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# Digital, Hybrid and Traditional Media Consumption and Religious Reflection

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**Abstract:** When a person incorporates a diverse selection of digital, hybrid, and print news into their media diet, scholars can analyze these sources as indicators of the user's reflexivity on the religious content. This study broadens our understanding of the relationship between the diversity of Catholic believers' news feeds and their capacity to conduct more critical reflection. We explore the relationship between different media diets and reflexivity through a discursive analysis of 30 digital media diaries and their related 30 in-depth interviews collected among traditional Catholic and post-Vatican II media users. Our results point to two patterns emerging between reflexivity and media consumption. The more diverse the repertoire of a given Catholic media user's consumption, the more likely they are to engage in reflection about the content of this media. At the same time, traditionalist Catholic media consumers, consuming counterpublic, homogenous digital content, are still able to engage in deep reflection.

**Keywords:** digital media, hybrid media, traditional media, media consumption, religious reflection, traditional Catholics, post-Vatican II Catholics

## INTRODUCTION

As researchers have documented over the past 40 years, individuals' reflective practices have much more in common with contextual media consumption (Lindlof, 1991; Rlindlof, 1988). Media users have strikingly distinct interpretations of media, which lead to alternative understandings of the same content

(Palmer, 1986), and thus vary in terms of news consumption (Jędrzejewski, 2017). Therefore, it's not surprising that media is an essential aspect of how individuals engage in reflective practices (Cake et al., 2015; Farr & Riordan, 2015). Reflective practices refer to the process through which a person uses their existing knowledge and real-life experiences to evaluate new information, and further, media information (Baume & Scanlon, 2018; Ramaker et al., 2015). Thus, critical reflection is a key issue for journalism and audience reception.

On the one hand, qualitative studies suggest that in newsrooms, journalists' desire for increased self-reflection and its implementation in practice are two separate factors (Buijs, 2014; de Haan, 2012). Some studies even demonstrate journalistic resistance towards critical reflective practices, perceiving them as overly academic, too rational, and time-consuming (Buijs, 2014; de Haan, 2012; Groenhart, 2013). On the other hand, a growing number of studies indicate a decline in critical reflexive practices among members of society (Hunter & Dahlke, 2023; Urzúa & Asención-Delaney, 2023), including people practicing religion (McNamara & Purzycki, 2020). These studies call for further investigation based on the question: does a diverse media diet, namely consumption content including diverse religious topics, counteract the loss of critical reflexivity? Reflective thinking connects the theory and practice of individualistic thought (Baume & Scanlon, 2018) and practice (Schön, 1992), and therefore not engaging in reflective thinking may reduce how much time individual consumers engage with and reflect on different groups, including diverse religious communities. This vicious cycle inhibits the creation and maintenance of a reflexive society (Beck et al., 1994).

These studies focus on how critical reflexive practice is a framework, through which consumers can address existential issues in the past, present, and future (Rodgers, 2002). This framework creates a highly structured form of thought focused beyond merely describing the human religious experience. At the same time, however, critical reflection can organize a consumer's thinking process and yield profound insights into understanding seemingly obvious and unambiguous matters often left unquestioned (Duron et al., 2006; Rodgers, 2002).

Critical reflective thinking, however, does not take place in a vacuum. Considering that contemporary societies function in conditions of progressing deep mediatization (Hepp, 2019), a discussion of reflexivity requires one to consider the context of change in social refigurations (Hepp, 2013). We can assume that the progress of mediatization, understood as a change in media and communication that causes a change in culture and society (Hepp et al., 2015), should lead to changes in the critical reflexive practices of media users and participants in the communication process. Studies indicating rapid loss of reflective thinking ability in response to advanced communication technologies show that this process is unidirectional and reduces one's critical thinking ability (Greenfield, 2014; Spitzer, 2014).

However, previous observations of mediatization processes prove its linear nature (Stähle, 2022), which may translate into an increase or decrease in critical reflexive practices. When we contextualist this within modern de-mediatization trends (Kopecka-Piech, 2023), we will see that an individual's deeper critical reflective practices on digital existence necessitate improvements in human mindfulness and a return to authentic relationships (Lagerkvist & Peters, 2018). Moreover, even in the face of advancing mediatization, consumers' ability to think deeply about ubiquitous communication technology allows them to participate in specific mediatization processes that unify people rather than tearing them apart (Hepp et al., 2014) and increase their knowledge and awareness instead of limiting it (Kopecka-Piech, 2019).

Religious mediatization, in particular, showcases how digital rituals and the participation of technology in updating religious experience are now more than ever grounded in on human reflexivity (Evolvi, 2019), the free decision to be part of a religious community, or to recognize certain authorities (Cheong, 2013; Campbell, 2021). Thus, digital religion, created through various types and sets of media, transforms religious individuals into religious users of this media.

Regardless of whether we accept the arguments that mediatization causes dementia, or that the process of mediatization has the simultaneous potential to decrease and increase critical reflectivity, scholars have yet to explain the critical reflective patterns of religious people in the process of media consumption. This article attempts to fill this gap by addressing and analyzing the relationship between the diversity of content that Catholic media users consume and their level of critical reflective practice. To this end, we will first introduce the issues of media consumption and the critical reflectiveness of traditional and post-Vatican II Catholics. Next, we will present the research methodology and results. Finally, we will discuss the results obtained in the context of mediatization and the reflective approach.

## **MEDIA CONSUMPTION**

The search for media consumption patterns, understood as the selection of preferred media and platforms with the objective of generating understanding for the covered issues (Verdugo & Fierro, 2014), is gaining popularity. However, there are few studies focused on critical reflexivity in this process. The main research trends instead focus on the general impact of media relations on their users, indicating the presence or absence of the media effect (Potter, 2011; Grover et al., 2022) and the mediatization effect (Esser & Matthes, 2013). Meanwhile, studies on the impact of specific media types emphasize that the diversity of this media is the result of assorted formats and content. On the one hand, these studies

highlight significant inference resulting from the format and its content, e.g., those between tabloids and broadsheets or between public and commercial media (Baker et al., 2008). On the other hand, the politicality of the medium is a long term determiner in its importance among users (Strömbäck et al., 2016).

As a result of the politicization of these mediums, it is clear that the impact of specific types of media cannot be reduced to observing the media effect or the mediatization effect alone. Only by focusing on the involvement caused by the consumption of specific sets of media can we assess the importance of the daily practices of their users, including the process of creating and maintaining meanings.

Most studies use media consumption as a direct paraphrase for media use (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). This is especially evident in political news consumption, which has the power to sway and polarize public opinion (Kondor et al., 2022). Paradoxically, religious issues that ignite social debate rarely become the basis for regular studies in this area. A few exceptions are primarily quantitative, including a study on increased consumption of religious media and a decline in support for same-sex marriage (Perry & Schnabel, 2017). Regardless of the relationships shown, they cannot capture elements of reflective thinking by negotiating meanings in the context of the past, present, and future (Rodgers, 2002).

When exploring issues that require empathy and compassion, linking media consumption with reflexivity can show us the correlation between well-designed technology and deep thinking (Lee et al., 2023). However, this study does not document the quality of reflection during the process of media consumption itself. Qualitative radio consumption patterns, investigated through in-depth interviews supplemented by Q-sort methods and factor analysis, fill this gap (Jędrzejewski, 2017). This technique assumes that media users do not consume a single type but mixed media sets (traditional, digital, and hybrid) based on their sociodemographics, variety of used sources, approach to the news feed, and the outcomes of this process. Apart from that, qualitative religious media consumption patterns, investigated through observations and in-depth interviews, show the existence of individual media sets supplemented by hidden and relatively private means of communication through platforms (Hall et al., 2023), which occur regardless of what the official media of their churches provide them with.

Throughout the process, they also perform specific intellectual work that leads them to diverse beliefs and social attitudes. Let us move this perspective into the space of media consumption. Here, we are able to provide answers about the role of media sources in the quality of reflection as media users' practices (Bird, 2010), looking for both the causes of the perceived state (why) and the dynamics of this state (how).

## TRADITIONAL AND POST-VATICAN II MEDIA USERS

Our interests focus on the publics' critical reflection in the religious content offered by the media. With this in mind, it is fruitful to study the media created around and about the Roman Catholic Church. Two arguments make this a particularly attractive move. First, contemporary Catholicism is characterized by an apparent tension between two opposite forms, namely the post-Vatican II Catholics and the traditional post-Tridentine Catholics. The first group covers supporters of an existential formation drawing on the theological changes enacted by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the latest interpretation of the popes leading to the present Pope Francis. The second group consists of the custodians of the tradition referring to the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and the teaching of the popes until the mid-twentieth century. Both sides of the dispute show competence. This proves that Catholicism has long since become a field of technological change, whether it serves to cultivate old rituals or reaffirm religious values in secularized societies (Anderson, 2016; Lynch, 2018).

This existential Catholicism, based on the assumptions of the Second Vatican Council, dominates numerically and is represented by most institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, including Pope Francis himself. As for the faithful, most of them are not even aware that they represent the mainstream and not Catholicism as a whole. The specificity of post-Vatican II Catholics results from their belief in the common priesthood of the faithful (Vatican Council, 1965a) and the duty of dialogue with the world since some truth also functions outside the Church itself (Walsh, 2016). As far as Pope Francis is concerned, his teachings unconditionally engage with and in this dialogue. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the potential interlocutor of the Church's side recognizes God's agency in it, the Church itself undertakes to be the first to reach out with understanding and consent (Francis, 2020).

In the case of post-Tridentine Catholicism, we mean the diverse communities of Roman Catholicism characterized by a firm and unambiguous identity centered on the Tridentine Mass and the pre-Vatican II approach to the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ (Pius XII, 1943), i.e., a perfect community of priests and the faithful. On the one hand, this is a community characterized by a belief in having a license to the truth and means of salvation. On the other hand, this community stands on the conviction that it is a "biblical remnant" in which the authentic Church of Christ has survived. Contrary to pre-conciliar formations, dialogue is not a priority here. A monologue takes its place, which the Church itself defines as the authentic teaching of revelation (Lefebvre, 1998). One characteristic of this formation is the fact that this monologue is conducted in the digital space thanks to the incredible computer efficiency of the traditionalists.

However, there are no extremes to its boundaries, as evidenced by the discourse depreciating Pope Francis himself (Guzek, 2023).

Considering both groups' potential motivations and abilities to undertake structural reflection, we see two basic patterns of its possible occurrence. In the case of post-Vatican II Catholics, negotiating the teaching of the Church in the context of a believer's life is at the heart of the whole process. Exposure to religious content may provide the believer with spiritual nourishment or, on the contrary, lead to counteracting Church regulations contrary to one's conscience (Cunningham, 2009).

Among post-Tridentine Catholics, we see the basis of their reflexivity in counter-public activities (Fenton & Downey, 2003; Evolvi, 2019). This is primarily due to the inclination of some believers to negotiate religious authority naturally (Campbell, 2021) and the opposition to the digital leadership that characterizes Francis' pontificate (Narbona, 2016). It may also be associated with their animus towards any form of power, including religious power with political potential (Ivèreigh, 2014).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

For this study, we utilize qualitative approach that combines digital media diaries and in-depth interviews, and the designed methodology has two main advantages. First, the methods complemented each other, providing data that allowed the reconstruction of (1) surveyed users' process of media consumption, (2) the creation of meanings during this consumption, and (3) the role of reflection in the whole process. Second, in recognition of potential gaps or inconsistencies in the collected data, the interviews at the end of these digital media diaries clarified doubts and existing conflicts in data.

The first step of data collection was selecting the sample and recruiting candidates. The characteristics of the sought-after participants required a recruitment process using the snowball method. Every recruited person was asked to encourage similar people to participate in the study and to indicate potential recruitment environments. Acquiring a wider group of participants through personal contacts, contacts with priests of traditional communities, and opinion leaders in Catholic circles made it possible to attract two socio-demographically diverse groups of participants.

The recruitment of the first group of so-called traditional Catholics was based on the following criteria: they attended Mass in the traditional Latin rite, predominantly expressed reserve about rather than support for the Second Vatican Council, were cold rather than enthusiastic about ecumenism, used the Internet daily, and were over 18 years of age. The second group, which we defined

as post-Vatican II media users, consisted of participants who met the following criteria: they participated in the Mass in the new rite in the vernacular, expressed support rather than criticism towards the ecclesiastical changes of the Second Vatican Council, supported ecumenism more than negated it, used the network daily and were over 18 years of age.

In the interests of cohesion and overcoming bias, the initial recruitment of 40 people representing various socio-demographic types was assumed. As many as 10 participants were expected to drop out during the study (COVID-19 pandemic, unexpected health problems including cancer, job loss, etc.). So, the final sample was distributed in three ways: the majority were identified as traditionalists versus post-Vatican II media users; there were fewer participants aged 60+; and city dwellers outnumbered rural dwellers. The structure of the sample is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants in compiling digital media diaries and in-depth interviews

		aged 18–34		aged 35–59		aged 60+		
		urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural	
male	traditional Catholics	4	3	1	1	0	0	15
	post-Vatican II Catholics	1	1	4	0	0	0	
female	traditional Catholics	7	0	2	0	0	0	15
	post-Vatican II Catholics	1	0	2	0	1	2	
total		13	4	9	1	1	2	30

Digital media diaries offer a great method for collecting data from recruited participants. In March 2021, study participants were asked to compile a monthly digital media diary to record their contacts with news feeds about the papacy. A single entry in the diary asked the participants to describe their contact with the news feed about the papacy, the event's context, and the news content's reflection. Given that digital media diaries are increasingly used in communication and media studies (Berg & Düvel, 2012; Jürgens & Stark, 2017; Kaun 2010; Kondor et al., 2022), adopting such an approach guaranteed obtaining knowledge about the sources of religious information and ways of utilizing this information that would be translatable and reproducible across the fields. In addition, it provided access to links related to the obtained information.

Next, we conducted semi-structured interviews after the collection and analysis of the digital media diaries. These interviews were based on a common scenario



of an in-depth interview, also including diary references to individual entries and discoveries made by participants. The interviews lasted an hour and covered topics related to the Pope and the daily consumption habits of religious media. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they were only conducted by phone, recorded and transcribed. The study received a positive opinion from the Ethics Committee of the University of Silesia in Katowice (no. KEUS.50/07.2020). All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study.

Digital media diaries and transcripts of in-depth interviews were transferred to the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software environment, where they were treated discursively based on discourse theoretical analysis (DTA) assumptions (Carpentier, 2017; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). This specific macro textual and macro contextual type of media discourse analysis derives from an approach that identifies discourse as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105).

Since DTA does not have one specific procedure (Filimonov & Svensson, 2016), it was conducted in two stages. The first covered coding with in-vivo codes used to identify the discourse’s nodal points and axial categories. The second included the analysis of antagonism, understood as “confrontation between non-negotiable moral values or essential forms of identification” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). In both stages, the search for media consumption patterns, the relationship between news sources, and the reflexivity of users utilizing this news were considered. Undertaking such actions was related to answering two main research questions (RQ)

- (RQ1) What were the traits of the media consumption patterns of the surveyed Catholic users?
- (RQ2) How were the media consumption patterns presented in relation to reflective thinking practices?

## **POLISH CATHOLIC LANDSCAPE**

Poland is a good illustration of the tension between the post-Vatican II mainstream and the pre-Vatican II minority. Paradoxically, when we look at those countries experiencing friction between the two formations, it is difficult to accept a less controversial analytical context than Catholicism in Poland. The reasons for this state of affairs can be found in three arguments.

First, limiting Catholicism to two opposing religious formations, traditional and progressive, is challenging. Social practice proves the existence of diverse groups within Roman Catholicism (Lynch, 2018). While some of these groups are based on the primacy of openness and dialogue, and others assume exclusivity,



they all function on the guidance of religious ministers who acquire competence in the field of religious visibility (Herbert, 2015; Stępnia, 2020). In the United States, this visibility is more difficult due to the pluralism of faiths and values (Bellah & Hammond, 2013).

Thus, some forms of Catholicism are visible to the extent that they can distinguish themselves from other religious propositions, which is well illustrated by the issue of headscarves worn by traditional Catholic women in American churches (Cieslik & Phillips, 2022). In France, however, this minority traditionalist Catholic group is identified through activity within the church vestibule (Barras, 2017). Religion in the social space is even suspicious (Garay, 2013). As opposed to these two examples, none of the mentioned extremes takes place in Poland.

Second, the example of Poland points to the incomplete secularization characteristic of a significant part of the world (Casanova, 1994). Religion is losing importance in this area but still belongs to the social imagination. On the one hand, the rituals people cultivate are related to a specific religious life cycle. Whether a believer or a doubter, events like the Corpus Christi procession show participation in religious practices important to the social imagination rather than showing one's deep religious faith. On the other hand, secular public institutions cooperate with representatives of religion based on fusion (Grzymała-Busse, 2015). Representatives of the dominant Church are eager to formulate political demands during political campaigns (Leśniczak, 2016).

Third, Catholicism, which is essential for Poland, remains peripheral to the wider Catholic world. Until recently, Poland thought it belonged to the center of Catholicism due to the leadership of Pope John Paul II, the Polish Pope in the Catholic Church. With the pontification of Pope Francis, the role of local episcopates has increased. Recently, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Poland has reflected on various problems in a way differing to that of the neighboring conference of bishops from Germany. The Polish episcopate repeated the teachings of John Paul II rather than proposing its solutions (KEP, 2017). However, a defining characteristic of this phenomenon is that friction between support for solid implementation of the ideas of the Second Vatican Council and the struggle to secure the freedom of worship of traditionalists also appeared in this country (Jóźwiak, 2021).

Combining these three arguments into one, we see that a marginal case from the perspective of the entire Catholic Church can provide something objective. On the one hand, Polish Catholicism lies somewhere between the American and French models. At the same time, Polish Catholicism expresses the benign nature of the phenomenon, which in the mentioned models takes a rather radical form of the church-state relationship. On the other hand, religion that continues to shape the social Imaginarium of this country, at the same time having the resources to interfere in the political scene, has faced the tension

between tradition and progress described at the global level. In this sense, the findings based on Poland may enrich the understanding of the phenomenon in the space of the entire Catholic Church.

## **MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND PATTERNS OF REFLECTIVITY**

An individual's media consumption depends on many factors, such as interest in the content of the news medium, trust in the medium, or its geographical and social outreach (Jędrzejewski, 2017; Schröder & Larsen, 2010). Considering that the study participants were asked to compile digital media news diaries about the papacy, especially about Pope Francis, the source of the news and trust in it were derived from noting the contact with a specific news item. The analysis of these contents, their sources, and ways of articulating the attitude towards them allowed identifying constellations of individual media repertoires.

Based on individual repertoires, we attempted to identify common media consumption patterns separately for the post-Vatican II group and the traditional Catholic media users. Since individual repertoires were highly dispersed, we undertook to build a typology based on two successive steps. On the first level, we looked for common media repertoires. In the case of traditional Catholic users, the diverse research material forced us to also consider non-periodic media supplements in the form of religious literature and sermons during the Mass. At the second level, we looked for other distinguished patterns resulting from discourse analysis. In the case of post-Vatican II Catholics, this was the participants' attitudes toward the agency of Pope Francis. In the case of the group of traditional Catholics, the basis for differentiation was determined by their approach to conspiracy theories and dividing the world into sacred and secular spaces.

## **SIX TYPES OF RELIGIOUS MEDIA CONSUMPTION**

We were able to identify the optimal six types of media consumption based on the researched material covering the aforementioned groups of post-Vatican II and traditional Catholics. Within the group of traditional Catholics, we distinguished types of negotiators, descriptors and contesters. In the post-Vatican II group, we selected digital followers, hybrid followers, and supporters. The specificity of each type is presented in Table 2, available below.

Table 2. Media consumption patterns broken down by news sources

Group of users	Type of media users	Media diet of users	Characteristics of media user types
traditional Catholics	negotiators	social media and websites, traditional media (TV or printed press)	supportive approach to conspiracy narratives; connection of secular and sacred
	descriptors	social media supplemented by websites or traditional TV and radio	ambiguity in approach to conspiracy narratives; separation of secular and sacred
	contesters	social media	opposition to conspiracy narratives; separation of secular and sacred
post-Vatican II Catholics	digital followers	social media	evident positive position to the pope
	hybrid followers	social media and websites, traditional media (TV, radio, printed press)	evident positive position to the pope
	supporters	social media and websites, traditional media (TV, radio, printed press)	negotiated positive position to the pope

Regarding the traditional Catholic media users, negotiators were the first types of media users we identified. Called this name that reflected their specific media consumption practices, negotiators were consumers of the most varied media diet based on multiple sources and a mixed repertoire that primarily included digital sources. Digital media consistently was their primary sources of information concerning the pope. Later, however, it was supplemented by traditional media, such as TV or the paper press, and non-periodical media, i.e., religious books. A diverse set of media served this type of users to acquire and discuss content related to the papacy constantly. Consequently, their rich media diet was the basis for reviewing the actions of Pope Francis and negotiating an individual approach to the Pope.

These characteristics of negotiators are complemented by their specific attitude toward conspiracy theories regarding Pope Francis. Negotiators demonstrated familiarity with conspiracy theories linking the pope to the Freemasons, sourcing information from both books and online content. However, their engagement with these sources appeared ambivalent. While they encountered material that might provoke unsettling inquiries or perhaps elicit amusement, they also expressed a distinct inclination to further explore this subject matter to develop informed perspectives. Finally, negotiators had a diverse media diet but did not delineate sharply between the secular and the sacred.

Another group of consumers, who we called the descriptors, also relied on a varied media diet. Although they most consume digital media, descriptors obtained news from traditional television and radio. However, they did not show deep tendencies to discuss the information obtained. Their consumption was

characterized by reporting the facts and opinions of others. Critical thinking about the information they obtained gave way to emotional reactions to the information. The aspect that most defined descriptors was their embrace of digital media as a gateway to the world. In fact, digital media offered them essential and current information about the pope and the Church, evoking emotional reactions.

The descriptors demonstrated a complete refusal to listen to and disseminate conspiracy theories. Despite being aware of narratives that suggest the end of the papacy or Francis' involvement in a conspiracy with the Freemasons, they did not take these seriously. When it comes to the relationship between the secular and the sacred, descriptors depicted a clear division into distinct activities for worldly matters and separate activities in the sacred realm.

The last type of survey participants identified were the contesters. Social media was the main indicator of their media diet. Unlike the previous two types, the repertoire that made up the media diet of the contesters was poor. It turns out, however, that even based on a limited media diet, these users could develop a counter-publicity model. By acquiring digital content about the papacy, they undertook polemics with the actions of Pope Francis and the Roman Curia. Contesters presented clear separation of secular and sacred and a perplexing approach to conspiracy theories. On one hand, they were familiar with Pope Francis' purported connections with the St. Gallen Mafia or Freemasonry. On the other hand, they maintained a certain distance when questioned about their stance on this content.

Looking at post-Vatican II Catholic media users, we see that the first type, the digital followers, was characterized by an undifferentiated media diet based on digital sources. Facebook and news portals were their basic sources of information about the papacy, and these presented a far from critical stance toward Pope Francis viewed as celebrity and mentor. Some of the users also used the news app from Google. Such a media diet supported their belief that the current Pope fits their vision of the Catholic Church and Francis himself is practicing the right model of religious leadership.

Another type, defined by us as hybrid followers, was characterized by a rich media diet based on social platforms and information portals. Traditional media also appeared to be an important supplement in the following order: television, radio and the printed press. This type had a decidedly positive attitude towards Pope Francis. Unlike digital followers, these hybrid followers consumed diverse media content.

The last type of the presented post-Vatican II groups were supporters. Their varied media repertoire was based on social networking sites, news applications and news portals that supplemented radio and television or radio and the print press. Considering their method of utilizing the obtained information, we will notice that the discussed types of users used their obtained media content

to build arguments supporting the pontificate of the papacy and the Catholic Church's perceived new style of functioning.

## REFLECTION AND RELIGIOUS MEDIA CONSUMPTION

The key supplement to the characteristics of the six media consumption patterns presented above turned out to be the level of reflexivity among individual users of each type. These were articulated by the participants of the study in the month-long process of completing the digital media diary and during their subsequent participation in the in-depth interviews (Table 3). We assessed the level of critical reflective practices in the diaries and then evaluated them on the materials from the in-depth interviews based on the assignment to three grades: low/moderate/high. We assigned low reflexivity when the diaries and interviews were mainly characterized by descriptions of the facts that occurred. Moderate reflexivity was used when the description of facts was grounded in causes or predictions. We identified high critical reflexivity practices in descriptions that included a continuum of themes with references to past and future predictions. Keeping this in mind, it turns out that a specific media diet was the beginning of the process of creating meaning and starting a discussion on the reality of church life and, more broadly, the social life that interested the participants.

Table 3. Media consumption patterns and degrees of reflexivity

Group of users	Type of media users	Level of users' reflection	Users' approach to Pope Francis
traditional Catholics	negotiators	high	mixed
	descriptors	low	mixed
	contesters	high	negative
post-Vatican II Catholics	digital followers	moderate/ low	positive
	hybrid followers	moderate/ low	positive
	supporters	high	positive

A comparison of the highly reflective types (negotiators, contesters, supporters) highlighted in Table 3 indicated that the more diverse the media accessible to the consumer, the more positive the attitude towards Pope Francis turned out to be. Contestation took place where the media diet was based solely on digital sources (traditional contesters). However, in the case of mixed sources of information, deep reflection led either to the affirmation of Pope Francis' work (the post-Vatican II supporter type) or to partial accommodation of his agency within his vision of what the Catholic Church is supposed to be (the traditional negotiator type).

The moderate reflection undertaken by digital and hybrid media followers of media users selected within the post-Vatican II type turned out to be less

conditioned by the media repertoire. The specificity of these users meant that, regardless of whether they were based only on digital sources or based on a mixed repertoire, they showed relatively similar reflective patterns by observing and following content related to the papacy. Therefore, these users were more passive than active. The observation they made referred to what was in the past, present and even the future, so it was reflective.

Often, the diverse sources available to the individual did not prevent them from undertaking only a superficial analysis. The discussed problem's past, present and future influences the currently dominant optics of a given problem. This is exactly how we could characterize the descriptors of the traditional respondents type because their opinion was only based on content from online sources. In addition, their poor media diet perpetuated an insular media environment. Descriptors excitedly reported other people's opinions instead of making an independent analysis or presenting their original conclusions.

Combining the reflection process with media consumption patterns, we can assume that the participants of the study presented a clear directional relationship related to the diversification of the media diet, which also leads to deepening the reflectivity of this diet's consumers. However, it cannot be forgotten that in the case of strong counter-publicity visible in the type of contesters, it was not the media diet that determined the level of reflectivity. On the contrary, the tendency among the contesters to oppose the papacy depicted in the media was revealed regardless of their poor media diet. However, the available research material was insufficient to determine this phenomenon's potential causes. We can only assume that they were based on one of the two alternatives: either the contesters exploited a poor diet in such a way that their counter was based on weak arguments, or they took part in the study without commitment to or with concerns about accessing their daily media consumption cycle. This could lead to their selective participation in the study.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

As our study has shown, by enriching the media diet with a diverse repertoire of digital, hybrid and traditional media, this mostly translates to an in-depth reflection on the religious content to which the content of these media refer. As a result, when answering the first question (RQ1), "What were the media consumption patterns of the surveyed Catholic users?" – our analysis led to their identification of six types of consumption of religious media due to the typologically and qualitatively diverse repertoires of the media diet.

Considering that the mentioned types refer directly to the consumption of religious content, it is in vain to look for their equivalents in the existing literature.

A strong parallel emerges between the described type of emotional descriptors and the type of lurk presented in studies on the use of social networks (Kim, 2018). Using the media without any particular purpose, the consumers react very emotionally when negative content is presented in them on the platform. However, when we omit the topic of emotional reactions, descriptors turn out to be closer to other types of network users presented by Kim (2018), i.e., social network enjoyer focused on net surfing for pleasure and the relationship type focused on information.

Addressing the second research question (RQ2) “How were the presented media consumption patterns related to reflective thinking practices?” – we noticed that, within the presented types, there were two consistencies between the diversity of media diet and the degree of reflexivity. On the one hand, our analysis highlighted a clear pattern of deep reflection on the media content, resulting from the confrontation with many typologically diverse sources of news about the papacy. On the other hand, in the case of niche users with a clear opposition to the papacy (contesters type), the basis of their judgments was a character trait supported by content obtained only from digital media.

The first of the perspectives presented above, indicating that the diversification of the media diet led to an improvement in the quality of reflection, may take the form of a general postulate. Assuming after Rodgers (2002), that reflection today must still include the perspectives of the past and the future, we will add that its foundations in a deeply mediated world should be based on the most diverse repertoire of means of communication. The broader this repertoire, the greater the probability of the consumer confronting various points of view that lead users to make intellectual efforts.

The second presented perspective concerned contesters breaking out of the scheme of reflexivity based on diverse sources. This finding reinforced Bird’s (2010) view, according to which daily online consumption practices contributed to the polarization of users’ positions resulting from their ideologies. The aspect that is new in our study concerns the range of religious content and that the contestants belonged to a minority type of Catholic traditionalists.

When we look at the postulate of expanding the diversity of the media diet from the perspective of general social changes under the influence of media technologies (Hepp et al., 2015), it turns out that we are dealing with a postulate, part of the mechanism of mediatization of religion (Hjarvard, 2012), whose composing element is the increased presence of religion in the media (Herbert, 2015; Stępniaak, 2020). It is clear, however, that from the perspective of a media user, the tangible results of the mediatization of religion can be seen in easier access to a wider set of religious content. In practice, the more media that provide religious news, the greater the field for users to perform individual intellectual work, which takes the form of deep reflective thinking.



We must emphasize that, in this study a digital diet affects critical reflexivity, it is impossible to unequivocally confirm that more digital news leads to reduced reflectivity (Greenfield, 2014; Spitzer, 2014). Our findings only point to the notion that a relatively homogeneous digital diet can be the basis for extensive online communication practices when it concerns a type with a rigid identity and strong identification against the mainstream, similar to a social media echo chamber (Terren & Borge-Bravo, 2021). This seems to accord with other findings in the field of counter-public dynamics (Fenton & Downey, 2003), specifically Rhodes' (2022) study documenting why social media echo chambers condition consumers to be less critical of political information. However, it should be clarified that consuming religious content is secondary to a deeper and prior attitude, a religious attitude that aids the process. Reading is only a secondary confirmation of beliefs. The participants' level of reflexivity depends on the depth, quality and intensity of these beliefs. These attributes grow during one's religious life, formation and upbringing. In general, it can be presumed that the conservatives participating in the study had a deeper, stronger religious life than the post-conciliar Catholics, and this resulted in, among others, greater reflectivity even with a poor media diet.

## COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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