.: *Fikcija kao stvarnost – Stvarnost kao fikcija*. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.matica.hr/kolo/289/fikcija-kao-stvarnost-stvarnost-kao-fikcija-19998/>>.

²⁰ See: BENTHAM, J.: *A Fragment on Government*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1988, VII–XXIV.

²¹ For more information, see: VAHINGER, H.: *The Philosophy of ‘As If’: A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*. London : Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1935, p. 17-19, 61-117, 144, 176.

²² See: BACON, F.: *Novi Organon*. Zagreb : Naprijed, 1986, p. 45-48.

It has always been assumed that fiction was capable of producing reality. For Vaihinger, this was the indisputable truth, which led him to formulate the law of ‘changing ideas’. Ideas, he assumed, go through a transformation of their integral potential. Firstly, they are realities, because they are considered to be the things themselves, even though they were merely invented to explain things. When we accept this fact, ideas change into hypotheses, but the assumption that there is a reality that agrees with them is still there. In the end, the hypotheses are revealed as fictions, which the construction of reality is conditional on precisely because there is nothing that corresponds with them. In Vaihinger’s opinion, however, from the perspective of the truth, all realities are nothing but fictions. Whenever and however realities are created, fictions are involved.

Fictionality is nothing but an instrument channelling the required flow of fantasy to our everyday world. As an activity of consciousness, it uses our imaginary resources, shaping them simultaneously for use. The interplay between the fictional and the imaginary thus turns into the basis for education, revealed in literary anthropology. But what *is* the imaginary? This has always been a complicated problem, even for the philosophers who were traditionally considered to be sceptics, and whose scepticism was regarded as generalized. David Hume saw magical potentials of the soul in what he described as “modern” and “imagination”, inexplicable to the great majority of efforts at human understanding.²³ The imaginary refutes discourse definitions, not because it is impossible to isolate, but only because it exists in connection with something else, forming an unbreakable alliance. Sartre understood the imaginary as an idea activity whose discovery subjects itself to the management of consciousness. This applies even to dreams, where consciousness is frozen as pure idealization, ultimately growing out of its intentions. In Sartre’s view, dreams are therefore the full realisation of self-contained imagination, as he puts it, whose full domination deprives us of all our freedom.²⁴

Since literature does not allow the imaginary to be absorbed into the pragmatic applications of the real world, this allows us to concentrate our intentions on the nature of our human resources. It is not subject to any kind of premature definitions, but it is present in all their forms, whose exploration is the main goal of literary anthropology.²⁵ In line with the reception theory, Iser explores the function of the reader, and his imaginative abilities in relation to fictional literary creations. Literary anthropology takes a documentarist approach to fictional worlds, developing analyses of the anthropological features in literature, usually consisting of a quest for a culture’s meaning system, expressed in the text, or investigates the construction of novels; such approaches reveal multiple judgments of literary and cultural systems through the confluence of three axes: literary formation, the cultural-spatial category, and the experience of the world, where the fictional world is seen as an anthropological approach to another culture. Unlike literature, anthropology is in essence associated with the context of the development, circulation and reception of texts.²⁶ Free of all practical restrictions, literary fictionality is able to explore the imaginary in a vast number of ways. It can allow the consciousness to be occupied and overwhelmed by the imaginary, or it can freeze the imaginary into a purely cerebral configuration. Countless possibilities lie between

²³ HUME, D.: *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 8-10.

²⁴ See: SARTRE, J. P.: *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. London, New York : Routledge, 2004, p. 97-122.

²⁵ ISER, W.: *Prospecting. From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore, London : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 263-265.

²⁶ CESAREO M.: *Anthropology and Literature: Of Bedfellows and Illegitimate Offspring*. In DE ANGELIS, R. (ed.): *Between Anthropology and Literature*. London : Routledge, 2014, p. 159.

the two extremes, and the very freedom of the game proves to be the basic category for capturing the potential of the imaginary. The game also structures the overlapping of fictionality and the imaginary, without defining their relationship, which is revealed in a number of games. This allows us to turn back the game we are playing, and at the same time to erase the permanent label affixed to the relationship in order to allow the imaginary to manifest in different ways. Since the game precedes any form of control derived from thinking, the interplay between the conscious and the imaginary illuminates the fact that neither exists independently of the other. There are no formal boundaries of this game, and yet every work of literature plays it in its own unique way. Accordingly, the game itself becomes a way to build a present that defies definitions, while the elements of the imaginary that will be viewed through the work of literature can only be reflected by playing the game in advance.²⁷

Literature is more than mere continual repetition of the world we live in: it is also a reflection of what we are. For this reason, it is primarily considered a *mimesis*. Regardless of the different definitions associated with this term throughout history, mimesis is always a repetition that delivers a product. Originally, mimesis was considered a representation of the constituent parts of natural forms, or a perfection of what the nature left imperfect. Mimesis as a repetition is therefore also a transcendence of boundaries. What exactly do we mean by ‘transcendence’? The Aristotelian tradition maintained that art mimicked the constituent parts of natural forms, which are perfect, while also perfecting nature’s imperfections: the two main impulses of the mimetic tradition thus imply, in the very least, a momentary lack of the element that was supposed to be presented. From the very beginning, the underpinning intention of repetition in arts and literature had been to turn an absent element into a present one. Accordingly, we may conclude that the repetition of certain worlds in literary text was always based on a preliminary understanding that this repetition was a way to make an absent element appear.

Duplication by literature produces an effect characteristic of duplication in general: a change of perception. This does not mean that the cultural context has been changed; it has, however, been translated to the dimension of its perceptiveness. Duplication thus allows us to see ourselves as elements affected by it: from this viewpoint, literature is the decisive measure of shaping cultural reality. It is worth emphasising one more time that literature does not reflect this reality. It reflects its rear, or backward, side that would have otherwise remained hidden in the cultural context itself. This reflection is what brings the reality of a historical period to full maturity. By putting the unchartered territories of a previous culture to rest, it changes the map that shows the imaginary element of the cognitively unthinkable.²⁸ The interplay between the fictional and the imaginary provides the heuristics needed for such research. In its capacity to transcend borders, fictionality is the first and the most important extension of the human species, which, like all other operations of consciousness, points to something else rather than to itself. Essentially, it is a void empty of any content that has to be filled. The potential of the imaginary flows into this structured void because things that are inaccessible to the cognitive and to perception can only be present by providing ideas. Fictionality remains nothing but a void without the imaginary, and the imaginary would never be set in motion without fictionality. The product of their interplay remains inaccessible to us.

²⁷ See: RAPPORT, N.: *Transcendent Individual: Towards Literary and Liberal Anthropology*. London, New York : Routledge, 1997, p. 109-112.

²⁸ See: ISER, W.: *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore, London : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 171-203.

Still, one thing is cleared up in the end: the question of ‘reality in itself’ is pointless. The attempt to separate reality from fiction in the humanities and social sciences is doomed to fruitlessness. The two are evidentially mutually conditional. The power of our fictional abilities allows us to discuss all this. Provided that we do not take to extremes the abandonment of action, which is essential to an extent for thinking and for fictionality, the path will lead us back to any reality, translated to the form of an object, organisational system, and so on, which turn right back into fiction again. Sometimes, however, they turn into myths, which soon makes them irrevocable. In modern times, all considerations about reality and fiction seem ridiculous. Fictions create reality, and become the reality in private living spaces.

2 Videogames: A Sketch for a Genre Typology

As one of the most complex new media genres, videogames imply the use of complex activities, where listening, watching and reading is replaced with action and learning on the go.²⁹ The gaming philosophy seems to be based on the ancient remains of Aristotle’s peripatetic school, but videogames belong to the 21st century. In *The Information Age*, Manuel Castells maintains that we are living in confusing times that usually occur between big historical transitions from one social form to another.³⁰ The times we live in can be seen as confusing precisely because we are surrounded by incessant changes of social forms. As George Simmel put it more than a century ago, the community (social form) is present in the most trivial of interactions: “*What gives the [researcher’s] work its peculiar unity does not reside in some assertion about a particular content of knowledge (...) but rather in the possibility – which must be demonstrated – of finding in each of life’s details the totality of its meaning.*”³¹ McLuhan, furthermore, claimed that television established a balance and a unity of all senses, a synaesthesia, thus providing an immediate experience of everything that happens in our environment, and reenabling a relationship of active participation, like in tribal societies. The tribal civilization is reawakened by the possibility of fast or momentary transmission of information in form of voice or image, which gives all of the Earth’s residents the opportunity to participate in events together at the same time – the world becomes a *Global Village*, a global environment built by technical and technological means.³² The bodily experience of interaction with different technologies is becoming an increasingly important part of everyday life in the modern society. The mediatised habitus/subjectivity carries a mobile phone, which becomes an obligatory “object” in the interaction mix (body-object) and is always physically present, which constitutes an experience of “constant presence”.³³

Videogames differ from the other forms and formats of art by the fact that their aesthetic quality can only be experienced by playing: the developer’s artistic work in the programme is unfinished, and requires artistic additions and complements from the player to be brought fully to life. This is the essential quality and an integral part of the medium.³⁴ A videogame is

²⁹ SHAW, A.: What Is Video Game Culture? Cultural Studies and Game Studies. In *Game and Culture*, 2010, Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 412. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.863.6217&rep=rep1&type=pdf>>.

³⁰ CASTELLS, M.: *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol 1: The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1996, p. 353

³¹ SIMMEL, G.: *The Philosophy of Money*. London : Routledge, 2004, p. 53.

³² HORVAT PINTARIĆ, V.: *Oslikovljena riječ*. Zagreb : Galerije grada Zagreba, 1969, p. 17.

³³ LICOPPE, C.: The Mobile Phone’s Ring. In KATZ, J. E. (ed.): *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*. London : MIT Press, 2008, p. 140-141.

³⁴ See: CREMIN, C.: *Exploring Videogames with Deleuze and Guattari – Towards an Effective Theory of Form*. London, New York : Routledge, 2016, p. 1-9.

more than a thing that comes on a disk, or is downloaded from a website. It is more than a mere string of procedures, algorithms and codes. Steinkuehler describes videogames as a wide variety of procedures that include designers, players, diegetic objects, and contexts in which the player fights for control, and fights to create a meaning.³⁵ Videogames are an assortment and a collection of stimuli that produce sensations and experiences. Or, as Frasca concludes, the term “videogame” includes “*any forms of computer-based entertainment software, either textual or image-based, using any electronic platform such as personal computers or consoles and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment*”.³⁶ Videogames, players and culture do not yield themselves to a homogenous view. Playing a game like *World of Warcraft* on a PC is different than playing *Call of Duty* on a console, which is in turn much different than playing *Candy Crush Saga* on a smartphone. It is, however, possible to articulate the area, and analytically separate form from content. Form refers to the videogame culture in general, and content refers to different types of videogames, gaming styles, gamers, platforms, social contexts, and so on. The fast-growing, consolidated videogame culture suffuses our society, becoming an important lens for the analysis of general social phenomena, seeing as how videogames are regarded as an expression of life and culture in late postmodernism. They can be described as the collection of experiences, culture, and socio-technical systems.³⁷ The videogame culture is diverse, complex and ever-evolving.

Videogames are classified into genres based on the type of player interaction: action games, adventure games, arcades, survival horror games, simulations, sports games, first-person shooter (FPS) games, real-time strategies (RTS), role-playing games (RPG), massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). First-person shooter games, action games, role-playing games, and sports games are the most popular genres at the moment. Action games imply physical challenges. Their more popular subgenres are a) action-adventure games, such as role-playing games, stealth games, survival horror games, battle games, platforms games; and b) shooter games such as first-person shooter (FPS) games, light gun shooter (LGS) games, tactical shooter games (TSS), and third-person shooter games (TPS). Adventure games are a videogame genre focused on exploring, solving puzzles, and interacting with game characters. These games also extend to literary genres such as fantasy, science fiction, horror, comedy, mystery. Simulation games simulate the real life, or its parts. Arcades include all games that are played on machines using slots or coins, which buy the player a certain number of points (lives), or a certain time. Survival horror videogames are a genre characterised by a predominant element of fear, and a main protagonist who fights to survive in adverse circumstances. Frequent enemies include vampires, zombies, mutants, or morbid creatures. First-person shooter games are a genre of action games that mostly come down to fighting and shooting, using a first-person perspective. The character’s hands and weapons are usually seen on the screen. In real-time strategy games, the player develops, with the ultimate objective of defeating another player. Massive multiplayer online role-playing games are a combination of videogames and massive multiplayer online games, where a very large number of players plays the game together in a virtual world, with the player assuming the role of his character, and control over it.³⁸ Story, narrative and narration form the

³⁵ See: CREMIN, C.: *Exploring Videogames with Deleuze and Guattari – Towards an Effective Theory of Form*. London, New York : Routledge, 2016, p. 22-23.

³⁶ FRASCA, G.: *Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate*. [Master’s Thesis]. Atlanta : Georgia Institute of Technology, 2001, p. 4.

³⁷ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 2.

³⁸ See: KARAMATIĆ, M.: *Značaj industrije video igara s osvrtom na stanje u Republici Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb : Faculty of Economics, 2019, p. 14-25.

narratives, or mutations, within videogames. Many theoreticians³⁹ problematize the narrative (narrative semiotics and narratology), but most take a broader view, arguing that a chain of causally linked events taking place in a certain time and space can be considered a narrative. There are four main arguments in support of this view: a) the argument of temporal distance (there is always a time that belongs to the narrator/signifier, and a time that belongs to the narrative/signified); b) the argument of narrator (in order for a narrative to happen, there has to be an authority that tells the story); c) the argument of interpenetration (there is no interactive narrative, only narrative segments); and d) the argument of linearity (the plot of the game is not predefined, while the narrative is). Narratology therefore refers to content (the story and its building elements), and the way the story is presented. Narrative descriptors are game elements that communicate the aspects of their story to the player, usually including a) a game manual (which used to come in booklet form, but was replaced by a digital manual); b) cutscenes (short videos of dialogues between characters); c) interface elements (keyboard, mouse, etc.); and d) visual elements. According to Ryan, videogames contain all the essential ingredients of a narrative: characters, events, settings, and paths leading from the initial to the final situation. We may conclude that videogames, unlike standard board and sports games, have been able to pull off the unique accomplishment of integrating the game into a narrative and fictional framework. Videogames are narrative in their essence, because they are built from the same elements as stories: temporality, causality, and conflict. They are able to tell a story, and provide the elements needed for diegetization, or the creation of new narrative, fictional world, which is established in three categories: fiction through rules (game rules are the driver of game fiction), fiction outside of rules (fiction prevents players from doing things that would have otherwise been possible), and rules not explained by fiction.⁴⁰

Why videogames? They are indisputably our contemporary reality, embodying some of the most important aspects of modern reality; they are an established culture product, and are turning into a fast-growing, consolidated culture. Jenkins discusses the videogame culture as a participatory culture⁴¹ that allows “ordinary” consumers to actively participate in building, constructing, and modifying media content. This culture holds an abundance of participatory potential, such as making or using wiki guides, tutorials, walkthroughs, fan fiction, cosplay, or modding.⁴² Finally, the videogame industry illustrates how identities are shaped in the modern world: the gamer category, and the communities built around videogames, constitute evident examples of fluid, multiple and fragmented identities,⁴³ up to the point when they anticipate post-identity scenarios.⁴⁴ An increasing number of people of different demographics are playing videogames. Exhibitions, museums, conferences, seminars, competitions, and many other videogame-related types of events have spread over the past fifteen years. A multitude

³⁹ For more information, see: GENETTE, G.: *Figure 3: Discorso del racconto*. Torino : Einaudi, 2003; GENETTE, G.: *Fikcija i dikcija*. Zagreb : Ceres, 2002; TODOROV, T.: *Uvod u fantastičnuknjiževnost*. Beograd : Rad, 1987; BORDWELL, D.: *O povijesti filmskoga stila*. Zagreb : Croatian Film Association, 2005; RYAN, M. L.: *Avatars of Story*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2006; PRINCE, G.: *Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2003; BITI, V.: *Pojmovnik suvremene književne i kulturne teorije*. Zagreb : Matica hrvatska, 2000.

⁴⁰ See: RYAN, L. M.: *Story/Worlds/Media: Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology*. In RYAN, M. L., THON, J. N. (eds.): *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln, London : University of Nebraska Press, 2014, p. 25-50.

⁴¹ For more information, see: JENKINS, H.: *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers. Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York : New York University Press, 2006.

⁴² See: NEWMAN, J.: *Playing with Videogames*. London : Routledge, 2008, p. 151-174.

⁴³ For more information, see: BAUMAN, Z.: *Identity*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2004, p. 15, 19-23, 26-37, 52-60, 68-77; or GIDDENS, A.: *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1991, p. 15-22, 32-35, 36-64.

⁴⁴ See: AGAMBEN, G.: *The Coming Community*. Minnesota : University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 85-96.

of jobs, trainings and courses focusing on videogame design, development, research and study has been opened in the education and employment sectors.⁴⁵ We are witnessing an increasing phenomenon of *videoludification*⁴⁶ of the society. Certain areas of the social reality are starting to resemble a game, or are *gamified*, meaning that game elements are used and applied in other areas such as education, work, therapy, business, military, science, social relations, advertising, etc. Social reality turns into a (video)game, and the videogame culture thus has a significant impact on the society as a whole.⁴⁷

In *Homo ludens*, Johan Huizinga wrote about games as an element of culture⁴⁸ (as a fundamental element of life). He believes games are a cultural phenomenon that antedates culture, and is older than culture. Mäyrä suggests that we are becoming a *Ludic Society*, or entering an *Era of Games*,⁴⁹ defined as the process of *ludification* of culture and society, which refers to games and their elements originating from different areas of culture and society, in which games, ludic narratives and literacy become the dominant cultural forms.⁵⁰ Frasca⁵¹ views videogames through the concepts of *ludus*⁵² and *paideia*.⁵³ When playing an aircraft simulation in the *Microsoft Flight Simulator* or the *Nintendo's Pilotwings 64* without a particular purpose, the player is in education mode (*engaged in paideia*), but *ludus rules* (game, entertainment) can easily be imposed if the player, for instance, performs a special manoeuvre without crashing down. As Frasca notes, many videogames are specifically designed as environments for *paideia* and *ludus*.⁵⁴

The videogame culture is obviously embedded in a broader social phenomenon and transformation, intertwined with them in complex ways, including the rise of digital culture,⁵⁵ participatory culture,⁵⁶ liquid modernity,⁵⁷ postmodernism,⁵⁸ the age of simulacra,⁵⁹ staged

⁴⁵ See: KERR, A.: *Global Games: Production, Circulation, and Policy in the Networked Era*. London : Routledge, 2017, p. 94-104.

⁴⁶ Remark by the author: "Videoludification" is a process in which the everyday life is suffused with the logic of videogames, including economy, work, entertainment, education, health, and consumption. Latin v. *ludere* / n. *ludus* = to play, game.

⁴⁷ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 5-6.

⁴⁸ For more information, see: HUIZINGA, J.: *Homo Ludens – A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London : Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1949.

⁴⁹ MÄYRÄ, F.: Pokémon GO: Entering the Ludic Society. In *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 47-50. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2050157916678270>>.

⁵⁰ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 22.

⁵¹ FRASCA, G.: *Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate*. [Master's Thesis]. Atlanta : Georgia Institute of Technology, 2001, p. 4.

⁵² Remark by the authors: *Ludus* – Latin *ludus*, -i, m. = school, game, entertainment.

⁵³ Remark by the authors: *Paideia* – Greek *παιδεία* = upbringing – originally means the education of boys for life.

⁵⁴ FRASCA, G.: *Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate*. [Master's Thesis]. Atlanta : Georgia Institute of Technology, 2001, p. 4.

⁵⁵ For more information, see: CASTELLS, M.: *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol 1: The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1996, p. 358-406.

⁵⁶ See: JENKINS, H.: *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers. Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York : New York University Press, 2006, 37-51.

⁵⁷ See also: BAUMAN, Z.: *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2000, p. 91-130.

⁵⁸ See, for example: HARAWAY, D.: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. New York : Routledge, 1991, p. 203-231.

⁵⁹ For more information, see: BAUDRILLARD, J.: *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 14-30.

authenticity⁶⁰ and a number of other aspect of changes to social realities in late capitalism. The videogame culture is at the same time a consequence and a root cause (contributor) to the complex modern social and cultural transformations.⁶¹ We are rushing toward a future in which “entertainment” is the new “business”.⁶² A videogame player, or gamer, his fingers and thumbs frenetically flying over the keyboard to move his avatar through the mutating narrative landscape, participating in a textuality that they physically animate, immersing himself in the unorganised, progressive fictional universe that only exists in this integration (*immersion*), is largely a proponent of digimodernism.⁶³ As computer videogames spread among all age groups, they became a synecdoche representing an entire new cultural dominant form. Videogames are therefore a culturological prototype of digital culture in its purest form. Games and gamers have become the main product and the driving force of the modern society.⁶⁴ The player strives to understand the videogame, much like one strives to understand a movie, the difference being that the player can cause events in a videogame, and react to the presented events. The videogames system is interactive. The player creates meanings by manipulating object images presented on the screen, influencing the understanding of the game and of other communication processes. The game system is thus promoted into a semiotic system that promotes meanings and becomes a medium for communication.⁶⁵

In the paper *Tipologija gamera i gamera u Hrvatskoj – Neke sociokulturne karakteristike* (in English *Typology of Gamers in Croatia: Some Sociocultural Characteristics*), Krolo, Zdravković and Puzek underline three dimensions important for the understanding of the gamer culture. The first dimension of gaming is associated with the importance of technological and media literacy. The second dimension points to the importance of adopting and reading cultural codes that are associated with the narrative of the virtual worlds, and accumulating the skills needed for competent gaming. The third dimension is associated with the intensity of communication with the programming structure of the game, but also to the intensity of social communication with the other gamers, implying cooperation with persons from a different sociocultural context.⁶⁶ Kerr emphasises: “*Distinguishing between production and consumption and between work and play in contemporary Western societies is increasingly problematic.*”⁶⁷ The rise of phenomena such as *playbour* (a combination of the words *player* and *neighbour*)⁶⁸ or *edutainment* (a combination of the words *education* and

⁶⁰ For more information, see: MACCANNELL, D.: Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings. In *American Journal of Sociology*, 1973, Vol. 79, No. 3, p. 589-603. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776259?seq=1>>.

⁶¹ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 16.

⁶² ZICKERMANN, G., LINDER, J.: *The Gamification Revolution: How Leaders Leverage Game Mechanics to Crush the Competition*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 2013, p. 216.

⁶³ Remark by the author: According to Alan Kirby, digimodernism is the dominant culturological logic, dominated by digital culture.

⁶⁴ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 18.

⁶⁵ See: BABECKI, M.: Digital Games as a Research Subject in Media Studies. In *Studia Medioznawcze Media Studies*, 2018, Vol. 72, No. 1, p. 45-55. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <https://studiamedioznawcze.pl/Numery/2018_1_72/babecki.pdf>.

⁶⁶ KROLO, K., ZDRAVKOVIĆ, Ž., PUZEK, I.: Tipologija gamera i gamera u Hrvatskoj – neke sociokulturne karakteristike. In *Medijske studije*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 13, p. 30. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://hrcak.srce.hr/166846>>.

⁶⁷ KERR, A.: *The Business and Culture of Digital Games: Gamework and Gameplay*. London : Sage Publications, 2017, p. 7.

⁶⁸ See: KÜCKLICK, J. R.: Virtual Worlds and Their Discontents. Precarious Sovereignty, Governmentality, and the Ideology of Play. In *Games and Culture*, 2009, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 340-352. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available

entertainment),⁶⁹ in which the line between business, game and education is completely blurred, serves as proof of a world in which everything becomes “just a game”.⁷⁰

Videogames are a medium offering the players a multitude of choices. The idea of agency and player control has become the key to defining and studying videogames in many debates. Some games, like *Until Dawn* and *Life is Strange*, use the “butterfly effect” as a metaphor and a conception to explain to the player that all his actions can have an impact on the course of the story and the fate of its protagonists. Telltale’s videogame opus, including *Walking Dead* (2012 – 2016), *Game of Thrones* (2014) and others, is similar. With these games, the players know that the story will unfold in accordance with their choices. In essence, the player “tailors” the story. Other games, like *Quantic Dreams Heavy Rain* (2010), *Beyond: Two Souls* (2013), and *Detroit: Become Human* (2018), are toying with the same idea while offering a number of different endings, depending on the player’s decisions.⁷¹ Videogames are presented as replete with choices and options, with the responsibility of choice always on the player: which path to choose, who will survive, which decisions to make. The player is always in control of his activities, and their consequences. This makes him responsible for successes and accomplishments as much as for failures and defeats, in spite of the involvement of many other participants in the game process, some of whom are not human (artificial intelligence, etc).⁷² Berens and Howard differentiate between seven types of games: I) action and adventure; II) driving and racing; III) first-person shooter; IV) platform and puzzle; V) roleplaying; VI) strategy and simulation; VII) sports and beat-‘em ups.⁷³ Rouse, on the other hands, seeks an answer to the question what the players want from the videogame, why they play it. He found that the players’ motivation and expectations are fuelled by I) challenge; II) immersion; and III) desire to act/do rather than just passively watch.⁷⁴ As Livingstone interprets it: “In interviews with children regarding their experience of screen entertainment culture, what is most notable when children talk about computer games, the words that appear over and over are ‘control’, ‘challenge’, ‘freedom’.”⁷⁵

at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1555412009343571>>; FRELIK, P.: The Master’s Digital Tools: Cognitive Capitalism and Non-Normative Gaming Practices. In *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, 2016, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 163-176. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1555412009343571>>; HJORTH, L.: Ambient and Soft Play: Play, Labour and the Digital in Everyday Life. In *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2017, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 163-176. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1367549417705606>>.

⁶⁹ For more information, see: CHARSKY, D.: From Edutainment to Serious Games: A Change in the Use of Game Characteristics. In *Games and Culture*, 2010, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 177-198. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1555412009354727>>; EGENFELDT-NIELSEN, S., SMITH, J. H., PAJARES TOSCA, S.: *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. New York : Routledge, 2008, p. 205-223.; OIKONOMOU, A., JAIN, L.: *Serious Games and Edutainment Applications*. Berlin : Springer, 2011, p. 9-25, 107-125.; KATSALIAKI, K., MUSTAFEE, N.: Edutainment for Sustainable Development – A Survey of Games in the Field. In *Simulation and Gaming*, 2015, Vol. 46, No. 6, p. 647-672. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1046878114552166?journalCode=sagb>>.

⁷⁰ TAYLOR, N. et al.: Alienated Playbour: Relations of Production in EVE Online. In *Games and Culture*, 2015, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 383. [online]. [2021-04-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1555412014565507>>.

⁷¹ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 60-61.

⁷² See: MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 65-71.

⁷³ NEWMAN, J.: *Videogames*. London : Psychology Press, 2004, p. 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁷⁵ LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment*. London : Sage Publications, 2002, p. 231.

Considerably influenced by Huizinga, Caillois proposes four main types of videogames: *Agon*, dominated by competition and competitiveness; *Alea*, which are all about opportunities, possibilities, unpredictability, and coincidence; *Ilinx*, in which satisfaction and enjoyment are derived from movement; and *Mimicry*, in which games revolve around simulation, make-believe, and role-play. The important thing is that these forms and categories are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are often combined and interwoven.⁷⁶ When playing a videogame, the player is in the very heart of action. Presence would therefore be a more precise notion than control, manipulation, and playing (*being there rather than controlling, manipulating and playing a game*). The key task of videogame designers thus becomes to make sure that there is no separation or distancing from content, because participation and the sense of being there are the central idea. A good videogame makes a person forget themselves and forget about the flow of time, makes them function unconsciously, and just go with the flow.⁷⁷ Videogames therefore represent the experience of life, and this experience is the key concept in the study of videogames.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Videogames are a paradigmatic cultural product of the digital participatory culture, which allows participation in co-creation, and complementation of the constructed reality. By playing videogames, the player creates and constructs meanings, and this experience creates a sense of control. Participation gives the player a sense of control over reality. The advantage of videogames is that they call for action with the act of playing itself. The player has to bring the dystopia to its end, and videogames send the message that the power of change lies in the hands of those who are subjected to the system. Videogames can also be a powerful tool of social criticism. Many videogames have several endings, depending on the players' decisions and actions. They create different worlds and different narratives within the same game. At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when we have no control whatsoever over the global reality, when we have no power to influence global politics and health or economic policies, as we witness almost dystopian scenes of facilities, institutions, companies and shops closing down, we are all gripped by a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. Escapism – running away from our problems – is one of the powerful motivators to use videogames, and the gratifications they bring. While everything around us seems hopeless, while we are isolated in our own homes, it seems that choosing the solutions and the paths to take in a videogame is the only thing under our control. Videogames become our new windows into the world, and our only comfort in the world that is collapsing before our eyes. Videogames are our only socialization tool at the time of social isolation and distancing.

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⁷⁶ NEWMAN, J.: *Videogames*. London : Psychology Press, 2004, p. 21.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 17-18.

⁷⁸ MURIEL, D., CRAWFORD, G.: *Video Games as Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. New York : Routledge, 2018, p. 84.

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NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ján Proner – Dušan Blahút

Abstract:

In the last decades, the issue of virtual and augmented reality has become known throughout several scientific fields. This phenomenon, which was once considered science-fiction, is currently being studied by the academia in many contexts. With the pandemic, new opportunities to utilise modern tools of virtual and augmented reality have opened up. Due to strict government measures, people were faced with a situation they had never been in before. Virtual and augmented reality offer tools and opportunities through which people can learn, communicate, shop, or have fun. This article maps the use of virtual and augmented reality during the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus in various areas, such as healthcare, education, tourism, culture, and shopping.

Keywords:

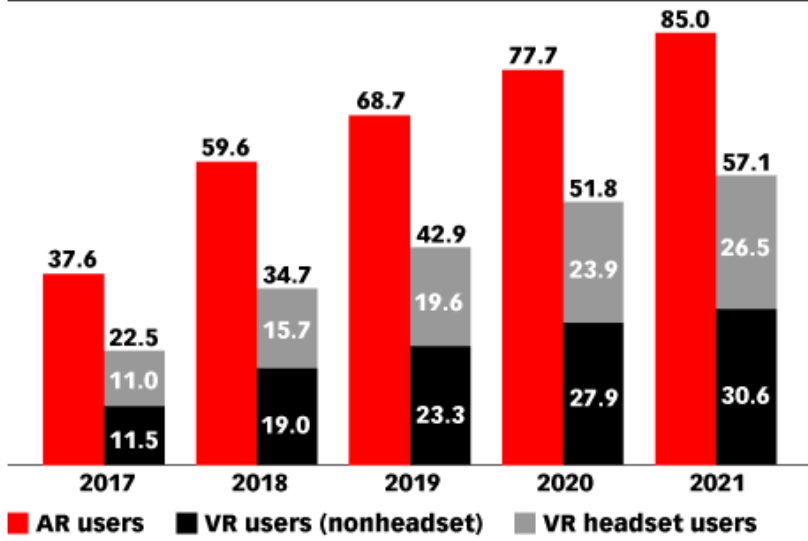
Virtual Reality. Augmented Reality. COVID-19. Innovation. Virtual Space.

Introduction

In March 2020, the *World Health Organization* announced that the COVID-19 virus had reached more than a hundred countries around the world. The pandemic affected all continents, and subsequently all countries. If we look at the statistics, over 10,000 people on average still die from the virus every day. The total number of infected people climbed up to 159 million, while more than 3 million people succumbed to the disease.¹ Presently, at the end of the second wave, and with the availability of vaccination, scientists anticipate the end of the pandemic. The overall impact on the economy, culture, or social relations will be a topic of study in the coming years. The impact of the pandemic can also be seen in the technology sector, which had to adapt to the current situation. In our article, we focus on technology, specifically virtual and augmented reality, which offered new conveniences and tools during the pandemic. It is recognised that the use of VR and AR is wide, from healthcare through education to the media itself. We may not even realize it, but VR and AR are already a part of our daily lives. Whether it is a virtual background of the *Google Meet* platform or *Zoom*. A virtual meeting where participants are in different places, and at different times. Or simple filters on social media such as Instagram that can transport you into space via AR. Virtual Reality has been trying for years to achieve a global market reach and wide availability for customers. The current situation with the pandemic, combined with remote form of work, education, or healthcare creates a new space for VR. If we look at Figure 1, we can see that the use of VR or AR has been constantly growing in the recent years.

¹ *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <[https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?/](https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/)>.

US Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality Users, 2017-2021
millions



Note: virtual reality (VR) users are individuals of any age who experience VR content at least once per month via any device; augmented reality (AR) users are individuals of any age who experience AR content at least once per month via any device
Source: eMarketer, March 2019

245839 www.eMarketer.com

Figure 1: Use of VR and AR in the U.S. in the years 2017 – 2021

Source: PETROCK, V.: *Virtual and Augmented Reality Users 2019*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.emarketer.com/content/virtual-and-augmented-reality-users-2019>>.

1 Definitions of Virtual and Augmented Reality

First of all, we should define the difference between virtual and augmented reality, specifically what they have in common and what makes them differ. The concept of a “virtual continuum”, designed by Milgram and Kishino in 1994, will be helpful in this.² From this simple figure, the nature of both realities is clear, i.e., virtual reality replaces a completely real environment, unlike augmented reality, which adds artificially generated objects into the real environment. However, there is also a third group called mixed reality, which is in between a pure virtual reality, and a pure augmented reality.

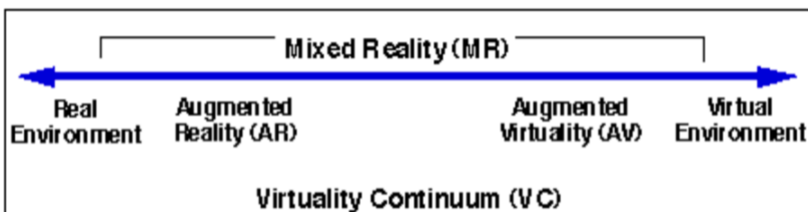


Figure 2: Virtuality continuum

Source: MILGRAM, P., KISHINO, F.: A Taxonomy of Mixed Reality Visual Displays. In *IEICE Transactions on Information and Systems*, 1994, Vol. E77-D, No. 12, p. 1322. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <http://web.cs.wpi.edu/~gogo/courses/cs525H_2010f/papers/Milgram_IEICE_1994.pdf>.

² See: MILGRAM, P., KISHINO, F.: A Taxonomy of Mixed Reality Visual Displays. In *IEICE Transactions on Information and Systems*, 1994, Vol. E77-D, No. 12, p. 1322. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <http://web.cs.wpi.edu/~gogo/courses/cs525H_2010f/papers/Milgram_IEICE_1994.pdf>.

The first mention of virtual reality appeared in 1957, when Heilig constructed a device called *Sensorama Simulator*. By using this device, the user could watch television in 3D, and even play games. At that time, it was a big technological innovation.³ Virtual reality was also defined by Krueger, who calls it artificial reality, referring to a synthetic environment in which the user can be involved interactively. This artificial reality perceives the participant's action from the body's relationship to the graphic environment, and generates reactions evoking the feeling that the participant's activity is taking place within this world.⁴ Lévy described virtual reality as a type of interactive simulation. In it, the user experiences a so-called psychological experience, through which they are involved in situations defined by the database. In his opinion, this virtual world can accurately simulate the real world.⁵ At the same time, it allows the user to create their own virtual concepts that are very different from the real view of the world. In it, the user can be interactively involved, and this artificial reality perceives the participant's action in the body's relation to the graphic environment, and generates reactions that evoke the feeling that the participant's activity is taking place within this world.⁶ Šubák describes the principles of Virtual Reality as follows: “*The basis of virtual reality is the effort of displaying spatial models and scenes as faithfully as possible, manipulating them, creating the real world, a certain part of it with all its laws and rules, moving in three-dimensional space, and all this in real time. Meanwhile, basic approaches of the graphics field are applied.*”⁷ According to Milgram and Kishino, virtual reality can transcend the boundaries of physical reality by creating a world in which the physical laws that normally govern space, time, mechanics, or material properties are abolished.⁸

When discussing virtual reality, it is important to mention its sub-category. We are talking about “augmented reality”. It is a type of virtual reality that allows the user to perceive the real world enhanced by virtual objects. It can therefore be considered a connection between the artificial world and the real world. Virtual display provides the user with the opportunity to obtain additional information about the physical environment that is not perceivable by the human senses.⁹ Augmented reality is a kind of virtual reality that allows the user to perceive the real world enhanced by virtual objects. The concept of augmented reality is linked to a more general concept called mediated reality. In it, mediated image of reality is modified by a computer. The result is an enhanced perception of reality, while virtual reality only replaces the real world with a simulated one. Augmented reality is often mistaken with virtual reality. There are several views on the relationship between the two, as well as the very definition of augmented reality. Virtual reality is often used to define augmented reality. Virtual reality can therefore be considered a source of unlimited possibilities. One of its basic products is digital games. These currently represent a popular media content used by a wide range of people.

³ *History of Virtual Reality*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.vrs.org.uk/virtual-reality/history.html>>.

⁴ SHERMAN, W. R., CRAIG, A. B.: *Understanding Virtual Reality: Interface, Application, and Design*. San Francisco : Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2002, p. 16.

⁵ LÉVY, P.: *Kyberkultura*. Prague : Karolinum, 2000, p. 64-65.

⁶ SHERMAN, W. R., CRAIG, A. B.: *Understanding Virtual Reality: Interface, Application, and Design*. San Francisco : Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2002, p. 16.

⁷ ŠUBÁK, M.: *Čo je virtuálna realita?* [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://virtualnarealita.eu/co-je-virtualna-realita>>.

⁸ See: MILGRAM, P., KISHINO, F.: A Taxonomy of Mixed Reality Visual Displays. In *IEICE Transactions on Information and Systems*, 1994, Vol. E77-D, No. 12, p. 1321-1329. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <http://web.cs.wpi.edu/~gogo/courses/cs525H_2010f/papers/Milgram_IEICE_1994.pdf>.

⁹ BENETINOVA, S.: *Virtuálna realita, rozšírená realita a metaverzum*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://plus.fmk.sk/wiki/fmk-4/tedi/herne-siete/2363-2/>>.

2 Use of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality during COVID-19

The areas where we can encounter virtual and augmented reality are truly wide. Both have found their way in the industrial sector, they are involved in automotive design, architecture, and design. Together with software applications they save time and resources, where designers can simulate and modify external shape or construction requirements without having a physical model. Likewise, the gaming industry uses both platforms, thus making them more accessible to the general public. In case of games utilising virtual reality, the limiting factor is the need for external peripherals, and for the most immersive experience also a sufficiently powerful computer. Nevertheless, the number of game releases is higher from year to year.

2.1 Education and Healthcare

When discussing augmented reality, we can mention various applications that enable for better students' interaction with study aids through smart devices, thus creating a new form of immersive education. Educational applications must meet several specific attributes in order to be successful in this segment. Authors must focus primarily on the visual side and intuitive operation, while the text part is secondary to tertiary, replaced instead by pictograms or basic symbols. An important role is played by the auditory layer, allowing replacement or supplementation of the text component for better understanding of the context. Another attribute is the cognitive ability to recognize given signs and their interpretation by a given segment of percipients. It is also important to keep in mind the fine motor skills that play an important part in controlling the application. As can be seen from the brief outline of the conditions that should be taken into account when creating an application for the youngest group of users, the creator is in a way limited in the choice of resources. However, with the right combination of individual components, the set goal can be achieved.¹⁰

In medicine, the benefits of augmented reality are the most profound in diagnostics and surgery. Doctors can use visualizations to practice procedures or invasive surgeries, thus eliminating errors and recovery time. During a surgery, the acquired information is projected in 3D (X-RAY, MRI, CT) onto the patient, and the surgeon has a chance to see into the patient through HMD, or an external monitor or projector. In addition to these possibilities, augmented reality can also be utilised in examination of internal organs. It also finds its use in aesthetic surgery, where it helps not only the surgeons, but also the clients themselves, who have the opportunity to see the final results of the surgery before the procedure itself. Through augmented reality, doctors or nurses can also try out surgical procedures in a simulated operating room environment. Healthcare is the ideal tool for virtual and augmented reality for training, education, or treatment of patients. It is the immersive elements offered by VR and AR that eliminate disturbing environment, and allow the patient or doctor to fully concentrate during their training. Patients who have survived the COVID-19 virus, and are experiencing long-term effects are also currently a part of the augmented and virtual reality research. Several studies show that patients who have recovered from COVID-19 do not need to recover just physically. Many of them have also suffered psychological damage that requires rehabilitation. During the pandemic, 4 out of 10 adults were found to have a problem with depression or anxiety. Negative aspects of mental health also include problems with sleep, diet, alcohol consumption, or

¹⁰ BLAHÚT, D.: Využitie rozšírenej reality pri vzdelávaní detí. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MENDELOVÁ, D., RADOŠINSKÁ, J. (eds.): *Megatrendy a Média 2017: Budúcnosť médií II*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2017, p. 7.

worsening of chronic illness.¹¹ Of course, the pandemic also had an impact on the physical side of people, working from home and sitting in front of a computer for 10-12 hours was reflected in the loss of fitness, and the decline of physical activity. As lockdown was introduced in all countries, people did not have the option to attend rehabilitation. The alternative to a conventional rehabilitation is telemedicine, which can use elements of virtual reality. By telemedicine, we can understand a transmission of medical information directly to one's home through various communication devices. It can be a simple video chat, video recording, but also a digital game that teaches you how to exercise correctly. Virtual reality can also be a part of telemedicine. As a part of telemedicine, it has significant advantages compared to conventional rehabilitation, especially during a pandemic.

The first plus is the advantage of social distancing, as the patient can exercise from home without visiting a physiotherapist. The second advantage is from the therapist's viewpoint, as they can work with several patients simultaneously, and monitor their condition at the same time. Virtual reality is unique precisely in the 3D absorbing environment, which can isolate the patient from the real world. The therapy as a whole is therefore more effective, and more beneficial for the patient. Compared to other telemedicine devices, VR allows the use of many external devices, which allow the therapists to constantly monitor their patients.¹² On the other hand, it is important to state that many patients can experience side effects during this treatment. These are related to the total time spent in virtual reality. Some patients might experience unexpected symptoms such as headache, blurred vision, fatigue, or mild balance problems. Although current tools almost completely eliminate these side effects, they are still a topic.

2.2 Tourism and Culture

With the pandemic and the introduction of mandatory quarantines, public institutions such as theatres, cinemas, galleries and museums also suffered losses. In order for these institutions to function, they had to move into the virtual world. The answer to closed museums, cancelled concerts, or closed theatres are virtual shows, or digitization of art. Today, you can access various cultural institutions or world-known monuments by taking a virtual tour. VR also includes 360-degree videos designed for the *Oculus Rift* headsets or similar devices. These allow the viewer to transport themselves in an immersive way to a virtual, but photorealistic environment. It is clear that neither VR nor AR can completely replace the experience of real travel. However, in the current situation, VR in particular offers a safe and affordable way to travel the world. The reasons for creating and using augmented reality in the presentation, maintenance, and preservation of cultural heritage are indisputable, and among them we can include:

- Interdisciplinarity;
- Interactivity;
- Emergence of a digital artifact;
- Visuality;
- Attractiveness.

¹¹ MANCHAL, N., KAMAL, R., COX, C.: *The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>>.

¹² See: SMITH, M., STAAL, J., VAN GOOR, H.: Could Virtual Reality Play a Role in the Rehabilitation after COVID-19 Infection? In *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 2020, Vol. 6, No. 1. No pagination. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjosem/6/1/e000943.full.pdf>>.

Recent studies show that “up to 35% of museums in Europe have already included a VR and AR form of presentation in order to improve their exhibitions”.¹³ Although this way of cultural heritage presentation is still new, the steady increase in popularity suggests that museums are beginning to understand the potential of augmented reality and its effectiveness in creating interest in historical heritage, and in creating more engaging ways of their presentation. Such applications also have the ability to provide an alternative way of navigating museums that do not have enough space to exhibit all their collections, as well as a way of providing information on accessing these collections. Some of the artifacts are also oversized, often rendering them impossible to exhibit. Such exhibits could be completely replaced by a digital version. An example of the use of VR in culture is the *Google Art & Culture Service*. Google has created a platform that has connected with more than 2,500 museums and galleries around the world. Art enthusiasts can thus see galleries and museums such as the Louvre, the *Vatican Museum* or the *Van Gogh Museum* in Amsterdam right in their living rooms. Virtual tours are an example of what a museum might look like in the near future.¹⁴ The use of augmented reality in the cultural and social sphere is clear, and has potential to contribute to the attractiveness, better education, and marketing success of a given cultural heritage object. The first attempts at augmented reality and its implementation in the presentation of cultural heritage were made more than 10 years ago.¹⁵ Through VR, you can also access music concerts from museum and galleries. COVID-19 also caused experimentation in the music industry. An example can be the concert of the singer John Legend via the *Wave* platform with support of VR. The artist was uploaded to the application as an avatar – a virtual character. His movement, even strong facial expressions or gestures were captured using the tools of the MNV animated motion capture system.¹⁶ The same motion capture technology is also used in conventional or sports medicine. For example, to better diagnose the athletes’ movement, and achieve new goals. During the concert, the singer was subsequently placed into a virtual environment – a music stage, where there were other virtual characters present. The concert was organized as part of the *Free America* project, and showed an alternative direction in which music concerts can go.

When discussing concerts, we must also mention the virtual performance of the singer Travis Scott, and his performance in the virtual world of the game *Fortnite*. A total of 12 million people watched the concert. During the concert, the artist’s avatar transformed into various sizes, and into various virtual parts of the digital game, be it underwater or the space. The virtual 10-minute-long concert signified a visually interesting connection between virtual reality and a digital game.¹⁷

¹³ See: ANGELOPOULOU, A. et al.: Mobile Augmented Reality for Cultural Heritage. In VENKATASUBRAMANIAN, N. et al. (eds.): *Mobile Wireless Middleware, Operating Systems, and Applications*. 4th International ICST Conference. London : Springer, 2011, p. 15-22.

¹⁴ ROMANO, A.: *12 Famous Museums Offer Virtual Tours You Can Take on Your Couch (Video)*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours/>>.

¹⁵ See: MAGNENAT-THALMANN, N., PAPAGINNAKIS, G.: Virtual Worlds and Augmented Reality in Cultural Heritage Applications. In BALTSAVIAS, M. et al. (eds.): *Recording, Modeling and Visualization of Cultural Heritage*. London : Routledge, 2006, p. 419-430.

¹⁶ CARLTON, B.: *John Legend Performs on Wave to Raise Awareness towards Mass Incarceration*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://vrscout.com/news/john-legend-live-vr-concert-wave/>>.

¹⁷ STUART, K.: *More Than 12m Players Watch Travis Scott Concert in Fortnite*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/games/2020/apr/24/travis-scott-concert-fortnite-more-than-12m-players-watch/>>.



Figure 3: Virtual concerts

Source: *LIVE – A Night For “Bigger Love”*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGy6419Yuuw>>.

2.3 Augmented Reality as a Shopping Tool

As for augmented reality, its use has been found especially in online shopping. Through AR, people can shop directly from the comfort of their home. Through your mobile device and an augmented reality application, you can browse a virtual catalogue, select furniture, change its colour, and see if it will fit into your living room. The 3D visualization offered by AR gives the customer an opportunity to view the goods or product before making the decision to purchase it. This process reduces the number of product returns, and supports a greater customer satisfaction. An augmented reality application is also offered by *IKEA*. By uploading a photo of your room into the application, it automatically measures its size and offers you furniture that fits the size and style of the room.



Figure 4: Ikea app

Source: *Say Hey to IKEA Place*. [online]. [2021-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UudV1VdFtuQ>>.

It is also similar with clothing; customers can see through AR what the selected product will look like without having to try it on directly. An example is the application from *Warby Parker*, which allows its users to try on different products, especially glasses, via AR. An interesting collaboration between a service and the VR and AR technologies was a campaign from the cosmetics company *L'Oréal*. The users can upload their photos into the application *Makeup Genius*. The user then chooses cosmetic products such as lipstick or nail polish from the application, which they can add to their photos. The application also uses AR, while also

allowing video recording. Augmented reality ensures that the product is showing on the user's face even when moving. The customer actually sees what the product will look like on them. The use of AR increased online sales by 49% for *L'Oréal*.¹⁸

Conclusion

The COVID-19 epidemic presented people with new opportunities and tools to utilise virtual and augmented reality. Currently, COVID-19 is forcing people to shop, work, or even socialize in a virtual environment. For the commercial and non-commercial spheres, the pandemic meant an increase of interest in new technologies. In some sectors, this created a pressure to find a new approach to customers, which for a few was key in order to maintain their livelihoods. AR and VR had used previously known features, and enabled individuals, artists, galleries and companies to connect their products with customers in a virtual environment. During a pandemic, virtual and augmented reality offers new ideas, ways, or tools that help to ease the impact of the disease in various areas. VR and AR are no longer 'sci-fi' technologies, they are a part of our lives, and are as reliable as laptops and smartphones. The only thing they lacked was a strong impulse for their frequent use in several industries. And this impulse came with the COVID-19 pandemic, which again pushed the technological advancement of VR and AR forward. However, another question arises, and that is the question of sufficient resources and production capacity, as the degree of globalization, especially in modern technologies, is very high, and a disruption of production of one component can slow down or even stop the flow of components needed to create the complex product. We should take this experience of a global pandemic as a challenge and an impulse to create new products and services that would benefit people not only in difficult situations, but also during rest and relaxation.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MUSIC PRODUCTION

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Abstract:

The paper explores the connection between artificial intelligence and music production and consists of two main chapters. The theoretical part provides general knowledge on artificial intelligence. The empirical part tries to answer how experts perceive the phenomenon of artificial intelligence in music production, also confronting and explaining their findings. Artificial intelligence is currently being implemented in various areas of human life. With its effect, many people rightly fear that they will remain in their jobs, but it should be added that the main goal of artificial intelligence is not to destroy and replace human individuals, but to help them and speed up their work process. It is scientifically proven that when listening to music, different parts of the brain are involved in the thought process; As for the creative process of playing a musical instrument, both hemispheres of the brain participate in this process. Exploring the implemented artificial intelligence in music production is an interesting direction of research.

Key words:

Artificial Intelligence. Music Experts. Music Production. Music Industry. Perception.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is generally defined as “*intelligence demonstrated by machines, as opposed to that manifested by man. It is an area of study in computer science that seeks to reproduce what the human brain does.*”¹ For better imagination, it is a specific software or computer program with the ability to learn. He further uses the learned knowledge for decision-making processes in new situations, thus showing the level of intelligence. At the same time, it should be added that this intelligence does not come from man, and is therefore called artificial – mechanical. As early as in the 1990s, experts identified artificial intelligence as an interdisciplinary discipline, drawing heavily on relevant scientific disciplines: psychology, neurology, cybernetics, mathematical logic, decision theory, computer science, game theory, linguistics,² etc. The Czech scientist V. Mařík claims that artificial intelligence includes all procedures and algorithms, which in their consequence lead to a certain imitation of the expression of the behaviour of an intelligent person. Slovak scientists M. Gregor and M. Gregor complement this definition by saying that “*artificial intelligence is an area of theory and development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that require human intelligence, such as voice recognition, image recognition, decision making, learning, etc.*”³

1 Artificial Intelligence in Music Production

The term “artificial intelligence” has recently become increasingly associated with its application in the music industry. A. Britten declares that the music industry generally covers many important activities, but all focus on one thing, namely the support of an artist or a

¹ SPANO, M.: *Umelá inteligencia v orechovej škrupinke*. [online]. [2020-11-01]. Available at: <https://martinspa.no/_layout/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=umelainteligenciask.pdf>.

² MAŘÍK, V. et al.: *Umelá inteligencia (1)*. Prague : Academia, 2000, p. 11.

³ GREGOR, M., GREGOR, M.: *Umelá inteligencia, explózia inteligencie a technologický pokrok*. [online]. [2020-11-01]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280553214_Umela_inteligencia_explozia_inteligencie_a_tehnologicky_pokrok>.

group. Jobs are divided into three basic sectors: recording, publishing and live music.⁴ However, artificial intelligence offers many ways in which it can influence the music industry. G. Byers explains how artificial intelligence can be beneficial for music publishers themselves. He claims that music publishers currently earn about 30% of the total profit of a successful hit, but that they can use artificial intelligence to reduce their own costs of producing and promoting music and secure higher revenues. The use of artificial intelligence has many more benefits in the music industry, but these are primarily wasted on business and increasing productivity and revenue.⁵ A notable example is the personalized generation of recommended music content and artists to help consumers discover new songs and music genres. The last decade has been distinguished by the development of streaming platforms, it means that music has become more accessible to masses. Music applications using elements of artificial intelligence, resp. machine learning algorithms have become so common that it is difficult to imagine life without them. Editor O. Lunny refers to a prominent music expert, Scott Cohen, who demonstrates the importance of artificial intelligence in the music industry at the Dutch ESNS (Eurosonic Nooderslag) conference using the example of the Spotify streaming platform. He says that up to 20,000 new songs are uploaded to the service every day, which ordinary consumers do not have a chance to listen to and then categorize. The penetration of big data and artificial intelligence has brought an end to the music genre as a marketing concept, and according to Cohen, there is currently no search by music genre. At the same time, he adds that the songs get into our playlists due to their success and recommendations by artificial intelligence. As an example, he cites the iTunes hit from 2017, Despacito, and carried over its success to the following year, while in 2018, the Korean band BTS had up to two #1 albums.⁶ With a uniform music categorization, we would label both music genres, which are different from each other, with the label World Music.

G. Ramos describes the present as the second wave, when artificial intelligence greatly influences the process of composing and producing music. He believes that, according to experts, technologies using artificial intelligence can help artists beyond, which can ultimately lead to the complete replacement of the positions of composers and sound engineers.⁷ New technologies have always found their place when recording new songs. S. Bowman mentions Frank Zappa's experimentation with a 5-track recording in the 1960s or the first auto-tune used by Cher in track Believe (1998). Once the position of sound engineers required deep experience and years of practice, today these people have at their disposal virtual mixing assistants who use elements of machine learning to balance and equalize the music track.⁸ Of course, artificial intelligence also brings with it the application of deep learning in music production or in the generation of lyrics. Artificial intelligence and its forms are currently most often seen in the role of co-producer. The album 2017 I AM AI by *YouTube* star Taryn Southern is considered to be a significant milestone in the co-production of music by artificial intelligence. This is the very first album created with the help of artificial intelligence. For

⁴ BRITTEN, A.: *Working in the Music Industry: How to Find an Exciting and Varied Career in the World of Music*. 3rd Edition. London : Little, Brown Book Group, 2009, p. 6.

⁵ BYERS, G.: *Artificial Intelligence Is Altering the Music Industry*. [online]. [2020-12-28]. Available at: <<https://medium.com/@117361441/artificial-intelligence-is-altering-the-music-industry-43882af08895>>.

⁶ LUNNY, O.: 'You're Probably Going to Be Replaced'. *Digital Music Pioneer Issues a Stark Warning for Industry*. [online]. [2020-12-28]. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/oisinlunny/2019/01/28/youre-probably-going-to-be-replaced-digital-music-pioneer-issues-a-stark-warning-for-the-industry/?sh=5d79b3b07b58>>.

⁷ LYRA, R.: *How Artificial Intelligence Is Transforming the Music Industry*. [online]. [2020-12-28]. Available at: <<https://moises.ai/blog/artificial-intelligence-music-industry/>>.

⁸ BOWMAN, S.: *How AI Is Changing the Music Industry*. [online]. [2020-12-28]. Available at: <<http://www.musicthinktank.com/blog/how-ai-is-changing-the-music-industry.html>>.

The Verge magazine, the singer described the process of composing, where she first entered BPM (beats per minute) into the Amper program, later musical instruments, musical genre, etc. The platform matched her with a complete song, which Southern adapted to his taste. He admits that the program is not perfect and, like other authors, points to the lack of understanding of the complex structure of the composition by the program. He adds that the program can produce a decent style or chorus, but it is up to the human individual to find a way to bring these different parts together. Compared to the traditional process of music production, Southern argues that collaborating on a song with artificial intelligence is easier for people who do not have a musical education and do not master playing musical instruments. She adds that in her human collaborations, the producers have accustomed her to guide and sharpen the vision of the composition, but in this case, she has to try to find her intention herself.⁹

Singing virtual personalities are another suitable example where artificial intelligence co-produces their musical work. As a first example, we present the most famous Lil Miquela – a digital avatar created by BRUD’s team of creators and graphic artists in 2016 in Los Angeles, USA. Today, this singer and Instagram influencer has more than 2.9 million followers. In 2018, *TIME* magazine named her one of the 25 most influential people in the world.¹⁰ M. Hassa points to the labelling of the reality of this virtual personality. No one knows how the recording process goes and who is behind the voice of this virtual personality, but Lil Miquela seems authentic and blurs the boundaries between technology and culture. It should be added that the narrative created around this avatar perfectly supports the idea of reality. In 2019, she appeared at the prestigious Coachella music festival and collaborated with many musicians. D. Daley argues that the advent of singing virtual personalities represents a new era in music production, adding that Lil Miquela represents a way in which artificial intelligence can become a full-fledged collaborative partner in music production.¹¹ The predecessor of Lil Miquela is considered to be the Japanese vocaloid Hatsune Miku. Vocaloid is a computer program for creating music, the first version being launched by Crypton Future Media in 2007 under the code name CV01. Hatsune Miku was the mascot of the program with two typical turquoise braids and a cute voice, which ensured her popularity on the international pop culture scene. This Internet phenomenon even appeared in 2009 as a hologram at the anime festival Animelo Summer Live in Japan’s Saitama Super Arena.¹² However, the developers did not create a narrative around the avatar, as is the case with Lil Miquela, which made it possible to use this vocaloid in various musical genres. S. Zhang is also sure that Hatsune Miku was more than a synthetic voice. According to her, she embodied creativity and unlimited possibilities of artistic expression.¹³ At present, however, fan forums inform about the extinction of this vocaloid and its replacement by others. We can say that artificial intelligence has its place in the role of co-production and very often it is promoted through virtual personalities and vocaloids. According to an estimate by Abbey Road Studios, up to 20 – 30% of the songs placed in the Top 40 hits will be co-produced by artificial intelligence

⁹ PLAUGIC, L.: *Musician Taryn Southern on Composing Her New Album Entirely with AI*. [online]. [2020-12-31]. Available at: <<https://www.theverge.com/2017/8/27/16197196/taryn-southern-album-artificial-intelligence-interview>>.

¹⁰ *The 25 Most Influential People on Internet*. [online]. [2020-12-31]. Available at: <<https://time.com/5324130/most-influential-internet/>>.

¹¹ DALEY, D.: *Off the Record: AI*. [online]. [2020-12-31]. Available at: <<https://www.soundonsound.com/music-business/record-ai>>.

¹² ZHANG, S.: *Hatsune Miku: Japan’s Vocaloid Pop Star, Explained*. [online]. [2020-12-31]. Available at: <<https://www.cbr.com/hatsune-miku-japan-vocaloid-pop-star-explained/>>.

¹³ Ibidem.

in the future.¹⁴ Thanks to modern technologies and various programs, human beings can now try out the role of music producer without having the musical knowledge and mastering playing musical instruments. According to many authors, the predictions differ, but in one they remain the same. Music production with elements of artificial intelligence will move forward in the future and will partially influence the traditional process of music creation.

2 Methodology

In the paper we use short standardized individual interviews with experts, which should confirm or refute the obtained theoretical data. In particular, the questions will be open and complementary. We will conduct a structured interview with two qualified experts on this issue, asking the same questions to both. The first respondent will be the Czech musicologist Martin Flašar, who currently works as an assistant professor at the Institute of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno, and the second respondent will be digital artist Jakub Fiala, who participates in software development and works with sound. When formulating the problem, it is important to take into account the fact that, based on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, it is clear that the connection of artificial intelligence and music production is currently not common and occurs only in rare cases abroad. Therefore, we consider the main problem to be the fact that in our territory = there are no publications examining this issue and we do not even have information on whether people are interested in such a connection and whether it has any application in the future on the Slovak market. Via questions intended for experts in artificial intelligence and music production, we examined their views on the present of artificial intelligence, its procedures, but also what to expect in the future.

1. To what extent do you think artificial intelligence has influenced the traditional process of creating musical works?

It is clear from the question that we are interested in the extent to which artificial intelligence has disrupted the traditional process of music production. In connection with the described description of the creation of musical works by human individuals or artificial intelligence in this paper, we examine how experts approach this fact.

2. Why do people in most cases perceive the music of artificial intelligence negatively, while in contrast to virtual personalities (e.g., Lil Miquela) they consider such a production to be natural?

We believe that mainstream music is popular because it is intended for the masses and the music of artificial intelligence rather falls into the category of experimental and slightly non-traditional music. Lil Miquel's virtual personality and her work on the music scene is associated with a number of positive responses, while alternative artists do not receive as much media attention. We do not assume that this is a question of marketing, and therefore we are interested in the opinion of experts.

3. How is the element of humanity handled in the production of music using elements of artificial intelligence? Is there a way to keep it in the song?

This question focuses on the mentioned element of humanity, which in most cases is missing in the music produced by artificial intelligence. We therefore ask the experts how we can keep it in the composition.

¹⁴ BEENTJES, D.: *The Current State of AI in Music Production*. [online]. [2020-12-31]. Available at: <<https://abbeyroadinstitute.nl/blog/current-state-ai-in-music-production/>>.

4. At present, there are attempts at artificial intelligence in the autonomous generation of musical works (e.g., Open AI) or in the creation of new musical instruments (e.g., Google Magenta). However, co-production with humans (e.g., Taryn Southern) is much more popular. Where do you think this music will move in the near future and which musical genres have the greatest potential for its application?

Based on the above examples, we try to get their opinion from experts on the application of artificial intelligence in the music industry in the near future. We are also interested in a specific music genre.

5. What is your personal opinion on the use of artificial intelligence in music production?

Here we are interested in the personal view of experts on artificial intelligence in music production, their observations and ideas.

3 Results

On the first question, to what extent did artificial intelligence influence the traditional process of creating musical works, M. Flašar believes that at present we do not make sufficient use of the potential of artificial intelligence. He is convinced that so far, he is only learning to plagiarize. *“It will be really interesting when we let it create autonomously ex nihilo.”*¹⁵ J. Fiala, on the other hand, thinks that artificial intelligence interferes with the sphere of sound design, i.e., emulation of physical devices. He cites amplifiers and simulations of natural processes as examples, where he points to room reverberation or voice modulation. *“In addition to sound, it is possible to use artificial intelligence techniques to control the interaction between a musician and an instrument (see, for example, Rebecca Fiebrink’s research). But even in this area, I think we are still a long way from perfection.”*¹⁶ He claims that the musical works of artists such as Holly Herndon, who make full use of machine learning models, look very human and the audience likes it. *“But it is possible to say that artificial intelligence has a significant impact as a cultural phenomenon and is becoming a popular lyrical theme in both popular and experimental music,”*¹⁷ he adds. On this issue, both experts agreed that artificial intelligence is not currently being used to its full potential. J. Fiala claims that her work is reflected in sound design, while M. Flašar claims that all her work is plagiarism and therefore that the traditional musical process only copies her. However, J. Fiala contributed an interesting opinion and that the concept of artificial intelligence is becoming more and more frequent in music, while some artists already partially use its models in practice.

In the second question, why do people in most cases perceive the music of artificial intelligence negatively, while in contrast to virtual personalities, e.g., Lil Miquela, they consider such a production to be natural, M. Flašar is convinced that it is a prejudice. Using the example of the advent of electroacoustic music at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, he demonstrates that the audience’s reactions were both positive and negative. He adds that over time the interest of this music has decreased and the same scenario is imagined for music created by artificial intelligence. *“Simply put: if the output is human, it does not frighten anyone. But the idea of abstract neural network algorithms is about as incomprehensible to*

¹⁵ FLAŠAR, M., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 18th March 2021*. [flasar@phil.muni.cz]; [lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

¹⁶ FIALA, J., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 22nd March 2021*. [jakub@fiala.space]; [lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

¹⁷ Ibidem.

the majority of audiences as the structure of the human brain and its cognitive processes."¹⁸ J. Fiala responds to the specific example of Lil Miquela's virtual personality and thinks that music is a more complex medium compared to the profile on *Instagram*. According to him, the reason is much more difficult to encode the right emotions. *"Unfortunately, in the example of Lil Miquela, we cannot talk about real artificial intelligence – Lil Miquela is, above all, a very carefully created avatar, which was created by a group of people and modified to evoke a certain emotional or sexual reaction."*¹⁹ He also adds that this avatar is the exact opposite of the art of artificial intelligence and is only a work of people for people. Even in this case, both experts agreed that the majority of the audience's negative reactions to the musical creations of artificial intelligence are only prejudices. M. Flašar looks at the issue from a historical point of view and is a supporter that positive and negative responses are expected every time a new product is launched on the media market. J. Fiala adds that the reason may be the incorrect incorporation of emotions. However, unless it is an artificial intelligence, which is scary, M. Flašar claims that people accept such outputs positively. According to J. Fiala, the creators of Lil Miquela succeeded, even though it is a purely human product that is labelled as an artificial intelligence, mainly due to the excellent graphic design.

The third question, how to deal with the element of humanity in the production of music using elements of artificial intelligence, examined the real effect of artificial intelligence in musical practice and possibly the existing process that preserves this element in the composition. M. Flašar responds to it: *"Compared to a machine, a person is characterized mainly by imperfection (error), slowness, unreliability and not too high a level of perseverance. If we want artificial intelligence to respect human parameters, it should include these."*²⁰ He adds to the question that at present, music software has so-called humanizers that intentionally spoil the whole process. According to J. Fiala, it depends on the way of implementing artificial intelligence into a specific composition. *"However, the same methods that have long been used in digital production to achieve an analog feel- simulated reverberation, modulation, nonlinear distortion and compression – are reliable."*²¹ On this issue, experts looked at the issue on two levels. According to M. Flašar, we will preserve the human element in a composition with used elements of artificial intelligence so that human elements can be clearly heard from the musical work. We can currently achieve these with various tools from computer programs designed to produce music. On the other hand, J. Fiala understands this question from the point of view of control and the way of using elements of artificial intelligence in a musical work. His statement follows M. Flašar and also agrees that in order to preserve humanity, it is important to use methods typical of human production.

The next question examined where the music of artificial intelligence will move in the near future and which musical genres have the greatest potential for its application. In this case, the very idea of an empathic teammate in live music production also inspired M. Flašar and puts the so-called live electronic, and thus the cooperation of man and technology. He claims that this collaboration saved electroacoustic music in the 1960s, and that it turned out that music is largely just theatre. He thinks that an important part of using technology is maintaining conservation, which produces real-time sound reactions. *"I'm already looking forward to a*

¹⁸ FLAŠAR, M., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 18th March 2021*. [flasar@phil.muni.cz]; lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

¹⁹ FIALA, J., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 22nd March 2021*. [jakub@fiala.space]; lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

²⁰ FLAŠAR, M., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 18th March 2021*. [flasar@phil.muni.cz]; lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

²¹ FIALA, J., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 22nd March 2021*. [jakub@fiala.space]; lenkakajanovicova@live.com].

neural network that will respond in real time to human musical actions and, of course, vice versa,”²² he adds. J. Fiala is a supporter that if researchers succeed in improving models designed for autonomous music generation, they do not see a problem for such works to appear in lift music or in automatically generated playlists from Spotify. “*In the realm of music as art, however, I can only imagine artificial intelligence as a tool, as a utilitarian abbreviation to achieve a certain goal.*”²³ He demonstrates his claim in the music of the American singer Bon Iver, who uses elements of autotune in his folk work. Both experts agree that the future of the use of artificial intelligence in the music industry leads to greater cooperation with man. M. Flašar imagines the interaction of man with technology during live concerts and claims that the genre in which the most will be used will be live electronic. J. Fiala, on the other hand, thinks that after the improvement of current programs, the cooperation of artificial intelligence will be applied in analog music and new genre combinations will be created.

The final question focused on the personal attitude of experts to artificial intelligence and their opinion on its use in the future. “*I think AI will be used to generate custom music. Imagine, e.g., a system that knows your musical preferences and based on them can infinitely generate individualized music that you will like,*”²⁴ says M. Flašar. He compares artificial intelligence to the technique of counterpoint, dodecaphony, aleatoric, etc. and is inclined to the opinion that in the future it may become so-called CAC (computer assisted composition), which means a support system for the composer. However, it does not deprive the possibility of an autonomous musical instrument. He is of the opinion that it is a human product and its rules are still set by man, even if we do not know what is happening at the level of artificial synaptic connections. J. Fiala thinks that artificial intelligence has limited potential as a creative instrument, but it is an interesting subject of lyrical work in music. “*However, I believe that the deep instincts that lead us to make music are inherently human, and therefore music as an art form will always require the active participation of human beings.*”²⁵ On this issue, both experts clearly agreed that music using elements of artificial intelligence is a human product and requires the active involvement of man. According to J. Fiala, the use of artificial intelligence in texts is interesting. M. Flašar believes that in the future he can help to produce music tailor-made, can act as an autonomous musical instrument and, last but not least, help composers in production.

Conclusion

Researchers have been working on the topic of artificial intelligence in music production since the 1980s. In his contribution, C. Roads then informed and called artificial intelligence the turn of the 20th century.²⁶ We found from foreign literary sources that, for example, final theses on this topic were written by several students from all over the world. The Master's thesis of A. Koh from the American University focuses on the study of the phenomenon of

²² FLAŠAR, M., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 18th March 2021.* [<flasar@phil.muni.cz>; <lenkakajanovicova@live.com>].

²³ FIALA, J., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 22nd March 2021.* [<jakub@fiala.space>; <lenkakajanovicova@live.com>].

²⁴ FLAŠAR, M., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 18th March 2021.* [<flasar@phil.muni.cz>; <lenkakajanovicova@live.com>].

²⁵ FIALA, J., KAJANOVIČOVÁ, L.: *E-mail Communication on 22nd March 2021.* [<jakub@fiala.space>; <lenkakajanovicova@live.com>].

²⁶ See: ROADS, C.: Artificial Intelligence and Music. In *Computer Music Journal*, 1980, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 13-25. [online]. [2021-03-27]. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3680079?seq=1>>.

Google Magenta²⁷ and, for example, N. Karpov from the University of Finland examines this issue from a technical point of view in his Bachelor's thesis.²⁸ In Slovakia, it is not yet informed about the interconnection of these areas. The only articles published in Slovak are about Taryn Southern's co-produced album I AM AI from 2017 and the project The Lost Files of the 27 Club, which focuses on the production of songs by deceased artists with the help of the Magenta program and whose primary goal is to raise mental health. Smaller research, which we carried out through interviews with experts, showed that the topic of artificial intelligence in music production is justifiably a phenomenon of the present time and is constantly gaining in popularity. The identification of individual musical tracks is problematic in moments when the music produced with the help of artificial intelligence sounds too human and can confuse an ordinary person. The impressions of the mass audience depend to a large extent on the types of recordings and visual rendering. It can be said that people react negatively to songs that use an artificial voice, while songs in which the human voice is clearly heard are positive. This can also serve as a suggestion for musicians who are interested in connecting these areas in their creative work.

People in the creative industries have legitimate concerns that artificial intelligence, in a style that is advancing and improving at the same time, will gradually dominate the music industry and push show business to the background. However, it should be remembered that its primary goal is not to reduce employees of the music industry or any industry, but to help and streamline their work process. We see this not only in specific music production, which has transformed from the traditional process of composing songs to the use of various intelligent instruments, as well as forms of machine or deep learning, but also in personalized music content on streaming platforms such as Spotify. Its use in the future can really be used to generate songs for movies or musicals, or to revive deceased musical legends. This paper offers a broad-spectrum view of the topic of artificial intelligence in music production. It points out the different types of its use at present and, together with recipients and experts, provides the reader with possible suggestions for its possible application in the future.

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²⁷ KOH, A.: *Music for AI Reports: Dual Prospects in Music Production*. [Master's Thesis]. New York : City University of New York, 2018, p. 69.

²⁸ KARPOV, N.: *Artificial Intelligence for Music Composing: Future Scenario Analysis*. [Bachelor's Thesis]. Jyväskylä : Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, 2020, p. 56.

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ADAPTATION TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE RISKS OF EXCESSIVE USE OF SMARTPHONE

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Abstract:

The rapid development of information and communication technologies and the need to carry a smartphone constantly are almost an irreplaceable part of our society and our lives. The paper deals with adaptation to information and communication technologies and digital literacy. It reflects the most serious problems arising from the increasing time spent with a smartphone. It points to a new kind of addiction phobia and the influence of parents in the process of working with technology. In connection with the expansion of social networks and the need to be always online, processes such as digital detox or the trend to be offline are already coming to the fore.

Key words: Adaptation. Digital Detox. Information and Communication Technologies. Smartphone. Social Media.

Introduction

In recent years, information and communication technologies have been characterized by the fastest rate of progress and growth and as we have noticed, their symbol is a smartphone. They increase our work productivity, make life easier and are a great fun factor.¹ However, the trend of rapid development is unmanageable, as several participants, projects and interpretations usually stand against each other.² The marked changes do not relate exclusively to the visible properties and characteristics of ICT and smartphones, such as their size and appearance, design, function, or performance. Above all, the behavior of consumers, producers, and therefore people in general, is changing. Increased requirements for development and improvement do not only concern the technical elements of the smartphone, they also greatly affect the amount of time spent with the smartphone in hand and our satisfaction with it.³ At that time, ordinary people perceived the impact of computers and the Internet on society more in terms of individual experience or ‘threat’ – despite lack of physical activity, cybercrime, mutual alienation harmful content on the Internet. On the contrary, they had a low threshold of sensitivity to problems that were more abstract – a loss of privacy, a loss of the ability to think ‘with one’s own head’, a dependence on cyberspace or a ‘digital divide’ between people. As the findings show, over the years, perceptions of the seriousness of the problems of the impact of computers and the Internet on society have changed and profiled. Over the past five years, the population's sensitivity threshold has increased, in particular to the problems of ICT dependence (from 18% in 2015 to 29% in 2020) and the weakening of the ability to communicate normally with other people (from 18% to 25%).⁴ These are therefore problems with an individual and social context. On the other hand, a significant decline in the perception of urgency has noted the problem of lack of physical activity. While in 2015 it stated a lack of exercise, sports, living in nature, etc. as problem number one to 40% of respondents, in 2020 only a quarter of respondents consider it to be one of the most serious problems (26%).

¹ SPITZER, M.: *Digitální demence: Jak připravujeme sami sebe a naše děti o rozum*. Brno : Host, 2014, p. 341.

² LÉVY, P.: *Kyberkultura*. Prague : Charles University in Prague, 2000, p. 229.

³ See: VELŠIC, M.: *Digitálna gramotnosť na Slovensku 2020*. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2020. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs//publikacie/subory/Digitalna_gramotnost_2020.pdf>.

⁴ Ibidem.

The very adaptation to information and communication technologies is accompanied to some extent by the characteristics of man, his way of life as well as the influence of his surroundings. Rapid change, virtualization and boundless universalization all these are probably irreversible tendencies. However, the way in which they manifest and be reflected in economic, political and social life remains unclear.⁵ The pair of authors McGowan and Shipley believe that the problems with adaptation are not entirely appropriate.⁶ We have been adapting the field of authors to new technologies and conveniences for several hundred years. In the end, it shouldn't be such a problem for us. In connection with the adaptation, therefore, they openly talk about the so-called adaptation advantage and add that we can do it also because we have done it in the past. We have mastered techniques and devices that we initially thought we would not learn or control. Now that technology is changing, the ability to adapt will be all the easier, the only difference being the speed of adaptation already mentioned. On the one hand there is a younger, more educated, economically active and urban part of the population and on the other hand there is an older, less educated, economically inactive and rural part of the population.⁷ Technological development, the expansion of social networks and the Internet are causing us to spend more and more time in the virtual world. In fact, the current generation of children and adolescents with a cell phone and Internet access cannot imagine their lives without it. The benefits of such a modernized world are undeniable, but there is an increasing need to answer the societal question of the intensity of mobile phone use and dependence. The problem arises when a teenager loses access to mobile phones and the Internet connection. As a result, they often feel lost in this world.

1 Nomophobia and Its Symptoms

Smartphones have become very important; one might say an essential part of us and our lives. While their presence and use have a significant effect, their absence has equally significant effects. Just for comparison, let's take alcohol and drugs. These are always harmful, regardless of the amount of dose taken. Smartphones, on the other hand, can be very helpful, so less is said about their catastrophic impact. However, the length of their use is usually critical. Insomnia, eye and back pain, or problems with depression, resulting in addiction are just a few examples of the many problems associated with their overuse. If we want to talk about the usefulness of smartphones, it is very important to mention and emphasize limited use at the same time. Therefore, the term "nomophobia" is increasingly used in connection with this issue. This is a modern phenomenon, which, however, is becoming more widespread and occurring in our society. All age groups are at risk, regardless of the gender of the individual. The feelings usually associated with nomophobia are in addition to fear, states of anxiety, nervousness, and also general discomfort and restlessness, which are often alternated with feelings of helplessness, anger, aggression and frustration. However, when we lose contact with our smartphone, we may feel a number of negative emotions at once.⁸ Baylor University Professor James Roberts lists 6 categories of nomophobia symptoms:

⁵ LÉVY, P.: *Kyberkultura*. Prague : Charles University in Prague, 2000, p. 229.

⁶ MCGOWAN, H., SHIPLEY, C.: *The Adaptation Advantage: Let Go, Learn Fast, and Thrive in the Future of Work*. Hoboken, New Jersey : John Wiley, 2020. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <<https://books.google.sk/books?id=l8zSDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

⁷ See: VELŠIC, M.: *Digitálna gramotnosť na Slovensku*. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2005. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/vyskum/subor/Digitalna_gramotnost.pdf>.

⁸ See: KANMANI, A., BHAVANI, U., MARAGATHAM, R.: Nomophobia – An Insight into Its Psychological Aspects in India. In *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 2017, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 5-15.

1. Importance: for a reindeer nomophobe who suffers from mobile addiction) working with a smartphone is the highest priority. Its existence therefore becomes an integral part of his daily life.
2. Euphoria: exaggerated reactions to the phone, for example in the form of excitement with each new notification, SMS, or a large number of likes.
3. Tolerance: constantly increasing the hours spent with the phone in hand.
4. Separation syndrome: accompanied by moodiness, irritability, hysteria and panic.
5. Conflict: problems at work, in personal life and even with the law (fines for calling behind the wheel).
6. Recurrence: inability and unwillingness to give up the phone at any cost.⁹

The seriousness of the situation is also confirmed by the findings of the research agency dscout,¹⁰ which revealed that the nomophobe clicks on his smartphone (all touches and shifts are included) on average 5,427 times. He thus spends about 225 minutes a day on smartphone activities which represent more than 3 and a half hours which are often spent meaninglessly. Just for comparison, a normal user clicks on his smartphone less than half (2,617 times) and uses about smartphone for about 145 minutes, i.e., a little over 2 and a half hours a day. However, researchers warn and add that when playing games, this number automatically rises rapidly and can climb up to an incredible 70,000 clicks. How is it possible that they can reach such an enormously high number in such a short time? It is a mental state in which a person concentrates on a specific activity or thing so much that the surrounding events and things will no longer interest him completely. In short, they become irrelevant to him.¹¹ He is therefore able to actively engage in smartphones, from waking up to late in the evening. Take not watching television as an example. The primary intention of a nomophobe may be to watch TV in real life, but a smartphone and regular checking of all downloaded applications or playing their favorite games keeps him busy to such an extent that television ultimately becomes only a quiet voice in the background. Over time, this formula becomes a kind of regularity, respectively an unwritten rule, which means that the normal performance of simple activities such as the already mentioned TV viewing is not avoided without the assistance of a smartphone and becomes impossible, even absolutely excluded. In addition to eliminating dependence on a smartphone, the fact that we are heavily dependent on it prevents and hinders us. We have all the necessary data stored in it, such as various numbers, passwords and notes. We send and receive dozens of urgent e-mails daily which we must urgently reply to and we use an alarm clock and many other (un) necessary applications and functions. We just rely on them too much.

2 Age Limits of ICT and the Impact of the Environment

The use of smart devices, and therefore smartphones, has no age limit or restrictions. The reality is, in fact, that smaller and smaller children are able to work with ICT, many times better than parents and adults themselves. The conditions for a child's development today are on a completely different level than they used to be. However, rapid development cannot be stopped, nor can the progress of children be hampered.¹² Addiction to smartphones therefore does not

⁹ See: ROBERTS, J.: Who's the Boss: You or Your Cell Phone? In *Keller Center Research Report*, 2014, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 5-9. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <<https://www.baylor.edu/business/kellercenter/doc.php/229653.pdf>>.

¹⁰ *Mobile Touches: Dscout's Inaugural Study on Humans and Their Tech*. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <https://blog.dscout.com/hubfs/downloads/dscout_mobile_touches_study_2016.pdf>.

¹¹ CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, M.: *Flow: Psychológia optimálneho prežívania*. Bratislava : Citadella, 2015, p. 381.

¹² MATULA, Š.: Sú deti s IT nadaním iné? Ako na ne? In *Rodina a škola*, 2015, Vol. 64, No. 7, p. 5.

only affect adults, but also young people and minors in particular. It can be said that the greatest influence on the use of smartphones in children is mainly the family and the role model. Adults and the older generation use a smartphone every day, but children want to naturally, imitate them. However, their use cannot be completely banned, so parents move them into the hands of their children much earlier than healthy. They often do not even think about what consequences this may have for them later, or they do not even have the necessary information about the negative consequences and/or they are unable to access them. There is still a digital generation gap between parents and children. This is due to the fact that today's generation of parents grew up in a world where access to mobile phones and social media in general had not been developed and so they may not be able to fully assess the possible risks and threats. This gap is gradually narrowing and today's young parents are more oriented in use and risk.

The problem arises when parents use smartphones as a calming tool, respectively a means of silencing your children in activities. This includes allowing them to play on your smartphone when eating together, driving, family visits and conversations, or whilst at work.¹³ Simply put, there is a curiosity behind it as children naturally throw themselves into everything that is new. In addition, the smartphone offers them colorful pictures, plays music and in a few seconds allows them to access a lot of content from around the world – especially such content which is usually forbidden for children and young people.¹⁴ Not only parents but especially their children, will then get used to the described practices quite easily and so they will start to claim a smartphone not only during the activities already mentioned above, but also at every common activity and occasion. Without the assistance of a smartphone watching a favorite fairy tale on television, swimming or even playing together will not be possible. The child then quickly becomes addicted, not entirely through his own fault. It is often us as adults (parents, grandparents or siblings) who in some cases allow this to develop into such an addiction in a two- or three-year-old child. The following Table 1 includes the answers of respondents who were posed the question of who, in their opinion, is the reason for the development of smartphone addiction in children.

Table 1: Respondents' opinions on the question "Who is responsible for children's addiction to smartphones?"

Demographic	Parents	Children	The media	The companies that make smartphones	No one	Don't Know / No Opinion	Total N
Adults	60% (1013)	3% (58)	13% (221)	10% (174)	8% (128)	6% (104)	1699
Age: 18-29	51% (150)	5% (15)	22% (66)	8% (25)	7% (21)	6% (17)	294
Age: 30-44	60% (265)	3% (15)	15% (68)	6% (29)	9% (39)	6% (28)	444
Age: 45-54	57% (173)	2% (7)	11% (33)	14% (41)	9% (28)	7% (22)	304
Age: 55-64	62% (196)	3% (9)	8% (26)	16% (50)	5% (16)	7% (22)	318
Age: 65+	68% (229)	4% (12)	9% (29)	9% (29)	7% (24)	4% (15)	338

Source: *National Tracking Poll #180108: Crosstabulation Results*. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <<https://morningconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/smartphone180108-crosstabs-1.pdf>>.

¹³ HAMID, A.: *Nomophobia: Kids, Phone Addiction and Parents' Responsibility*. Released on 8th February 2019. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <<https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net/nomophobia-kids-phone-addiction-and-parents-responsibility/>>.

¹⁴ SPITZER, M.: *Digitální demence: Jak připravujeme sami sebe a naše děti o rozum*. Brno : Host, 2014, p. 341.

The results of the National Tracking Poll survey from January 2018¹⁵ confirm that more than half of the respondents, regardless of age, agreed that their parents were primarily responsible for their children's addiction and it can even be suggested that this belief grows with age. On the other hand, only 13% (221) of respondents point the finger at the media, compared to 10% (174) of respondents blaming smartphone manufacturers. The parents, as the legal guardians, both have the right and obligation to monitor, control and regulate the time spent using ICT and thus smartphones by their children.¹⁶ It is therefore in their direction and competence to teach their children not only to use a smartphone, but more importantly, how to spend a healthy amount of time on them. Both options, whether parental lock-as a form of control, or an application with a time limit on the amount of time spent with a smartphone in hand, seem to us to be a suitable and effective method and respectively aid in addressing this issue.

3 Adaptation Versus Trend to Be Offline

Paradoxically, digital detox or even the trend to be offline seems to be one of the possibilities for adaptation. The digital detox can be seen as a break from digital reality and focusing more on actual reality.¹⁷ Applying digital detox does not mean that now and from day to day we must get rid of our smartphones and screens in general and go back to life without them. On the contrary, someone can completely disconnect from information and communication technologies and others can simply decide to spend less time on their smartphones.¹⁸ Above all, we will learn to live with ICT in a way that benefits both us and our health. It is necessary to clarify the positive aspects of digital detox – less distraction, increased attention and focus on the work done, reconnecting with reality and improving or restoring interpersonal relationships, less stress and overall, improvement in health. On the other hand, it is important to be aware of some negative aspects – reducing the temporal and spatial efficiency of communication or slowing down access to information. It is known that digital social media does not contribute and does not lead to more frequent and better contacts and on the contrary lead to social isolation and superficial contacts. The number of those who are aware of it is increasing and thus the number of those who want to return to real communication and engage in joint activities with their families and loved ones is increasing.¹⁹ Compared to 'digital detox', another trend in society is visible, namely the trend to be offline. In this context, there are three most common reasons for life 'offline':

1. Ambivalence: mixed feelings and views in relation to information and communication technologies, often as a result of negative experiences such as addiction (nomophobia/netholism) and the associated frequent use of digital media, the Internet and smartphones, bullying through social networks, possible overload of a number of daily notifications of new alerts and much more).

¹⁵ National Tracking Poll #180108: Crosstabulation Results. [online]. [2021-03-11]. Available at: <<https://morningconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/smartphone180108-crosstabs-1.pdf>>.

¹⁶ GRONEWOLD, A.: *Parents, Not Companies, Are Blamed for Smartphone Addiction Among Youths*. [online]. [2021-07-09]. Available at: <<https://morningconsult.com/2018/01/25/parents-not-companies-are-blamed-for-smartphone-addiction-among-youths/>>.

¹⁷ See: BOWLES, M., RIKARD, W. E.: *Life Unplugged: A Digital Detox Workbook*. New York : Rock Point, 2018.

¹⁸ GOODIN, T.: *Off: Your Digital Detox for a Better Life*. New York : Abrams Image, 2018. [online]. [2021-03-23]. Available at: <<https://books.google.sk/books?id=ql62DgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

¹⁹ See: JOSHIOVÁ, L. H.: *Odpojte své dítě od sítě: 101 způsobů, jak se odtrhnout od přístrojů a užít si skutečného života*. Prague : Euromedia Group, 2018.

2. Identity: social media as a way of self-presentation and a way to tell people and show who we really are. Sharing the same opinion, in this case not using a smartphone and soc. networks is a good way to find, identify and connect with people who share a common view.
3. Work: the use and operation of social networks as well as a smartphone are demanding on both care and maintenance. They require a lot of work and attention, which robs us of the amount of free time we could devote to useful activities and people.²⁰

Discussion and Conclusion

Digital literacy research is considered to be one of the basic indicators of the information society showing us growing trends. According to data from February 2020, the share of digital literacy reached 83%. The share of digital literates, i.e., those who have at least elementary experience in controlling PCs, laptops, tablets or smartphones, increased by 4 percentage points compared to 2013. More precisely – more than 80% of the population over 14 years of age have experience with sending SMS and MMS, working with various types of computers (PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones), e-mail communication or searching for information and services on the Internet.²¹ But how has the use of information and communication technologies and the mass media affected by the corona crisis? During the year of being in a restricted mode, in the educational process at home and reliance on the use of Internet services, it is already clear today that children and young people were forced to be more on mobile devices and social networks. Psychologists and sociologists have drawn attention to the negative effects of this throughout the crisis. It is known that for pupils and students, using electronic equipment directly in the school environment causes distractions and often leads to reduced performance during teaching. As a precaution, we should teach an adequate way to use our smartphones, i.e when it's time to turn them off and time to reach for them again. One of the growing demands requires the introduction of academic and extracurricular activities that would rather involve young people in the real world, outside of cyberspace. It is very important for teachers to plan a curriculum that would offer their students various tips on how to work with information. This supports the development of critical thinking. The use of smartphones by students may be limited by various educational activities carried out during individual lessons, as well as events organized within the classroom or at a school-wide level, e.g., International Safer Internet Day (February 8). Safer Internet Day is dedicated to the protection of personal data, especially on social networking sites. It aims to support prevention, various types of online threats, e.g., sexting, cyberbullying, cybercare, nomophobia. The crisis has mirrored society, not only in the ability of citizens to work with information and communication technologies (e.g., regional or age differences in the way and quality of online teaching, in employers' reactions to home offices, etc.), but also in school and household equipment. The level of digital skills has probably increased to some extent for each of us and at the same time, the time children have spent with technology and social networks has increased.

²⁰ SYVERTSEN, T.: *Digital Detox: The Politics of Disconnecting*. Bingley : Emerald Publishing, 2020. [online]. [2021-03-23]. Available at: <<https://books.google.sk/books?id=o-DWDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

²¹ VELŠIČ, M.: *Digitálna gramotnosť na Slovensku 2020*. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2020. [online]. [2021-04-10]. Available at: <https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/Digitalna_gramotnost_2020.pdf>.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL ANXIETY AND STRESS IN COMPETITIVE E-SPORTS SETTINGS

Nina Urukovičová

Abstract:

Competitive E-sport has grown rapidly across the globe. In line with the increase in competitive gaming, the interest into the science underpinning performance has accelerated dramatically in the last decade. Despite the remarkable surge of popularity in E-sports, there is limited academic literature that has explicitly investigated the psychophysiological factors influencing performance of elite level E-sports during competitive gameplay. As E-sports athletes are competing in highly pressurized and competitive environments that are comparable to traditional sports, it is likely that psychophysiological responses exist in an E-sports performance environment. Therefore, it is important to enhance our understanding of these responses that E-sports participants face, because stress and anxiety is likely to have a negatively impact on performance in such an environment. The present review aims to investigate whether playing E-sports in competitive settings is related to psychological and physiological anxiety and stress. Although the existing literature contributes to an initial understanding of psychophysiological anxiety and stress in E-sports, there needs to be further in-depth studies investigating the psychophysiological responses in actual competition.

Key words:

Anxiety. Competitive Gaming. E-Sports. Performance. Stress.

Introduction

E-sports are defined as an individual or team-based competitive activity including ranking systems on both professional and amateur levels. Wagner provided a detailed definition of E-sport as “*an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies*”.¹ With the constant rise in popularity of competitive video gaming, greater numbers of players regularly participate in high-level competitions.² For successful performance, E-sports players need to possess game-specific knowledge, think strategically, stay motivated and focused, communicate properly with their teammates, maintain fine motor control³ under physical and psychological anxiety and stress, and cope adaptively with the stress of the competitive setting.⁴ In addition, E-sports require various cognitive demands including attention, perception, mental agility, processing speed, executive function, effective hand-eye coordination, and, to a lesser extent, physical exertion⁵ in a virtual competitive environment, that are critical for winning and success in E-sports games.⁶ Both the competitive and stressful environments within which players perform

¹ WAGNER, M. G.: On the Scientific Relevance of Esports. In *International Conference on Internet Computing & Conference on Computer Games Development*. Las Vegas : ICOMP, 2006, p. 3.

² HIMMELSTEIN, D., LIU, Y., SHAPIRO, J. L.: An Exploration of Mental Skills among Competitive League of Legend Players. In *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations*, 2017, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 19.

³ PEDRAZA-RAMIREZ, I. et al.: Setting the Scientific Stage for Esports Psychology: A Systematic Review. In *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 30.

⁴ BARLETT, C. P., ANDERSON, C. A., SWING, E. L.: Video Game Effects – Confirmed, Suspected, and Speculative: A Review of the Evidence. In *Simulation & Gaming*, 2009, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 380; SMITH, M. J., BIRCH, P. D., BRIGHT, D.: Identifying Stressors and Coping Strategies of Elite Esports Competitors. In *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations*, 2019, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 37.

⁵ BÁNYAI, F. et al.: The Psychology of Esports: A Systematic Literature Review. In *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 2019, Vol. 35, No. 2, p. 358.

⁶ BEDIOU, B. et al.: Meta-Analysis of Action Video Game Impact on Perceptual, Attentional, and Cognitive Skills. In *Psychological Bulletin*, 2018, Vol. 144, No. 1, p. 100; FUNK, D. C., PIZZO, A. D., BAKER, B. J.: Esport Management: Embracing Esport Education and Research Opportunities. In *Sport Management Review*, 2018, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 11.

share some similar physical and mental demands to other non-digital competitive sport environments.⁷ Furthermore, the increasing social attention received by the competitions and the pressure to perform can lead to anxiety and other mental problems,⁸ and gamers need to develop strategies to deal with these consequences. Many studies⁹ have recently indicated that competition, which is a key aspect of E-sports, is related to change in psychophysiological state. While competition may indeed have an impact on performance, little is known about competition related psychophysiological anxiety and stress responses in E-sports. There is also limited research that has investigated the psychophysiological demands of elite level competitive E-sports players during competitive gameplay. Although evidence on psychophysiological anxiety and stress responses in E-sports is limited, the present review provides results on the current state of research. Given mixed results on psychophysiological anxiety and stress related to competitive settings, the aim of the present study is to develop and enhance understanding of these responses on the performance of E-sports players.

1 Theoretical Models of Stress and Anxiety in Competitive Settings

Sport competitions are a source of possible anxiety and stress that provoke different physiological responses depending on the competitive moment: before, during, and after the competition. Stress is defined as an interactive psychophysiological response that includes cognitive appraisal and physiological changes to threatening or demanding yet relevant stimuli.¹⁰ While the subjective response to stress can be experienced as unpleasant, the physiological response involves a complex reaction of the neurohormonal (e.g., cortisol and testosterone) and autonomic nervous systems (e.g., blood pressure and heart rate). From a psychological perspective, cognitive appraisal plays an important role in the stress response. The biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat¹¹ declares that the psychological states challenge and threat are dependent on cognitive appraisal in motivated performance situations (self-relevant tasks or tasks that require high engagement). In the context of performance, the challenge response is characterized by high approach-motivation, namely by the perception of the superiority of one's resources over the performance demands; energization of behaviour directed toward the desirable goal along with physiological mobilization via increased blood flow throughout the body (increased cardiac output), which provides the efficiency of energy delivery.¹² These motivational, cognitive, and physiological, responses form a challenge response that is likely to facilitate the performance outcomes.¹³ In sports specifically, the

⁷ HALLMANN, K., GIEL, T.: Esports – Competitive Sports or Recreational Activity? In *Sport Management Review*, 2018, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 18.

⁸ PEREIRA, R., WILWERT, M. L., TAKASE, E.: Contributions of Sport Psychology to the Competitive Gaming: An Experience Report with a Professional Team of League of Legends. In *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 29.

⁹ SALVADOR, A., COSTA, R.: Coping with Competition: Neuroendocrine Responses and Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 168; LABORDE, S., MOSLEY, E., THAYER, J. F.: Heart Rate Variability and Cardiac Vagal Tone in Psychophysiological Research-Recommendations for Experiment Planning, Data Analysis, and Data Reporting. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 213, p. 7.

¹⁰ LAZARUS, R. S.: How Emotions Influence Performance in Competitive Sports. In *The Sport Psychologist*, 2000, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 248.

¹¹ SEERY, M. D.: The Biopsychosocial Model of Challenge and Threat: Using the Heart to Measure the Mind. In *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 9, p. 648.

¹² NICHOLLS, A. R.: Adaption, Stress and Coping in Sport. In SCHINKE, R. J., MCGANNON, K. R., SMITH, B. (eds.): *Routledge International Handbook of Sport Psychology*. Abingdon : Routledge, 2016, p. 9.

¹³ BEHNKE, M., KOSAKOWSKI, M., KACZMAREK, L. D.: Social Challenge and Threat Predict Performance and Cardiovascular Responses during Competitive Video Gaming. In *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2020, Vol. 46, p. 78.

challenge responses should facilitate performance via improved decision making and cognitive functioning, stronger task engagement, and increased anaerobic power.¹⁴

Moreover, anxiety is commonly experienced across all levels of competition and consists of cognitive and somatic elements. Research has shown results for anxiety, particularly sport-related anxiety, and its ability to be either detrimental or facilitative in traditional sports.¹⁵ Ford et al. provide a definition of sport-related anxiety as “being a trait and/or state-like response to a stressful sport-related situation, which the individual perceives as potentially stressful, resulting in a range of cognitive appraisals, behavioral responses, and/or physiological arousals”.¹⁶ Moreover physiological arousal has been shown to follow a timeline similar to somatic anxiety and is easier to measure through methods such as heart monitors, or electrodermal activity.¹⁷ For instance, the catastrophe model uses physiological arousal as the mediating factor between cognitive anxiety and performance.¹⁸ When cognitive anxiety is low, performance should be high whereas if cognitive anxiety is high; coupled with a high increase in physiological arousal, a catastrophe of performance may occur. This rapid decline is often unable to be reconciled as it will likely compound the effects of cognitive anxiety and physiological arousal. Multidimensional theory states that cognitive anxiety has a significant adverse relationship to competitive sport performance and that it must be low in order to perform well.¹⁹ Balyan et al. show contradictory evidence, they conducted an experiment which measured cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, arousal, and personality trait effects on performance while competing in a digital game. Participants completed the CSAI-2 inventory, and physiological data were collected via heart rate monitor and electrodermal recording. Researchers found no association between physiological arousal, cognitive and somatic anxiety, and it has been suggested that independent factors of performance should be considered, as they affect performance in different ways.²⁰ Results after performances showed that within the high anxiety group, winners had less physiological arousal and greater levels of cognitive anxiety in comparison to losers. These results support Hardy et al.’s prediction for the catastrophe model which predicts cognitive anxiety will have a positive relationship with performance when physiological arousal is low.²¹ Even though anxiety has produced mixed results in regard to performance, it is still characterized as a negative emotional state which athletes often attempt to mediate.²² In conclusion, there are many theories²³ with its own

¹⁴ MEIJEN, C. et al.: A Theory of Challenge and Threat States in Athletes: A Revised Conceptualization. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 126, p. 9.

¹⁵ HARDY, L., BEATTIE, S., WOODMAN, T.: Anxiety-Induced Performance Catastrophes: Investigating Effort Required as an Asymmetry Factor. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 2007, Vol. 98, No. 1, p. 29.

¹⁶ FORD, J. L. et al.: Sport-Related Anxiety: Current Insights. In *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine*, 2017, Vol. 8, p. 206.

¹⁷ HARDY, L., PARFITT, G.: A Catastrophe Model of Anxiety and Performance. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 82, No. 2, p. 176.

¹⁸ BALYAN, K. Y. et al.: The Relationship among Personality, Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Physiological Arousal, and Performance in Male Athletes. In *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 54.

¹⁹ WOODMAN, T., HARDY, L.: The Relative Impact of Cognitive Anxiety and Self-Confidence upon Sport Performance: A Meta-Analysis. In *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 2003, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 455.

²⁰ BALYAN, K. Y. et al.: The Relationship among Personality, Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Physiological Arousal, and Performance in Male Athletes. In *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 55.

²¹ HARDY, L., BEATTIE, S., WOODMAN, T.: Anxiety-Induced Performance Catastrophes: Investigating Effort Required as an Asymmetry Factor. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 2007, Vol. 98, No. 1, p. 176.

²² HANTON, S., MELLALIEU, S., WILLIAMS, J. M.: Understanding and Managing Stress in Sport. In WILLIAMS, J. M., KRANE, V. (eds.): *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 2015, p. 237.

²³ HARDY, L., PARFITT, G.: A Catastrophe Model of Anxiety and Performance. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 82, No. 2, p. 176; BALYAN, K. Y. et al.: The Relationship among Personality, Cognitive

reasoning as to how sport-related anxiety effects performance; consensus is that at a point in which arousal becomes too high within a competitor – their performance will decline.

2 Empirical Evidence of the Psychophysiological Response in the Competition

The significance of psychological factors impacting the psychophysiological response in the pre-competition phase has been supported by empirical evidence.²⁴ Player characteristics, such as personality, expectancies, previous experience in competitive settings, players motivation, or perceived relevance of the competition affect cognitive appraisal which is assumed to influence the extent of the psychophysiological stress response.²⁵ If a competitor appraises an upcoming competition as challenging (important, controllable, and dependent on effort), a proactive coping response pattern is more likely to occur along with lower physiological stress responses, for instance in change of cortisol levels²⁶ and heart rate.²⁷ This pattern results in an increase in testosterone compared to baseline, sympathetic nervous system activation, and positive mood changes during competition, which in turn increase the probability of victory.²⁸ In contrast, cognitive appraisal of a situation as threatening would more likely result in a passive/reactive coping pattern response, insufficient activation of testosterone and the sympathetic nervous system, negative mood changes, and increases in cortisol compared to resting conditions.²⁹ Mendoza et al. found out that cognitive anxiety and perceived match importance were significantly higher in the expert group, however somatic anxiety and self-confidence were not. In addition, they found out a greater statistical weight in the cognitive variables than in the physiological ones. The results obtained by Mendoza et al. suggest that real competitive context and player's expertise were factors associated with an anticipatory stress response.³⁰ With regard to cortisol, an increase in cortisol and sympathetic autonomic branch has been observed prior competitions, highlighting the anticipatory response prior to the competition due to the psychological anticipation, that can be observed from days before the stressor,³¹ whereas the biggest manifestations can be found when the competition approach.³² Hormones such as testosterone and cortisol are pleiotropic, meaning they have multiple effects

Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Physiological Arousal, and Performance in Male Athletes. In *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 55.

²⁴ CASTO, K. V., EDWARDS, D. A.: Testosterone, Cortisol, and Human Competition. In *Hormones and Behavior*, 2016, Vol. 82, p. 35; VAN PARIDON, K. N. et al.: The Anticipatory Stress Response to Sport Competition: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis of Cortisol Reactivity. In *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 2017, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 9.

²⁵ SALVADOR, A., COSTA, R.: Coping with Competition: Neuroendocrine Responses and Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 168.

²⁶ GAAB, J. et al.: Psychological Determinants of the Cortisol Stress Response: The Role of Anticipatory Cognitive Appraisal. In *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 2005, Vol. 30, No. 6, p. 608.

²⁷ TOMAKA, J. et al.: Cognitive and Physiological Antecedents of Threat and Challenge Appraisal. In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1997, Vol. 73, No. 1, p. 67.

²⁸ OLIVEIRA, R., OLIVEIRA, G.: Androgen Responsiveness to Competition in Humans: The Role of Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience and Neuroeconomics*, 2014, Vol. 3, p. 28.

²⁹ SALVADOR, A.: Coping with Competitive Situations in Humans. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2005, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 200.

³⁰ MENDOZA, G. et al.: The Role of Experience, Perceived Match Importance, and Anxiety on Cortisol Response in an Official Sports Competition. In *The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, Vol. 18, No. 6, p. 5.

³¹ BALYAN, K. Y. et al.: The Relationship among Personality, Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Physiological Arousal, and Performance in Male Athletes. In *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 55.

³² ALIYARI, H. et al.: The Effects of FIFA 2015 Computer Games on Changes in Cognitive, Hormonal and Brain Waves Functions of Young Men Volunteers. In *Basic and Clinical Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 6, p. 198.

and often serve functional ends. In response to a stressor such as a stimulus warranting a fight-or-flight response, hormones such as cortisol and aldosterone might increase to prepare the body to rapidly mobilize energy, cognitively focus, and shunt attention away from other less immediately important functions such as reproduction or digestion.³³

In comparison, little research has been performed on mood, cardiovascular, and hormonal changes during competition. Studies have shown that competitive tasks result in greater sympathetic nervous system reactivity than non-competitive tasks.³⁴ During competition, it was observed increases in heart rate in expert players and between competition days and rest days,³⁵ low frequency/high frequency ratio, and blood pressure were also significantly increased during competition than during resting conditions in all E-sports players.³⁶ In addition, the cardiovascular response is influenced by different aspects, such as cognitive factors (knowledge or past experience), intrapersonal factors (personality traits), biological factors (genetic factors), and interpersonal factors (relationships or presence of evaluative others). However, no differences with respect to cortisol and testosterone were detected in many studies that assessed this parameter³⁷ moreover it shows no differences in hormones between play against humans compared to a control condition against the computer. Furthermore, it was found that the play duration was positively correlated to increases in testosterone.³⁸ Some studies have observed moderate decreases in cortisol during unofficial competitive games.³⁹ On the contrary, other studies have observed increases in cortisol, especially in higher-ranked players.⁴⁰ Mendoza et al. found out that only the expert group presented significantly higher cortisol levels in pre-competition situations than non-expert participants. They did not find significant modifications of cortisol between the pre and post competition samples, as well as between winners and losers.⁴¹ Gray et al. interpret these mixed results as a consequence of play against familiar opponents in a familiar environment. Also, the observation of positive correlations between play duration against people and increases in androgens could reflect the processes of steroid

³³ MCEWEN, B. S. et al.: Mechanisms of Stress in the Brain. In *Nature Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 18, No. 10, p. 1360.

³⁴ GARCIA-LEON, A. et al.: Relative Effects of Harassment, Frustration, and Task Characteristics on Cardiovascular Reactivity. In *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 2003, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 170.

³⁵ BEHNKE, M., KOSAKOWSKI, M., KACZMAREK, L. D.: Social Challenge and Threat Predict Performance and Cardiovascular Responses during Competitive Video Gaming. In *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2020, Vol. 46, p. 78; OXFORD, J., PONZI, D., GEARY, D. C.: Hormonal Responses Differ When Playing Violent Video Games Against an Ingroup and Outgroup. In *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 2010, Vol. 31, No. 3, p. 205.

³⁶ CHAPUT, J.-P. et al.: Video Game Playing Increases Food Intake in Adolescents: A Randomized Crossover Study. In *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2011, Vol. 93, No. 6, p. 1201.

³⁷ GRAY, P. B. et al.: Testing Men's Hormone Responses to Playing League of Legends: No Changes in Testosterone, Cortisol, DHEA or Androstenedione but Decrease in Aldosterone. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2018, Vol. 83, p. 232; SCHMIDT, S. C. E. et al.: The Influence of Cortisol, Flow, and Anxiety on Performance in E-Sports: A Field Study. In *BioMed. Research International*, 2020, No. 2, p. 4.

³⁸ ALIYARI, H. et al.: The Effects of FIFA 2015 Computer Games on Changes in Cognitive, Hormonal and Brain Waves Functions of Young Men Volunteers. In *Basic and Clinical. Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 6, p. 199.

³⁹ BALYAN, K. Y. et al.: The Relationship among Personality, Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Physiological Arousal, and Performance in Male Athletes. In *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 56; SUN, Y.: *Scholar Commons Motivation to Play Esports: Case of League of Legends Motivation to Play Esports: Case of League of Legends*. [online]. [2021-04-08]. Available at: <<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>>.

⁴⁰ MENDOZA, G. et al.: The Role of Experience, Perceived Match Importance, and Anxiety on Cortisol Response in an Official Esports Competition. In *The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, Vol. 18, No. 6, p. 5; LEIS, O., LAUTENBACH, F.: Psychological and Physiological Stress in Non-Competitive and Competitive Esports Settings: A Systematic Review. In *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2020, Vol. 51, p. 11.

⁴¹ TOMAKA, J. et al.: Cognitive and Physiological Antecedents of Threat and Challenge Appraisal. In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1997, Vol. 73, No. 1, p. 67.

hormone release (i.e., time required to elicit a measurable response) or the greater competitive psychological effect associated with longer duration play against other people.⁴² Some other research on human hormones and competition has observed decreases in cortisol during a competition, with interpretations such as unmeasured anticipatory hormone changes before a baseline measurement or a relatively relaxed competitive outlook.⁴³

Post-competition/during recovery, the cognitive appraisal of victory or defeat affects mood and satisfaction, which will be reappraised, and influence future competitions.⁴⁴ Besides, the competitor's dominance and tendency to participate in future competitions are affected by hormonal responses related to victory (increase in testosterone and decrease in cortisol) and defeat (decrease in testosterone and increase in cortisol). Geniole et al. showed that competition regularly induces acute changes in men's testosterone, and that relatively greater changes in winners than losers more often appear in non-lab settings.⁴⁵ Moreover the magnitude of testosterone change in response to competition may condition subsequent competitive behaviour.⁴⁶ Relatedly, Casto and Edwards reviewed research on cortisol responses to human competition. Findings showed that athletic competition typically led to an increase in cortisol levels, in some cases with elevated levels among winners relative to losers.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, some studies in sport competitions reported changes in cortisol from baseline to post-game conditions only after competition between recreational gamers for prize money,⁴⁸ not between teammates or students.⁴⁹ It was found that participants who played against out-group opponents rather than familiar club members, have greater testosterone and cortisol responses.⁵⁰ With regard to psychological anxiety, players who won their game demonstrated higher anxiety levels compared to players who lost their game.⁵¹ An explanation for higher anxiety in winners might be that aroused players perform better. These findings might be explained by internal (e.g., motivation and experience) and external factors (e.g., competitive settings).⁵²

⁴² ALIYARI, H. et al.: The Effects of FIFA 2015 Computer Games on Changes in Cognitive, Hormonal and Brain Waves Functions of Young Men Volunteers. In *Basic and Clinical. Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 6, p. 197.

⁴³ MENDOZA, G. et al.: The Role of Experience, Perceived Match Importance, and Anxiety on Cortisol Response in an Official Esports Competition. In *The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, Vol. 18, No. 6, p. 5.

⁴⁴ LAUTENBACH, F. et al.: Cognitive Appraisal Partially Explains Differences in Cortisol Increase after Psychosocial Stress between Women and Men. In *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 2016, Vol. 71, p. 17.

⁴⁵ GENIOLE, S. N. et al.: Effects of Competition Outcome on Testosterone Concentrations in Humans: An Updated Meta-Analysis. In *Hormones and Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 92, p. 48.

⁴⁶ MEHTA, P. H., JOSEPHS, R. A.: Testosterone Change after Losing Predicts the Decision to Compete Again. In *Hormones and Behavior*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 5, p. 688.

⁴⁷ HARDY, L., PARFITT, G.: A Catastrophe Model of Anxiety and Performance. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 82, No. 2, p. 175.

⁴⁸ MCEWEN, B. S. et al.: Mechanisms of Stress in the Brain. In *Nature Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 18, No. 10, p. 1359.

⁴⁹ ALIYARI, H. et al.: The Effects of FIFA 2015 Computer Games on Changes in Cognitive, Hormonal and Brain Waves Functions of Young Men Volunteers. In *Basic and Clinical. Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 6, p. 198.

⁵⁰ FLINN, M. V., PONZI, D., MUEHLENBEIN, M. P.: Hormonal Mechanisms for Regulation of Aggression in Human Coalitions. In *Human Nature*, 2012, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 86.

⁵¹ MCEWEN, B. S. et al.: Mechanisms of Stress in the Brain. In *Nature Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 18, No. 10, p. 1359.

⁵² HANTON, S., MELLALIEU, S., WILLIAMS, J. M.: Understanding and Managing Stress in Sport. In WILLIAMS, J. M., KRANE, V. (eds.): *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 2015, p. 236.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

The principal limitations of the present research, with few exceptions, were the low sample size used in many studies. Furthermore, there is limited research that has investigated the psychophysiological responses of elite level competitive E-sports players during competitive gameplay. The recruitment of different samples of players of varied experience playing E-sports, would be beneficial and help address how generalizable the present findings may be. Also, the biosocial influence of competition has to be considered, as playing against the artificial intelligence of the game is not the same as playing against humans. Furthermore, only a few of the included studies applied theories or models based on concepts of psychophysiological responses. Questionnaires and theoretical models specifically pertaining to anxiety and stress would deepen our understanding of these responses in E-sports. Future studies should also include a psychological perspective, assessments of the cognitive appraisal (challenge vs. threat) and associated coping response patterns, and its possible impact on performance.⁵³ In addition, little is known about psychophysiological anxiety and stress in E-sports and its relation to personal and external factors, as these factors influence the responses in important ways.⁵⁴ Factors should include personal aspects such as sex and age of the participants, previous experience, and the extent to which players care about winning and losing.⁵⁵ External factors should include aspects such as game setting, game outcome and presence of audience, as these have been shown to impact cognitive appraisal.⁵⁶ Moreover, various researchers have emphasized that studies must have at least three different measurement points that are significant for studying psychophysiological anxiety and stress responses.⁵⁷ These points are baseline (resting conditions), competition (event), and post-competition (post-event). This is of particular importance, for example, when athletes warm up prior to competition and might also experience an anticipatory rise in psychophysiological responses parameters.⁵⁸ Furthermore future research on E-sports competition could gain by identifying a more crucial competition in which to test for hormonal responses (e.g., at a public venue with large viewing audience and with financial stakes). Future work might also include games of longer duration given the links observed between play duration and hormone release.⁵⁹

Overall, the question as to whether playing E-sports in competitive settings is related to psychophysiological anxiety and stress responses cannot be answered satisfactorily based on current literature. Understanding psychophysiological responses in E-sports is necessary to help

⁵³ SALVADOR, A., COSTA, R.: Coping with Competition: Neuroendocrine Responses and Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 167.

⁵⁴ BEHNKE, M., KOSAKOWSKI, M., KACZMAREK, L. D.: Social Challenge and Threat Predict Performance and Cardiovascular Responses during Competitive Video Gaming. In *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2020, Vol. 46, p. 77.

⁵⁵ SALVADOR, A., COSTA, R.: Coping with Competition: Neuroendocrine Responses and Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 167; CHAPUT, J.-P. et al.: Video Game Playing Increases Food Intake in Adolescents: A Randomized Crossover Study. In *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2011, Vol. 93, No. 6, p. 1201.

⁵⁶ MELLALIEU, S. D., et al.: Competition Stress in Sport Performers: Stressors Experienced in the Competition Environment. In *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 2009, Vol. 27, No. 7, p. 739.

⁵⁷ SALVADOR, A., COSTA, R.: Coping with Competition: Neuroendocrine Responses and Cognitive Variables. In *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 168; LABORDE, S., MOSLEY, E., THAYER, J. F.: Heart Rate Variability and Cardiac Vagal Tone in Psychophysiological Research-Recommendations for Experiment Planning, Data Analysis, and Data Reporting. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2017, Vol. 8, p. 7.

⁵⁸ HARDY, L., PARFITT, G.: A Catastrophe Model of Anxiety and Performance. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 82, No. 2, p. 175.

⁵⁹ ALIYARI, H. et al.: The Effects of FIFA 2015 Computer Games on Changes in Cognitive, Hormonal and Brain Waves Functions of Young Men Volunteers. In *Basic and Clinical Neuroscience*, 2015, Vol. 6, p. 199.

players maintain cognitive (e.g., strategic thinking) as well as motor performance (e.g., fine motor control), in the competitive and stressful environment in which they perform.⁶⁰ E-sport is still working on finding reliable systems that help players and coaches improve performance.⁶¹ Considering E-sport has some similarities to traditional sport, a better understanding of anxiety and stress in the E-sports environment and its effects on performance are needed to inform sport psychological training and intervention strategies in the future. Given the growing relevance of E-sports globally, it is imperative that the health impacts of competing in E-sports be explored.

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⁶⁰ COTTRELL, C., MCMILLEN, N., HARRIS, B. S.: Sport Psychology in a Virtual World: Considerations for Practitioners Working in Esports. In *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 80.

⁶¹ GREEN, W.: *Sport Management & Sport Psychology for Esport: Winning Championships*. [online]. [2021-04-08]. Available at: <<https://medium.com/@MindGamesWeldon/sportmanagement-sport-psychology-for-esport-winning-championships-717491ba4609>>.

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THE EMERGENCE OF DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS AND DIGITAL HERITAGE IN THE AGE OF BIG DATA

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Abstract:

The paper deals with the basic principles of the issue of big data as the technological background to the emergence of digital footprints, and the data mining process as a methodological social behaviour research tool, which due to its complexity requires a multidisciplinary approach involving social sciences, humanities and technology. The paper also describes the security risks connected with accessibility to digital footprints, and puts them in the context of personal data protection and the GDPR regulation. The final objective is an introduction to the issue of digital heritage and a cultural and personal approach.

Key words:

Big Data. Data Mining. Digital Footprints. Digital Heritage. GDPR. Privacy Protection.

Introduction: Big Data and Datafied Society

During the intensive and constantly developing process of the transformation of all kinds of social activities into digital form, which we can summarise using the term of the datafication of society,¹ an increasingly large amount of data is generated which, in addition to normal commercial use in the area of marketing, can also represent an extensive resource for scientific research in the areas of not only information technology, but also social sciences and humanities. At the turn of the 21st century, the term “big data” began to be used for the extensive data collections which serve as a research resource; however, this term can be used in slightly different contexts, because it covers not only the large data volumes themselves, but also the fields dealing with their processing and analysis. That is why the term “data mining” also often appears in connection with the term “big data”. Both of these terms are closely related to the issue of digital footprints, and it is therefore necessary to define their meaning in the context of the topic of this text.

We can consider “big data” to mean sets of collected data generated during the daily interactions of the section of society which participates in network communication via a wide range of smart digital devices. However, this data may not necessarily be publicly available. As a specific example, it can be users’ public contributions on social networks, which are accessible to practically everyone, but it can also be lists of e-shop orders which, apart from registered customers, only employees with the appropriate authorisation can access. It can also be indexed information collected in Internet browser databases, or network communication records in server logs, which are available only to Internet communication providers and their network administrators. The big data category itself cannot be easily defined according to a specific data volume boundary; nevertheless, in general, it can be volumes in the order of 10^{15} bytes (i.e., petabytes). Regardless of the technological characteristics of these large data volumes, what is important is that there is not a uniform method of organising or formatting it. In the world of computer technology, multiple norms and standards are used for data storage, which support various options of working with data, but there are no fixed rules stipulating which method should be applied in certain cases. The data can therefore be concentrated in relational or document-oriented databases, or stored in files of various formats organised in data warehouses, etc. The degree of accessibility to this data is then based on its origin and nature of availability.

¹ See: DIJCK, J.: Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology. In *Surveillance & Society*, 2014, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 197-208.

Access to the data is often possible via the Internet and web services freely available on same, or programmatically usable APIs (Application Programming Interfaces), applying standardised communication protocols, which are maintained by specific organisations or institutions which manage the given type of data (whether free of charge or for a fee). In the case of non-public data, access is only possible with a mediated access authorisation or – as an extreme yet realistically possible case – via a cyberattack. Precisely due to the different organisational structures of data sources, the so-called extract, transform, load method is used for its collection and processing. The aim is to clean, structure and unify the collected data into a common format usable for further processing. Once the data is collected and formatted, the so-called data mining process, which includes subsequent analyses, comes into play. The name itself is somewhat misleading, as it is not a data collection process, as it might seem at first sight in connection with the word mining, but a process of acquiring new knowledge and revealing hidden information structures. The term Knowledge Discovery in Databases, abbreviated as KDD, is also used to more accurately name these processes, but we do not encounter it as often as the term “data mining”. Data mining analysis uses a broad palette of methods and technologies from the fields of information technology and statistics, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, neural networks, association analyses, regression analyses and decision trees. For example, methods based on big data and data mining are frequently used in the area of marketing and in business intelligence, for the purpose of the automated streamlining of processes in companies and organisations where the primary motive is to increase economic profit.

Nevertheless, in addition to commercial use and research of informatics (as well as genetics), these technologies also began to be used in the field of humanities. As stated by Mirko Tobias Schäfer and Karin van Es in their collection devoted to a datafied society and the study of culture through data, it is necessary to think about the multidisciplinary interconnections in this field of science: *“Scientists in the fields of humanities and social sciences are realising that they must focus more and more on evaluating data which comes from network and digital channels, because these are important sources from a research perspective. Data which comes from network communication is becoming an epistemological subject, and the process of the datafication and mediatization of society provides a new theoretical and methodological set of tools for studying culture. When developing these new research methods, academics are thus forced to broaden their own fields of activity, often in collaboration with computer scientists who can provide valuable information about the technological nature of the problem. These multidisciplinary approaches, often linked together using the term data science, are important in that they prioritise the issue of responsibility. The questions of responsible data production and use, as well as the questions of the importance of attribution, ethics, privacy and transparency when handling data, now form the core of this paradigm.”*² It is also necessary to take into consideration the fact that humanities, by their characteristics and core assumptions, differ from exact sciences, and their scientific goals often lie not only in the pure validation of empirical data and verification of hypotheses, but also in the creation of new questions and discovery of internal contexts.³ The fusion of technological fields and humanities is at least partly unavoidable, because the methods used for the analysis and collection of research data require an advanced knowledge of information technology.

² SCHÄFER, M. T., ES, K.: *The Datafied Society: Studying Culture through Data*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2017, p. 13.

³ See: RAMSAY, S.: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism. In *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 2003, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 167-174.

1 Origin of Digital Footprints

When we focus in more detail on the character of the content of the big data which is the subject of the analysis, we can observe that it often contains information of a personalised character. For example, web traffic analytics is governed at least by basic demographic parameters, which come from visitors' personal information and cookies. Similarly, marketing campaign management and analysis utilizes users' personal information for targeting, measuring effectiveness and monitoring sales funnels. In order to be able to read certain social behaviour patterns from the data, it is necessary to somehow correlate it with its owners or at least a certain demographic category. At a personal level, this can be information such as e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, credit card numbers, social network ID profiles and other similar unique identification information. At a general level, it can be geographic location, age category, gender and similar demographic data. Thanks to this personalised characteristic of the data, the phenomenon of *digital footprints* emerges as a by-product of network and Internet communication. This term basically includes everything that has been captured and stored in digital repositories thanks to personal interaction with the Internet environment. It is therefore a 'footprint' of our journey through the Internet. For example, a comprehensive definition of a digital footprint is offered by Tony Fish in his book *My Digital Footprint*, where he describes it as a set of data and metadata generated on the basis of a person's interaction with the Internet via digital devices. Fish also claims that digital footprints have certain input and output properties. For example, digital footprint's input properties may include focusing our attention on a specific activity, such as listening to our favourite music. It is therefore a record of the way we spend our time in the digital environment. Other input properties can be geographic location and time, content of the searched-for information, or the audio-visual or text content itself. According to Fish, we can consider a digital footprint's output properties to be the values that its input properties create by their presence. Namely, this can be the aim of our activity connected with the creation of the relevant record, sharing of opinion and reputation regarding an associated activity, protection and security of own personal data, personalisation of services on the basis of input properties, and contextual adaptation.⁴

Digital footprints therefore have certain properties that reflect our actions in the Internet environment. Nathan Eagle and Kate Green even call them the "*metadata of our lives*",⁵ which can be interpreted within the scope of network communication channels and affect how our personality is perceived by other participants in the communication. For this reason, we can regard digital footprints as another form of media at the level of interpersonal and network communication. However, digital footprints can have another specific property. According to research on digital footprints published within the *Pew Research Center*, digital footprints can be divided into two categories – active and passive. As mentioned by research co-author Mary Madden, *active* digital footprints are personal data that was made available intentionally, while *passive* digital footprints are personal data that was made available without a deliberate action.⁶ In practical terms, this means that the active element of a digital footprint can be the publication of a contribution on a social network, while on the contrary a passive element is if the user's profile is tagged by another user in another contribution, thereby adding a record which the first

⁴ See: FISH, T.: *My Digital Footprint: A Two-Sided Digital Business Model Where Your Privacy Will Be Someone Else's Business!*. London : Futuretext, 2009.

⁵ EAGLE, N., GREEN, K.: *Reality Mining: Using Big Data to Engineer a Better World*. Cambridge, London : MIT Press, 2014, p. 2.

⁶ MADDEN, M. et al: *Digital Footprints: Online Identity Management and Search in the Age of Transparency*. [online]. [2020-12-20]. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/media/Files/Reports/2007/PIP_Digital_Footprints.pdf>.

user could not influence. Some social networks such as Facebook offer its users control over this issue, while on the contrary other platforms such as Twitter leave this option open, and the user must therefore take it into account. For example, a passive part of a footprint can also be a record of the visit via web analytics, which is caused by the user's actions, but unknowingly.

From these situations, it follows that people have only limited control over their digital footprints. An important role is also played by the degree of own involvement, and the willingness to maintain and manage one's digital footprint. Not every user is aware of the extent and options they can avail of in terms of management, and often may not have personal motivation to deal with their digital footprint at all. On the contrary, some people take very good care of their digital footprint (or at least part thereof), because it forms a significant part of their interpersonal communication, or even represents a source of income for them such as in the case of influencers. This phenomenon could be described using the relationship of direct proportion to time spent on network communication, because the more intensively people communicate via the Internet, the more of their attention their digital footprint receives. It is currently possible to monitor a huge number of people via their public profiles on social networks, such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, where people can share their everyday experiences using videos, photographs and short status messages. These contributions thus remain retrospectively available. A new contribution model called 'Stories' recently appeared on social networks; this is a creative format which enables people who use services such as Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and Messenger to view and share everyday moments via photographs and videos that disappear within 24 hours. The WhatsApp service has a similar function, called WhatsApp Status. Stories contributions can be supplemented using creative tools such as stickers, emojis and GIF files, as well as built-in camera and augmented reality effects. Such profile management options are a clear example of digital footprint control, and also reflect the degree of the individual's involvement in this activity.

Social network profiles may form the main focal point of digital footprints, but they are not the only place where personal digital information is concentrated. In many aspects, personal information and digital footprints closely overlap, but there is a slight difference between them regarding accessibility. Personal digital information may not originate in network communication, and can exist independently of it (for example photographs on a hard disk, memory card or other digital carrier). It is compatible information whereby nothing is technically preventing it from being transmitted to the network, but it cannot be used as a normal part of digital footprints because there is no network connection leading to it. For example, the issue of personal digital information management is addressed by Ofer Bergman and Steve Whittaker, who summarise their research findings in the book *The Science of Managing Our Digital Stuff*. They consider personal information management to be a very different process from other types of information organisation. They are of the opinion that this process is difficult due to need to foresee when, and under what circumstances, the information must be available to the user on request. Nevertheless, it is an activity that every person regularly performs to some extent. According to Bergman and Whittaker, people use a storage and hoarding strategy when organising personal information, which they apply when managing these main categories: paper documents, digital files, e-mails, photographs and video recordings. The hoarding strategy has an advantage in that it enables easy access to items which are often arranged chronologically, but it ceases to be effective with increasing volume, and orientation in collected information thus becomes problematic. Users can have difficulties categorizing information, and may not be able to accurately identify the context in which they find this information. A negative effect is therefore the creation of excessively large piles of information containing heterogeneous and often also duplicated items, which as a result are

complicated and not very useful. The core of Bergman and Whittaker's thesis lies in that people are not exclusively consumers of public information, and their behaviour often requires a process of curating their own personal information which they consider valuable and store for possible future use. Curation thus represents a form of self-controlled communication, whereby the user stores and organises personal information using subjective attributes. The problems associated with curation are becoming more and more pressing, because the population's personal archives are constantly growing.⁷

2 Digital Footprint Security Risks

Because digital footprints are essentially personal data carriers, the topic of their security at a time when a considerable part of interpersonal communication takes place via online channels is obvious. Therefore, in the following section, I will try to present the main areas of the issue of secure access to digital footprints, the risks associated with its breaching, and options of protecting them. In this context, it is also necessary to take into consideration the interpretation of the relevant legislation, and the impacts of the implementation of Regulation (EU) No. 2016/679, of the European Parliament and of the Council, on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data (hereinafter GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation). Before we move on to specific security risks, let us first try to evaluate the general reasons why it is important to address privacy and personal data protection. In normal life, privacy is very important, because our nature includes an entire range of intimate and inner feelings, thoughts and opinions, which may not necessarily reflect our own public reputation, on which we work during our lives and build all our social efforts. It is this reputation that can be significantly affected by a personal data leak, which can have a fundamental effect on one's personal mental or economic situation. Personal data protection is provided by legislation which in the Czech Republic is based directly on the constitutional order and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms*, with its new amendments coming only with the advent of the GDPR. Another reason for personal data protection is its economic value, which stands behind the motive for its collection, and demand for same. In his GDPR implementation handbook, Luděk Nezmar aptly summarises the reasons for personal data protection from the perspective of its economic value: *“Personal data can be considered an economic asset created by individuals' identities and behaviour, which is traded in exchange for higher quality services and products. The amount of stored personal data is rapidly increasing. (...) Within a bilateral market mechanism, online platforms function as intermediaries which collect data from consumers and sell the collected information, mainly to advertising companies. By analysing the data they receive from consumers, they can design personalised advertising strategies tailored to the customers. Companies thus place their products more effectively, and consumers receive recommendations or advertising messages adapted to their interests. In other words, the use of personal data eliminates asymmetry of information, and contributes to the high efficiency of online transactions. However, concerns about the possible misuse of consumer data are warranted. Consumers are often unaware of how their data can be used in online business, particularly if they are not adequately protected. Insufficient protection of consumers' personal data can lead to an unequal exchange of economic value. In a situation where the processes by which data can be used are not properly addressed, individuals' willingness to share their personal data decreases.”*⁸

⁷ See: BERGMAN, O., WHITTAKER, S.: *The Science of Managing Our Digital Stuff*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2016.

⁸ NEZMAR, L.: *GDPR: A Practical Guide to Implementation*. Prague : GRADA Publishing, 2017, p. 20.

To understand the technological aspect of the security risks associated with digital footprints, it is necessary to understand the principles of data transmission through a network communication layer. Within the scope of this text, it is not possible to cover all of the elements in the information technology chain that are necessary for the functioning of network communication, but we will try to at least shed some light on the basic principles which enable access to personal data, and represent possibilities of its leakage. Inside computer memories, all information is represented by a code of binary sets of zeros and ones. This numerical representation enables language to be captured in the form of text in coding known as ASCII or Unicode. It basically involves the mapping of text characters in numerical form. In a similar manner, we can also numerically represent image and sound, whereby we convert image into pixels, and sound waves into a patterned digital signal. The methods by which information is transcoded into binary data are standardised, so if data leaks, it can be read and further copied using standard processes. The first threat to digital footprint security is therefore the observation of the network data flow. To counter this threat, procedures have been introduced in network communication technologies that take this variant into account and try to prevent it. This mainly involves data encryption methods using encryption or hashing algorithms such as AES, RSA, MD5 and others. Data flowing through the network is thus unreadable to potential external observers. Encryption can take place on multiple levels, from VPN (virtual private networks) to SSL, TLS and HTTPS protocols. The implementation of encryption mechanisms is recommended at all levels of communication, and is part of modern web services and social networks' standards, because it significantly reduces the risk of data leakage. Therefore, if the user is using modern, trusted communication applications, and at the same time is connected via a trusted Internet connection, in most cases they eliminate this part of the threat.

Nevertheless, despite basic technological measures, absolute security cannot always be guaranteed. Another risk category is connected with users' ignorance and carelessness during their online interactions. A weak link in the security chain can be a weak user password linked to access to a wide portion of the digital footprint, particularly if the user is using the same password to access multiple services. A weak password can be cracked using so-called *brute force* attacks, where the attacker attempts to repeatedly guess the password or key with the help of a high-performance computer and a database of commonly used passwords. A defence against such an attack is either multi-factor authentication, which in addition to the password also verifies a special code sent by SMS at the time of the login attempt, or an additional security question to which only the user knows the answer. Not all services and platforms offer this option, so it is particularly important to pay attention to using a secure password. In the book *Your Right to Privacy*, Jim Bronskill and David McKie offer recommendations for the creation of a secure password format, which should contain at least 8 characters in a combination of upper- and lower-case letters, digits, and at least one special symbol. For increased security, they also recommend that the user change the password regularly, and that they use different passwords to access different platforms and services.⁹ Unauthorised access during a cyber-attack or fraud can represent a threat to the user in the form of identity theft, or theft of other sensitive personal information for the purpose of financial fraud or blackmail. Attackers can then use personal information to gain access to bank accounts, take out financial loans, conceal other criminal activities, etc.¹⁰ Personal data from digital footprints can also be misused for the dissemination of spam or so-called phishing e-mails, where the e-mail appears to originate from the official address of the provider of a certain service regularly availed of by the user, but is in fact a fraudulent attempt to extract access or other sensitive personal data.

⁹ BRONSKILL, J., MCKIE, J.: *Your Right to Privacy: Minimize Your Digital Footprint*. 1st Edition. North Vancouver : Self-Counsel Press, 2016, p. 48.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

3 Digital Footprints in the Context of Personal Data Protection and the GDPR

For the aforementioned security threats, legislation exists that protects the user from the misuse of personal information, and sets out principles which must be adhered to when processing personal data to prevent possible misuse. In 2016, the European Union implemented the General Data Protection Regulation, which we know as the GDPR and which is valid in all 28 Member States. It represents a legal personal data protection framework which is valid throughout the entire European Union, protects citizens' rights against the unauthorised handling of their data and personal information, and imposes strict penalties in the event of a breach. According to Luděk Nezmar, the GDPR takes over all of the existing data protection and processing principles on which our EU personal data protection system is based. Within the scope of this regulation, all entities which process personal data must comply with principles which can be understood as an overview of the most important obligations during personal data processing. Thanks to the GDPR, the principles of transparency and minimisation, as well as integrity and confidentiality requirements, are clearly stipulated as elementary personal data protection principles. Namely, the regulation stipulates the following personal data processing principles: lawfulness, fairness and transparency; purpose limitation; data minimisation; accuracy; storage limitation; integrity and confidentiality; responsibility.¹¹

The GDPR is an extensive document which tries to take into consideration various possible personal data protection situations; we will therefore try to interpret the parts of the regulation which significantly affect the functioning of digital footprints. The first important point is that, in cases stipulated by law, personal data subjects must tolerate publication (e.g., in a public register). However, without explicit consent, it is not permitted to further take over or process this published data, even if it was published voluntarily. The publication of data therefore does not mean the automatic possibility of its further unrestricted dissemination and processing. In the context of digital footprints, it thus means that digital footprints available in this manner cannot be collected and processed, for example using the data mining process, without an appropriate authorisation from the owner. Another important aspect of the regulation is the provision of the right to be forgotten. In the GDPR, the right to deletion represents the controller's obligation to delete the personal data if it no longer fulfils the purposes for which it was collected, or if the consent to the processing is revoked. However, revocation of consent does not always mean that the controller is obliged to delete the personal data, as the consent is linked to a specific purpose and the controller can also process the personal data for other purposes. The provision of consent to personal data processing also must not be contingent on the conclusion of a contract, but it is possible that, in connection with the use of a service or product, the controller will be obliged to process a necessary amount of personal data for the purposes of fulfilling the contract and legally stipulated obligations. This rule therefore practically represents the need to provide the user with a tool to control the active and passive parts of digital footprints. A related rule is also the fact that personal data can only exist in relation to a natural person. A legal person is thus not a personal data subject, and data relating to a legal person is therefore not personal data. A personal data subject also cannot be a deceased person, and the regulation excludes its effect in such a case. This regulation plays a role in the context of digital heritage, which we will address in the next part of the text; nevertheless, it is important to mention that digital footprints can be freely used and processed after their subjects' deaths. According to Nezmar, this definition is identical to the content of Act No. 101/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Personal Data and on Amendments to Certain Acts.¹² In terms of digital footprint security, the regulation imposes an obligation on the controller to implement

¹¹ NEZMAR, L.: *GDPR: A Practical Guide to Implementation*. Prague : GRADA Publishing, 2017, p. 27.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 32.

technical and organisational measures, with regard to the nature, scope and purposes of the processing, so that they can ensure and are able to document that the processing is performed in accordance with the relevant regulations. Every controller is obliged to implement appropriate security measures, whose scope can differ depending on the purposes of the processing. For example, one personal data security element is its pseudonymisation and encryption. These elements are not mandatory, but their use can free the controller from the obligations connected with a potential security breach. In practice, this means that, in the event of a leakage of data stored in encrypted form, the controller is not obliged to report the incident.

The regulation also mentions the so-called profiling processes used for automated personal data processing to evaluate personal factors such as work performance, financial situation, personal interests, reliability, behaviour, location or movement. Profiling is not a priori prohibited by the Personal Data Protection Act or the General Regulation. However, it is important that it takes place in anticipated cases and on the basis of stipulated rules: “*Natural persons can be assigned network identifiers which use their devices, applications, tools and protocols, such as Internet protocol addresses, cookie identifiers, or other identifiers such as radio-frequency identification tags. In this way, footprints can be left which can be used to profile and identify natural persons, particularly when combined with unique identifiers and other information obtained by servers.*”¹³ The GDPR regulation also includes a special category for sensitive data, because certain personal data can affect the subject’s public reputation and cause damage in society, employment or school, or cause them to be discriminated against. For this reason, the regulation includes a nominal list of data types considered to be sensitive, and which are afforded increased protection during processing. This especially manifests itself in the legal reasons on whose basis the data can be processed. Special sensitive personal data categories include information regarding the racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religion, philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health, sex life or sexual orientation of a natural person. Also included is genetic and biometric data which is processed for the purpose of the unique identification of a natural person.

4 Two Levels of Digital Heritage

The consequence of life in an information society, where people create digital footprints via network communication, leads to an important issue, being the phenomenon of “digital heritage”. Under this term, we can imagine all digital footprint files that remain available to future generations even after their users’ deaths. According to statistical data from ITU, at the end of 2019 approximately 51% of the human population, i.e., roughly 4 billion people,¹⁴ participated in Internet communication worldwide, and according to information from the *Our World in Data* server, around 50 million people died every year over the last decade.¹⁵ Based on this data, we can therefore assess that the number of deceased persons’ digital footprints will grow cumulatively, because a considerable portion of the deceased will also be network communication participants. As shown by a study by Carl J. Öhman and David Watson, published in the scientific magazine *Big Data & Society* and devoted to predicting the

¹³ EU Regulation no. 2016/679, of the European Parliament and of the Council, of the 27th of April 2016, on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC from 27th of April 2016. [online]. [2020-12-20]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679>>.

¹⁴ *Statistics*. [online]. [2020-12-20]. Available at: <<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>>.

¹⁵ *How Many People Die and How Many Are Born Each Year? Our World in Data*. [online]. [2020-12-20]. Available at: <<https://ourworldindata.org/births-and-deaths>>.

accumulation of deceased users' Facebook profiles, around 1.4 billion users of this network will die by the year 2100, if Facebook as a service ceases to attract new users. However, if Facebook's growth trend continues at the current rate, this number will exceed 4.9 billion users: *"We came to the conclusion that in the next few decades alone there will be hundreds of millions of additional deceased persons' profiles, and that depending on the development of the global user penetration level, the number of deceased persons' profiles may exceed the number of living persons' profiles even before the end of the century. Regardless of how the network grows in the coming years, the vast majority of deceased persons' profiles will belong to users in Western countries. Given its global reach, we contended that the sum of deceased users' profiles means something more than the sum of its parts. These profiles are becoming part of our collective record as a species, and may prove invaluable to future generations."*¹⁶ It is undoubtedly a significant social phenomenon, because in the future more and more records of how people lived their lives will be cumulatively generated. Therefore, the issue of digital heritage can be viewed from two different directions.

4.1 Personal Level of Digital Heritage

The first approach is the relationship to the personal level of digital life, where digital heritage represents the significance of the value of a specific person's digital footprint, and in the event of this person's death, this value can pass to their surviving relatives.¹⁷ In this case, an important role is played by the self-management of digital footprints, which can be considered a form of property. The problem is that, in the legislative context of the Czech Republic, by its characteristic this data falls not only under the personal data category, but also under the copyright category. For this reason, for example, when registering their profiles on social networks, users are forced to provide the service operator with an unconditional licence to the content they post therein. The user is then not entitled to the further settlement of property rights linked to their authorial feats in the form of photographs, videos, etc. Nevertheless, personal copyright remains unaffected by this. Inheritance law as such does not take this marginal issue into consideration via a special process, and so it is governed by ordinary inheritance proceedings, where property copyright, but not personal copyright, passes to heirs within 70 years of the author's death.

The responsibility for bequeathing or inheriting access to digital footprints therefore remains in the hands of the user themselves. Some web services and social networks are aware of this issue, and thus provide users with at least basic tools for handing over access. Namely, the Facebook social network allows its users to name a person from the ranks of their friends who, in the event of the user's death, will be able to manage the profile to a certain extent, which for example represents the option of adding commemorative contributions, accepting new friend requests and editing the profile photograph, as well as requesting the deletion of the account. However, this step does not grant access to the user's account itself, nor is it possible to read their messages or edit contributions made before their death. Facebook calls this function profile *memorialisation*, and the person whom the user can choose from the ranks of their friends is called *legacy contact*. The Instagram social network offers a similar function to Facebook, and in the event of the user's death the account can thus be memorialised or removed. On the contrary, other social networks such as Twitter do not allow such access to the account, so unless the user bequeaths the access details to someone, the account will remain unchanged. Specifically, however, Twitter at least allows the account deactivation process to begin if the

¹⁶ ÖHMAN, C. J., WATSON, D.: Are the Dead Taking over Facebook? A Big Data Approach to the Future of Death Online. In *Big Data & Society*, 2019, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 11.

¹⁷ ZÁLESKÝ, V.: *The Digital Footprint as a Subject of Heritage in Today's Information Society*. [Master's Thesis]. Prague : Metropolitan University Prague, 2016, p. 67.

relative is able to submit a death certificate and proof of their relationship to the user. Another alternative process for bequeathing access is offered by Google, which provides the option of choosing a trustworthy person to access an account in the event of long-term inactivity. The activity control frequency is adjustable. If the account becomes inactive, the trustworthy person will be granted access for a limited period. After this period expires, Google can delete the inactive account. Of course, the afore-mentioned examples refer to services which have millions or even billions of users worldwide, and the issue of digital footprint management after their users' death is relevant for them. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is an infinite number of smaller services on the Internet on which people create a large number of accounts and records along their journey through the online world, and which do not follow a uniform approach for resolving this problem. The issue of bequeathing personal digital heritage will thus become a common problem that people will be dealing with in the future.

4.2 Cultural and Social Level of Digital Heritage

The second level deals with digital heritage as a form of social and cultural legacy, and as part of cultural heritage. Within the scope of this approach, it is important to understand that digital footprints which remain publicly available after their users' deaths have not only value for the subject and their loved ones, but also an impact on society and culture. Although interpersonal communication methods are moving deeper and deeper into the world of digital technologies, in normal life we continue to draw on the legacy of our culture and our ancestors, who handed it down through the media and means of expression that were available to them during their lives. We continue to read books they wrote, listen to music they composed, live in cities they built, use technologies they invented, speak and write languages which they helped form and develop, etc. In general, all these legacies and their attributes form a whole which we can call *cultural heritage*, and this process of bequeathing knowledge to future generations thus serves as a cornerstone for the development of human culture. Over time, objects emerge as a by-product of cultural creation, which embody its presence and have meanings encoded in them in a cultural context. We can call these objects cultural artefacts or relics. According to the author of a collection devoted to the study of relics, Alexandra Walsham, relics are created from physical remains, or objects connected with the persons they represent.¹⁸ However, an important detail is that remains only acquire the status of relic within a cultural context. A good example of a relic is the Holy Grail, which as the cup itself probably did not have great significance, but the circumstances of the death of Jesus Christ made it into an important cultural symbol encapsulated in the object of a relic. Simply, we can say that if the remains fall into oblivion and are never important to society and its culture, they will remain merely physical objects, and in time will decompose. However, if the remains affect and influence society and culture in some way (usually via the given person's actions), it is likely that they will live on, and through worship by society or survivors gradually acquire the status of relic.

We can also apply this idea of the creation of a cultural environment and cultural relics to the environment of online communication and digital footprints. In a similar manner, digital footprints will create a digital heritage in the form of a cultural legacy. Just like archaeology examines old excavated objects and tries to analyse their cultural value for the reconstruction of social life in the distant past, it is possible to use similar procedures on the basis of digital footprints contained in big data on the present-day Internet, and for example use the afore-mentioned data mining process to find new social behaviour structures through data. We can consider practically any part of digital footprints linked to a specific person, which acquire cultural significance after this person's death, to be a relic in digital form. I believe that all of

¹⁸ WALSHAM, A.: *Relics and Remains: Past and Present Supplements*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 22.

these remains will play an important role in the future for fields which deal with the study of remains, especially archaeology and anthropology.

Conclusion

As a consequence of social transformation towards a datafied society, large data volumes called big data are produced during interpersonal communication. This data is an analysis and research resource for a wide variety of disciplines including humanities, and is analysed using the data mining process, which utilises an entire range of modern methods including artificial intelligence. Big data often has the character of personal data, and is thus a reflection of the creation of so-called digital footprints, which we can define as records or imprints of interactions in the online communication environment. Due to the complex methodology, research in this area results in a multidisciplinary fusion of humanities and technical disciplines. Digital footprint management is closely intertwined with the activity of personal information storage, an important part of which is also personal data curation. As digital footprints are a personal data carrier, they are also subject to the security risk of its theft and misuse. However, in the EU, personal information disseminated via digital footprints is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which provides legal protection to online communication users and imposes strict penalties in the event of a breach. Personal data is subject to security threats, because it has considerable economic value. Technologically, the possibility of data leakage is prevented primarily by its encryption and anonymisation; nevertheless, despite these measures, data can be stolen due to carelessness on the user's part (for example by the cracking of a weak password). In 2016, the EU implemented the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), which protects citizens' rights against the unauthorised handling of their data. These measures also closely relate to digital footprints, and limit the possibilities of their unrestricted processing. Population growth, combined with a transformation into a datafied information society, results in a large number of digital footprints left behind by deceased users, which remain publicly available after their death. We can describe this phenomenon as digital heritage, and it can be approached from a personal or a cultural and social level.

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