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Decoding Media Impact and Datafication in Diverse Cultural Media Contexts

After the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, the discussion on the current effects and future potentials of datafication and artificial intelligence (AI) in media and communications has become more relevant than ever. The algorithmic revolution profoundly changes the media environment and the related social systems, and it seems there is no escape. The generative AI techniques combined with machine learning and predictive analytics are now – or will soon become – the focus of policymakers and researchers worldwide. Regarding media and communications studies, the critical questions are not only about the changing media (and newsroom) work practices, business models, and management structures of established media, including online-only strategies typical for the 'Going Digital' age. The era of generative AI and datafication further calls for understanding (and predicting) the long-term social changes in our democratic societies (see, for instance, Couldry, 2020; Møller Hartley et al. 2023). In other words, how will the AI revolution affect the behaviours and experiences of media users alongside power relations in our societies? How can media and communications scholars react and engage with the new socio-technological revolutions?

The challenge of capturing the importance of data techniques (and researching them!) in the media and their social environments is complex and highly multi-layered. On the surface, it juxtaposes the lenses of high technologies and coding skills with paradigm shifts in media production and delivery. So far, the core drivers and conceptualisations have been understanding data analytics and datafication, regarded as a paradigmatic shift (Fisher & Mehozay, 2019; Mathieu & Jorge, 2020) that revolutionized media's way of measuring and analysing media users' behaviour (and related profits). Datafication coupled with AI tools has created immense opportunities for media to address users' needs, including public service media and social entrepreneurs of the high-tech and creative industries. Still, at the same time, it has also raised several ethical concerns about data surveillance and privacy, not to mention the pitfall-related scenarios of how AI can take over human beings (Haenlein et al., 2022; John-Mathews et al., 2022).

Moreover, exploring how new technologies change the media landscape is affected and conditioned by the specific cultural and sociopolitical contexts, including the researcher's perceptions, experiences, and systems. Individuals, groups and organizations of the country or local specific cultural and sociopolitical communities and contexts develop their own worldviews and knowledge structures to help make sense of reality and filter and process information about the surrounding environment (Walsh, 1995). These knowledge structures are deeply rooted in the behaviors of actors, and therefore, they are a challenge to measure and change. They may even become a source of inertia, leading to such behaviours and societal phenomena as polarisation and the emergence of filter bubbles and hate speech. This is naturally a challenge and raises the question of how media – with its AI tools – could increase the value of mutual understanding and societal diversity, pride, and inclusion (Trattner et al., 2022; Porlezza, 2023).

This issue presents the Spring 2023 "Central European Journal of Communication" (CEJC) insightful studies and papers that can be addressed as more general questions of decoding the impact of media and the power of datafication and AI tools in different cultural contexts. Looking at the papers holistically, they might provide powerful examples of challenges in media studies regarding misinformation, political worldviews or methodologies placed in various researchers' socio-technological contexts. Overall, they look at the media's normative roles about critical societal issues (societal inclusion, health, wellness) and the ability to address the information needs of minorities and trustworthy and reliable information. In addition to the studies on media organizational responses and strategies, the articles offer examples of advanced computational research methods showing how to process and analyse vast amounts of digital data available, such as social and fact-checking media (see, for instance, Lomborg et al., 2020).

Two articles in this CEJC issue provide insightful conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understand the current media and AI revolution phenomena. Firstly, Göran Bolin emphasises the role of data in "contemporary data capitalism" as a source of power redistribution. Bolin argues that today's media power is redistributed to those with access to data and the capability to make sense of the data, with several question marks on the societal impact(s) and how to interpret the potential empirical data. Bolin's methods and concepts paper also highlights the role of social values and activities in the datafication processes by arguing that "data, which is the main aspect in data capitalism, needs social activity in digital space to come into existence". In other words, social activities are still 'the raw material' for generating data, something of potential value for future media and communications research.

A conceptual contribution to datafication media realities is also observable in the interview with Peter Gross. The discussion highlights the importance

of incorporating (and adjusting) cultural elements in analysing media and their current socio-technological changes and systems. Through reviewing the traditional media-political and economic-centric approaches, Peter Gross argues for the media culture kaleidoscope prisms to be placed in the discussions on the cultural path-dependencies and imagined media futures. The cultural kaleidoscope prism – as adopted from the Romanian media case studies – highlights the importance of cultural specificities and elements to understand the differences and similarities of media systems between countries, regions and media organizations (the organizational culture perspective) — another potential way to move the media research forward.

Looking at the Spring 2023 CEJC issue table of contents, one might ask: Why and how do the media systems in Central and East European countries differ from those of Western Europe? The empirical studies of this issue relate from assorted perspectives to the themes raised by Bolin and Gross: the intertwinement of datafication with social values and activities and the importance of the cultural context to understand differences between media systems. The cultural differences help to understand differences, for example, in technological implementation, media usage behaviour and the researchers' findings and conclusions on the media's role in society wellness and pride.

The study of Mihhail Kremez explores the attitudes of Estonia's Russian-speaking minority to Russian-language media in Estonia. Based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews, the "study challenges the view that Estonia's Russian minority lives in an isolated infosphere of Russia". According to the results, the interviewees representing the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia have diverse media references. They are critical media users, trust Estonian Russian-language media (especially Estonian Public Service Broadcasting) and can recognise the foundations of fake news and information disorder. As for practical implications, the study calls for more attention to information quality and information needs of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia.

Mato Brautović and Romana John look at the challenges and efficiency of fact-checking in combatting misinformation about COVID-19 spread in social media. The study analyzes the fact-checks of Croatian Faktograf.hr. The analysis compares the reach of debunked and misinformed versions of the same story using computational methods and content analysis. The study shows that the current use of fact-checking websites for debunking campaigns is insufficient, for example, too long correction times. Despite the results, the authors conclude that fact-checking "should still be conducted because it defends the culture of truth."

The study of Arben Fetoshi and Remzie Shahini-Hoxhai is also related to COVID-19 pandemic but in a very distinct context. The study focuses on the effect of media on voters during the election campaign in Kosovo in a political

crisis after the overthrow of the government. The case provides an excellent setting for analyzing the role of media for political parties and political communication because any other kind of campaigning was limited by the COVID-19 pandemic movement restrictions, and lockdown measures. Based on media monitoring and survey results, the study shows that the media did not have a defining role in the election campaign. This implies that political opinions and preferences are shaped through a long-term process and cannot be easily altered.

Scholarly paper by Ömür Talay and Hasan Cem Çelik analyzes the user behaviour of the app called "Google Opinion Rewards" (G§OR) which is a tool to collect data in market and academic research. The personal data is collected via voluntary participation in short surveys in return for rewards. The study focuses on the motivations and counter-surveillance strategies of users. The data for analysis is collected by creating a test account for the study and conducting in-depth interviews with participants for deeper insights. The study shows that despite some security concerns most GOR users are ready to share their information recklessly. The study also recognizes a smaller group of active users who aim to maximize their earnings and develop effective strategies against surveillance.

The study of Hugo J. Bello, Nora Palomar-Ciria, Elisa Gallego, Lourdies Jiménez Navascues and Celia Lozano highlights the role of media in society in shaping public awareness of high-relevance societal topics. The study, juxtaposing social researchers' experience with the experiences of researchers employed at the medical academies, looks at media in addressing gender-based violence (GBV), with the case study of Spain. The authors use advanced Big Data techniques such as web scraping, Natural Language Processing and Neural Networks to extract a significant amount of news from the Spanish digital news media, uncover the underlying themes related to GBV and analyze the relationship between GBV news and public awareness.

Finally, Katarina Fichnová and Lucia Spálová examine the role of creativity in participatory art marketing. The study aims to analyze whether creativity is a significant factor in user-generated content (UGG) success in marketing communication. The study is related to promoting cultural institutions, and is based in the context of a Getty Museum Campaign in Los Angeles. The analysis aims to determine whether there is a significant correlation between the creativity of the adverfact and their sharing on Twitter. The correlation analysis shows that creativity does not play a significant role in the success of UGG products, but creativity is highly relevant in designing attractive communication strategies to attract and engage with potentially relevant arts and creative communities (citizens and media users).

We welcome all the Spring 2023 CEJC contributions to share the culturally related knowledge on datafication, the fabric of generative AI – with

an overall question of the potential ways to media and communications scholars moving forward. With this CEJC issue, we showcase the diversity of research around datafication, asking for an overall understanding of the societal and cultural factors. Overall, this issue can serve as a good starting point for discussing (and exploring) the interplay of the Cultural Kaleidoscopes and related AI technologies.

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Mediatisation, Digitisation and Datafication: The Role of the Social in Contemporary Data Capitalism

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the relations between mediatisation and datafication, and how the process of datafication has integrated several diverse value forms in complex interrelations. The first section outlines the rise of datafication in the wake of the technological development of digitisation in combination with new business models of the media and communications industries, leading to a tighter integration between these and other sectors of society. The second accounts for how this development paves way for certain specific value forms that result from this integrative process, and how the interrelation between value forms introduces a shift in the valuation processes of late modern data capitalism, where the social takes a prominent position. The final section discusses the relationship between datafication and mediatisation. The argument is that although datafication introduces a new phase in the mediatisation process, the former also extends beyond the latter.

KEYWORDS: data; mediatisation; datafication; data capitalism; value.

INTRODUCTION

A gradually intensified discussion about datafication occurred during the past decade (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013; van Dijck, 2014). Strangely, this conversation seldom relates datafication to the somewhat longer discussion about mediatisation, with a few exceptions (e.g., Hepp, 2020). The process of datafication has significantly altered the conditions for contemporary cultural and media production and reconfigured the basic dynamics of value generation (Bolin, 2022). Media users and consumers are being drawn into production processes to an unprecedented extent, both contributing to the amassment of data from all kinds of movement in digital space. This process paves the way for a datafied

society centred on the digital tracking of social action in online environments (Schäfer & van Es, 2017). This macro process can be seen in a longer historical perspective of mediatisation, where the process of digitisation has qualitatively paved the way for datafication. The aim of this article is to discuss this development in more detail, as to how the process of datafication has not only integrated several diverse value forms in complex interrelations, but also relates to the process of mediatisation.

This article initially outlines the historic move where datafication emerged in the wake of the technological development of digitisation in combination with new business models of the media and communications industries, leading to a tighter integration between these and other sectors of society. The article then discusses how this development paves the way for certain specific value forms that result from this integrative process, and how the interrelation between value forms introduces a shift in the valuation processes of late modern data capitalism. In the final section, a discussion of the relation between datafication and mediatisation precedes a summary of the argument with some concluding remarks about the implications of this shift for mediatisation theory.

NEW PHASES OF MEDIATISATION: FROM DIGITISATION TO DATAFICATION

There is the argument that datafication is a process that partly occurs within the more general process of, as well as creating a deepened form of, mediatisation (Hepp, 2020). Datafication and mediatisation are processes in which change, or transformation is the central feature. Thus, mediatisation implies that something is affected by the media, has become more media reliant, or changed from one state of being into a new form of existence. But what do we mean by change? Change can occur across social or cultural levels – from general societal to institutional and individual. There are numerous explanations for why change occurs. One of the basic criticisms towards mediatisation theory holds that change is seldom empirically established but presupposed (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). There is some truth to this criticism, but there are ways to study long-term change empirically (e.g., Bolin, 2016; Bengtsson et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the context of modernisation theory, Berman (1982/1986) argues that change *should* be presupposed, since change is the foundational feature of modernity as an epoch. If change is the natural condition of modernity, the question is not whether it occurs, but what type is it. It is then more a question of the quality of change. This also begs the question of the temporal duration and speed of change, that is, the historical perspective adopted.

Elsewhere, Bolin distinguishes between three perspectives on mediatisation: the institutional, the technological and the sociocultural, which Bolin (2014)

encompasses in the term "media as world perspective". Each of these build on varying perceptions of the kinds of media that are involved in the process, the degrees of causality the researcher places in the media (and in other societal institutions), and—crucial in this context—the type of historical perspective they have. The institutional and technological perspectives on mediatisation focus on traditional mass media, and each of their historical perspectives reaches back to the mid-20th century (Hjarvard, 2013: 6). Still, many representatives of the more holistic socio-culturalist perspective argue that media and communication technologies have always been part of human social and cultural formations and cannot be separated from them in any meaningful way. They are part of the world, in which we live as humans (hence the phrase 'media-as-world'), and their development is intertwined with those of society and culture.

Both Hepp (2020) and Jansson (2018) argue for dividing the field of mediatization research into two types of approach: the institutionalist and the social-constructivist. While Hepp (2020) and Jansson (2018) each acknowledge the existence of a third approach, the technological—that Lundby (2014) calls "material"—, they argue that this perspective is not "alive" among mediatisation researchers. This is unfortunate because there are dimensions of technology that are well worth preserving. Jansson also finds the arguments by Lundby (2014) and Bolin (2014) about this third approach are incompatible, since the former refers to the medium theory by McLuhan (1964) and the latter leans on Baudrillard (1971). But a careful reading of Bolin (2014: 179f), clearly reveals that Baudrillard builds his idea on mediatisation (*l'information médiatisée*) partly on McLuhan. Both McLuhan (1964) and Baudrillard (1971) point to the medium-specific affordances of media technologies, and in Baudrillard's case, to the unique semiotic limitations of the technologies. These limitations are crucial to understand how media contents and texts are moulded by technology, and can perhaps explain the significative neglect and stark absence of textual approaches in mediatisation research—, which could be remedied by incorporating influences from scholars such as Baudrillard.

Seen from a historical perspective, the institutional and technological approaches clearly tend to emphasise the organised mass media of the 20th century (especially its latter half). By contrast, the socio-culturalist perspective reaches further back to the dawn of civilisation and argues that technologies of communication have always already been an integrated part of human activity and actually have been the basis for the formation of culture and society altogether; "The media is culture's specific technology" (Hannerz, 1990: 6, author's translation), while Dewey (1916: 5) argues along the same lines that "society exists *in* communication".

The types of media that have been central in society have varied over time, which have in turn marked societies and cultures throughout history. The tools of communication have developed from the pictorial such as cave or rock paintings,

to a chirographic culture based on handwriting, then print culture, electronic media culture, and so on. Eventually digital media appear, and gradually older media have become digitised and paved way for contemporary society. Over the last three decades, digital media has become the dominant form in which media operate. Digitisation refers to a technological process—to transform analogue things into a digital format. Traditional music media, for example, such as the gramophone, the LP record, the cassette tape have become digital, and music has instead been embedded on CDs and MP3 players and ultimately has been distributed via streaming services. This process occurred in distinguishable steps between digital production, distribution and consumption. Contemporary streaming services enable audiences to listen to older music, such as that recorded by The Beatles in the 1960s. This music was originally produced, distributed and consumed in the analogue format. Over time, this music became digitised to be distributed on CDs and consumed on CD-players. Today, most music is also produced digitally, and all steps in the production-consumption circuit are digital. The same processes can be found in other media, such as journalism (see Nyre, 2008 for an account of these changes in production, distribution, and consumption).

Digitisation as a technological process introduces changes in media industries (and in other industrial sectors of society). Larger amounts of information can suddenly be processed, which restructures modern industrial societies and bring them into the information age (Castells, 1996). Digitisation, or perhaps more accurately the digital distribution forms that came with the internet, also made some of the analogue business models obsolete. One of the first sectors to become affected by this was the music industry. Since digital music lent itself to be compressed into small data files and possible to distribute online via sharing networks, it became ever harder for copyright holders to protect their commodities from being disseminated without their consent. The music industry thus restructured its business models from earning money on sold records, to earning their revenues in other ways (see, e.g., Burkart & McCourt, 2006; Wikström, 2009). The introduction of free newspapers such as *Metro* affected journalism roughly at the same time as filesharing of music became widespread and meant that fewer people were prepared to pay for news content. However, it took this sector a longer time to develop digitally based business models.

A business model is based on the "design of transaction content, structure, and governance so as to create value through the exploitation of business opportunities" (Amit & Zott, 2001: 494). New business models in the age of datafication have largely been based on a traditional advertising model from the analogue era, which eventually became more detailed, with more precise targeting of niche audiences, and were constructed from the data of regional residency, age, and consumer profiles. The break between analogue and digital advertising models

is not as abrupt as one might think. Already in the late 1990s, Sweden's commercial television industry refined its business models in order to optimise the number of viewers they could reach during the restricted advertising time national regulations allowed them at the time (Bolin, 2002). The principles for this optimisation then extended into the early digital markets. However, towards the end of the first decade of the new millennium a qualitative change occurred to the business models of the communications and media industries. New technologies for extracting data from users in real time began to be used to produce more sophisticated consumer and audience profiling (Bolin, 2011). This was the first stage towards a more systematic change in the business models and the rise of profiling services. Ensuing stages led to the datafication of all types of social action, where social agency and social connections became mapped and packaged into a commodity that could circulate, for example, in the advertising market.

Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier (2013) coined the term datafication to define the process which turns human activity into extractable value. This process can be considered to be a specific form of mediatisation, that has digitisation as a prerequisite, but that combines the technological affordances of online media and the interconnection between databases with radically new business models that build on predictive analytics. Through the interconnection between databases, consumer profiling became more detailed, and targeting was perceived of as more effective, which triggered advertisers to pay large sums for getting access to precise and well-defined "digital consumers". Predictive analytics was combined with, among other data, recommender systems that could connect content with consumers in ways that not only had not been previously possible but also refined the distribution models for the content-producing media industries (Burke et al., 2011).

That all kinds of predictive analytics used for commercial, political, health or welfare service reasons are using the same technologies to manage their businesses results in a "digital tracking and profiling landscape" (Christl, 2017: 13), which is at the heart of the multi-sided markets of datafied society (Evans & Schmalensee, 2016). However, the datafied society extends beyond its integral multi-sided markets because also non-market agents are connected through the digital tracking and profiling landscape. In this landscape, large platform companies, advertisers, telecommunications providers, publishers, and other media companies are interconnected with financial services, retail and consumer goods, but also with welfare systems and governmental management.

The keys to this development are digitisation, and the condition where all kinds of media distribution and consumption now occur in online spaces. This development also made the telecommunications industries much more important than they were in the analogue era. Since all distribution and kinds of transactions in these markets happen online, those who control the connections

between the agents involved, i.e., those who have access to the IP-numbers of the computers involved, can also make profits from their gatekeeping positions. Communication service providers such as Telia, AT&T, Comcast and China Mobile are thus central to the multi-sided markets and are indeed a necessary integral component. In the analogue world, the traditional mass or niche media content producers had very little to do with the telecommunications industries, but with the new digital distribution systems, this changes (Bolin, 2011: 56ff). Most of these market actors are attracting little interest from media and communication research on digital media, which concentrate their analyses on the major platform companies such as Amazon, Google, Meta, Tencent, Baidu or ByteDance, or companies such as Apple and Microsoft. Compared to traditional giants in the content-producing media industries these companies might seem to be vast, but from a political economy perspective, the telecommunications companies have much more economic power (Winseck, 2017).

In summary, the integration of previously distantly related sectors of markets and societal spheres produced an increased market complexity, and although most sectors in the digital tracking and profiling landscape are profit-driven, welfare systems and government agencies are not. However, since non-market-oriented activities are based on the same profiling and tracking principles, they too become affected by market dynamics. The motivation for their activities and their data management stem from diverse interests, some of which are commercial, focussing on economic value and profit, while others have other value forms at their core. In the next section the complex relations between these value forms will be discussed in more detail.

NEW FORMS OF VALUE RELATIONS

The tracking and profiling machinery is arguably at the heart of contemporary data capitalism, i.e., "a system in which the commoditization of our data enables a redistribution of power in the information age (…) weighted toward the actors who have access and the capability to make sense of data" West (2019: 23). This system brings most societal domains together in a complex web of relations. Many of the sectors involved are commercially driven and thus have economic value at their core. But there are also non-profit motivated domains involved, such as NGOs and public administration. These are not driven by profit motives but are formed around other core values and operate within distinct *value domains*, i.e., spheres of action formed around a specific value and producing its own value regime. Before I describe these, a few words on what value in this context means.

Dewey (1939) contends that value can be both a noun and a verb, i.e., both a thing and an activity. We assign value to objects and practices around us and

thus engage in valuation. The result of this valuation is value as a thing—the sedimented form that is the endpoint of our valuation practice (Sayer, 2011: 25). Value is a matter of concern, produced socially though the process of valuation in which we ascribe degrees of importance to objects and practices. Following Bourdieu (1993), there is the argument that value is produced in social fields, on the basis that all agents agree on the field's core value. Although Bordieuan "fields" resemble social "domains", the latter concept is preferable, since Bourdieu burdens the term field with an emphasis on struggle and competition. While the concept of domain is more useful, it should be acknowledged that the basic negotiating principles of evaluation and value generation might be the same between the two terms.

As Bolin (2022) argues, data capitalism is formed on at least four value domains. One formed around economic value which has a dominant position and is inscribed in the business models of organised market agents, and three other domains: a technological, an epistemological and a social. As Manuel Castells (1996) points out, technological invention and development has always had a central position in the various forms of capitalism as they have appeared historically, from merchant capitalism or mercantilism to industrial and informational capitalism, to contemporary data capitalism. While the steam engine and the combustion engine were central in industrial capitalism, electronic media and the early computers were central to informational capitalism. In data capitalism, the key features are the networked database and real-time algorithmic processing power that make it technologically possible to extract the data commodity. Technology, however, also has its own dynamic, centred on values such as functionality and efficiency. If, for example, media technologies are thought of as "extensions" of human capabilities, as McLuhan (1964) theorizes, these extensions are not always utilised for profit purposes. Even when they can be, the pertinent technologies can have other functionalities. It is not uncommon that an invented technology takes on economic functions after a while, eventhough it was not initially invented for profit purposes.

As Heidegger (1954/1977) points out, technology is intimately connected to epistemology and knowledge. It is a form of revealing, argues Heidegger, a strive for unconcealment, and ultimately the arrival of truth, which arguably is a form of critique in the Kantian sense. Other authors have also discussed this relationship between technology and knowledge, such as Braman (2012), who finds her point of departure for a discussion of technology and epistemology in John Locke's (1690/1924) discussions on facticity.

> For Locke, facts appear when a *perceptual entity* has an *experience* of the material or social environment, symbolically *expresses* what has been learned about the environment, and those referential expressions become the subject

of *discussions* through which agreement is reached on what will collectively be accepted as the truth. (Braman 2012: 133).

Locke contends facts are produced in much the same way as values are described to be produced above—through intersubjective agreement based on observation and social negotiation. Facts are also the basis for scientific positivism, which in turn lies behind traditional audience measurements, and is thus a prerequisite for the market for audiences in commercial media business models. The basis for these models is that the media corporations produce trustworthy statistics about their audiences or media users, which are then packaged into an audience commodity (Mosco & Kaye, 2000). Advertising agencies, for example, presuppose that audience statistics are correct and equal to social reality. Any suspicion that audience figures are exaggerated, or distrust in the polling companies' methods for capturing the audience, ensures that the agencies will not be willing to pay for the commodity.

In this manner, the domains of epistemology or knowledge production relate to those of technology and economy and their principles for value generation. These relations do not arrive with digitisation, but existed in the analogue era, although the technologies and business models have changed in accordance with the enriched affordances of new digital media. The aspect that differentiates the analogue and the digital eras, and is the main feature in data capitalism, is the role that *the social* takes. This is because data, which is the main asset in data capitalism, needs social activity in digital space to come into existence. Hence engagement in social space by all consumers and media users is encouraged according to the principle that more engagement produces more data, which can extend the possibilities for data extraction.

So, rather than being "the new oil"— a resource produced without human action (but that needs human action to be excavated and refined)—data is a continuously reproductive resource underpinning data capitalism. In contrast to previous finite resources at the heart of capitalism—land, oil, etc.—data is limitless. While there is social activity in digital space, and whenever social life is captured by sensors, these activities can be transformed into data. The digitisation process has today attained that peak degree of development that the new business models based on predictive analytics and real-time processing can reach. Simultaneously the same business models offer social subjects either something in return for access to their data, or by making it socially very costly to stay outside of the data-generating system. The refinement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and human-machine communication create new possibilities for data extraction, as machine-generated communication will be processable— so long as a human social agent is an element of the loop.

Social activity as the raw material on which data is generated and packaged into a data commodity is thus the central mechanism in the datafication process. This is also why it is important to not lose sight of audiences and media users when theorising mediatisation and datafication. However, Livingstone (2019) remarks that the social is strangely absent from mediatisation and datafication research. Placing mediatisation and datafication research in a longer historical oscillation between "active" and "passive" audiences, Livingstone (2019) concludes that with datafication, structure is again taking precedence over agency, and hence media users are delegated to a background position. In summary, datafication research should benefit from re-engaging with the social. The next and final section will discuss the datafication process in relation to the wider process of mediatisation.

DATAFICATION AND DEEP MEDIATISATION

Mediatisation theory presupposes that "the media" are becoming increasingly important in culture and society—irrespective of which approach to mediatisation is at hand. Similarly, datafication indicates an increased importance of data for culture and society. Now, thoughts about the distinction between the three perspectives on mediatisation (accounted for above)—the institutional, the technological and the social-constructivist—can refresh the core features of each one. These are the ways, in which each approach defines the media, the role of causality, and the type of historical perspective adopted. So, what are the outcomes if the same analytical model for the phenomenon of datafication is adopted, starting with the question: What is meant by "data"? Furthermore: How does datafication relate to mediatisation theory?

Etymologically, the word data has its origins in the plural form of the Latin word *datum* ("that is given" – from the verb *dare*, "to give"). However, the concept of data has a polysemic quality of being both a "count noun" referring to "an item of information", and a "mass noun", referring to "related items of (chiefly numerical) information considered collectively, typically obtained by scientific work and used for reference, analysis, or calculation" [and in relation to computing], "quantities, characters, or symbols on which operations are performed by a computer, considered collectively" [or, more generally, simply referred to as] "information in digital form" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). As a count noun, data does not have to be either digital, or even numerical. A piece of information can be any description of a thing, a situation, a fact, a condition, etc. So, rather than the count noun, it is the mass noun that is referred to in datafication theory, the assemblage of digits that can be computed and related to other data in order to produce the digital commodity.

In terms of the relationship between datafication and mediatisation, Couldry and Hepp (2017) describes the latter process in terms of four "waves", starting with mechanisation, followed by electrification, digitalisation and lastly datafication. Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue the 2010s is experiencing the start of the fourth wave. The aspect that distinguishes each wave is a "fundamental qualitative change in media environments" of a "sufficiently decisive" kind, underlying which are "fundamental technological changes" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017: 39). However, and as argued above, technological change is but one feature of datafication, and needs to be related to organisational change in order to better explain both the changes at hand, and the reasons they appear when they do. We thus must relate the inventions in technology to organisational shifts in capitalism, with a specific focus on the business models at its core.

Couldry and Hepp (2017) discuss mechanisation, electrification, digitalisation and datafication as waves of mediatisation. But these processes are also general technological ones that extend beyond the media if we think of them in terms of communication technologies. Mechanisation produced the assembly production lines and electrification made cities bright at night, but neither of these technological processes have much to do with communication. This makes it problematic to see datafication as a straight-forward successor to the mediatisation process. Indeed Hepp (2020) recently suggests calling this "deep mediatisation" in order to solve this problem. This concept makes more sense as a specific phase of mediatisation, as it refers to a qualitative shift within modernisation, in the same way as a concept of late modernity is an epochal shift within modernity, rather than a successor to it. Deep mediatisation thus indicates a heightened form of mediatisation, which introduces a more penetrating phase. As explained above, this phase has social agency as a central component, as this is what produces the data at the heart of the datafication process.

CONCLUSION

This article accounts for the historic move where datafication emerged in the wake of both the technological development of digitisation and the new business models of the media and communications industries, which led to tighter integration between these and other sectors of society. This article discusses how this development has paved way for a complex relation between value forms, that together make up the unique combination underlying data capitalism. The article argues that the social takes a decisive role in the process of datafication and that changes in institutional relations are not the sole concern. Another matter is the transformation of society as a whole because of large institutional actors combined with the social activities of everyday media users and citizens. Lastly,

the article points out how to understand the relation between the wider process of mediatisation and the related process of datafication and argues it might be better to talk about datafication as a process that only partly overlaps with mediatisation. Furthermore, discussions could better refer to deep or intensified mediatisation as a radical new phase in the broader process. A phase in which the social takes a much more central position, and where more empirical work from the perspective of media users is needed.

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Estonia's Russian-speaking Audience's Media Attitudes, Preferences and Susceptibility to the Spread of Fake News and Information Disorder in Media Outlets

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Abstract: A multiplicity of infospheres in a country, especially in those with a significant proportion of language minorities, creates polarization and distrust towards state institutions. This article addresses the problem by exploring the attitudes of Estonia's Russian-speaking minority towards news media content regarding fake news and information disorder. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with Russian-speakers living in Estonia (N=29), using stimulus materials to induce reactions related to elements of trust in the materials. The results showed that the interviewees have—diverse media preferences, a critical eye for the news, more trust in Estonia's Russian-language media, and are quite capable of recognizing fake news and information disorder. The study challenges the view that Estonia's Russian-speaking minority lives in the isolated infosphere of Russia. The article argues that more attention should be drawn to information quality in the news aimed at this language minority audience.

Keywords: fake news; information disorder; Russian-speaking minority; polarization; distrust.

INTRODUCTION

Fake news is a message that is verifiably false, usually disseminated as a true news with the intent to mislead (Greifeneder et al., 2020), or as Tandoc et al. (2017, p. 11) explain "fake news hides under a veneer of legitimacy as it takes on some form of credibility by trying to appear like real news". Dorofeeva (2019) argues readers are not immediately able to detect information falsification and believe the presented "facts" either unconditionally or in part. Tandoc et al. (2017) conclude—in their research of 34 academic articles published that use the term "fake news" between 2003 and 2017—with a six-part typology of false news: 1) news satire,

2) news parody, 3) fabrication, 4) manipulation, 5) advertising, 6) propaganda. Wardle (2020) compiles a similar typology but consisting of seven parts and argues the problem is complicated in that: "most of the content isn't even fake; it's often genuine, used out of context and weaponized by people who know that falsehoods based on a kernel of truth are more likely to be believed and shared" (Wardle, 2020). Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) recommend the terms misinformation ("false information is shared, but no harm is meant"), disinformation ("false information is knowingly shared to cause harm") and malinformation ("genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere"), collectively calling them information disorder (see also Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Wardle, 2020). This article uses both terms fake news and information disorder to cover every possible aspect of fake, false, etc. information in the news.

The studies of the media habits and preferences of Estonia's Russian-speaking audience conducted in the first half of the 2010s (Saar Poll, 2014; Jõesaar, 2015) show the Russian native speakers—almost 33% of the country's population (Vihalemm & Juzefovičs, 2020b, p. 2)—live in a separate infosphere. Estonians and Russian-speaking residents represent two polarized audiences in one country in this period (Jõesaar, 2015) and even as of 2019 "the infospheres of the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities are still quite different" (Jõesaar, 2020, p. 83), because the latter still actively consume the Russia's media outlets, especially Russian TV channels (Jõesaar, 2020).

The pro-Russian information is disseminated in Estonia and other EU countries by the Russian state and state-related media and even global media including international news agencies and domestic news media and is considered by Russia as form of its soft power (Vorotnikov & Ivanova, 2019; Wagnsson & Barzanje, 2019; Watanabe, 2017). According to the "Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation" soft power "primarily includes the tools offered by civil society, as well as various methods and technologies – from information and communication to humanitarian methods and other types of technologies" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016, II, 9).

Toomla (2010) argues the situation of Estonia's Russian-speaking audience to watch more programs in their mother tongue as completely natural, but they still do not live only in the infosphere of Russian media outlets. Vihalemm et al. (2019, p. 1) argue against the "levelling, uniform view" that the Russian-speaking residents of Estonia are completely under the influence of Russian media and thereby politically associate themselves with the Kremlin.

The media repertoire, consisting of all the media outlets used regularly by the individual (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006), of the Russian-speaking audience has become more Estonian (Kantar Emor, 2020a; Kantar Emor, 2020b). Non-Estonians have started to consider Estonia's media outlets to be more important and reliable

than those of Russia, including a significant increase in reliability of *ETV+*, a Russian-language TV channel of Eesti Rahvusringhääling (ERR, Estonian Public Broadcasting), especially in the older age groups (Seppel, 2021).

Therefore, in recent years the media repertoires of Estonia's Russian-speakers have expanded and are now broader than those of the Estonian-speaking community, but still includes Russia's media (Jõesaar, 2020) and occasionally also the West's in Russian (Kaprāns & Mieriņa, 2019). Thus, this article investigated Estonia's Russian-speakers' contemporary media preferences.

Despite widespread skepticism and distrust of media organizations, members of Russian-speaking audiences in Estonia strive for independence in their judgement, however, they still view Russia's hegemonic geopolitical narratives (Vihalemm & Juzefovičs, 2020b). The same researchers conclude that news media audiences have developed "self-reliant media-related behavior strategies (juxtaposition of sources, interpreting clues) that allow them to manage the partial dysfunctionalities of the media system while not to fully abandon trust because this is a useful tool for managing complexity" (Vihalemm & Juzefovičs, 2020a, p. 3).

The abovementioned findings support the theoretical approach of active audience, in which participants are not passive recipients of information (Munday & Chandler, 2011; Livingstone, 2013) and may play an active role in decoding media messages (Hall, 2006). But according to the selective exposure theory, people tend to choose aspects of information that correspond to their individual characteristics and integrate them into their way of thinking, and their choice is based on their own interests, views and beliefs (Sullivan, 2009).

Therefore, the current study aimed to define the attitudes and preferences of Estonia's Russian-speaking minority towards news media and its content and their abilities to recognize fake news and information disorder in the news related to Russia.

The hypothesis underpinning the study program was that a Russian-speaking individual's ability to recognize fake news and information disorder relates to their media preferences. To resolve the truth of this statement four research questions (RQs) were formulated:

- RQ1. How do Estonia's Russian-speaking minority evaluate the media coverage: is there enough information, is the coverage comprehensive?
- RQ2. What media do the preferences of Estonia's Russian-speaking minority include, and which media do they consider reliable or unreliable and how do they justify such a division?
- RQ3. Have Estonia's Russian-speaking minority identified fake information and information disorder in the news about the coronavirus pandemic?
- RQ4. How do Estonia's Russian-speaking minority check the accuracy and what strategies do they use to verify information?

METHODOLOGY

The study used personal semi-structured interviews since such approach helps to ensure the necessary confidentiality and openness of the participant during the interview, while the semi-structured style allowed the interviewer the flexibility to change the order of questions and ask additional ones when an interesting or a new line of research emerges (Young et al., 2018). The interviews were conducted from November 2020 till March 2021. Due to the social restrictions established for the welfare of society during the COVID-19 pandemic—March 2020 until June 2022—the study used the following system to conduct the interviews to ensure interviewees' safety: face-to-face with face-masks and social distancing or through Skype depending on the person's request.

The interviews were split into two parts. The purpose of the first part was to explore the interviewees' relationship with news media and content and their interests in the news, media use, media assessments, assessments of the accuracy of the information, etc. The aim of the second part was to explore the interviewees' attitudes towards Russia-related topics and their information checking strategies. The interviews lasted for 23–53 minutes.

The study used the acquaintances + snowball method of recruiting participants, the team made phone calls and sent email invitations (n=41). The response rate was 70,7%. The study accepted participants on the basis of their interest in the news, i.e., the principle of credibility—sources of information can maximize the credibility and veracity of the results (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 64). Responses from people who in their opinion did not consume news were excluded.

The study placed the interviewees at random into three groups of roughly equal size (Group 1, n=9; Group 2, n=10 and Group 3, n=10), in which they were coded by their group number (G#) and a given interviewee number (I#) using the format G#:I# (e.g., 1:9, 2:10, 3:5). The coding enabled the study to meet the GDPR as well as the research ethics requirements in social studies to protect the privacy of the participants.

The study's design provided each group with various stimulus materials, which research considers as important support materials (Vincent & Stacey, 2013; Törrönen, 2002). News from media outlets provided the stimulus materials, which were presented to the interviewees after a discussion about their general background, media-related habits, and Russia-related interests.

In qualitative research, stimulus objects can be used as "clues, micromodels, or provocateurs" (Törrönen, 2002: 343). The news played the role of clues to the topics in Part I of the interviews and included various elements of credibility: title severity, media ownership (public, state, private) and political orientation (pro-government, opposition, neutral), referring to sources, the origin

of information, news content, news tone (positive, negative, neutral), compliance with the requirements of the news style genre, persons or agents covered.

The primary criterion for selecting stimulus materials was the topic or event system based on preliminary work from the previous study (Kremez & Kõuts-Klemm, 2021) and a new topic connected to coronavirus pandemic, all of them about Russia. Thus, each group received four news items as stimulus materials (see Appendix 1, Table 1). The first was a catastrophe, which always draws readers' attention as a news item and was in this instance an explosion in the Arkhangelsk region on August 8 2019. The second was an economic topic for readers with a special interest (the Eastern Economic Forum September 4–6 2019); the third was a psychologically relevant topic about the coronavirus vaccine in 2020; and the fourth was a piece of fake news. The latter news item was originally a joke on the KuzPress web site, which spread widely and became fake news about a Russian child named COVID. An investigation by the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* concluded that no child with that name was ever registered (Shelgachova, 2020) .

The next criterion was the media outlet: each group would have news on a variety of platforms and with a range of credibility other than the fake news outlet that was the same for all 29 interviewees. Each group received an item of news from one of three of Estonia's Russian-language news portals: the public *Rus.ERR.ee*; the privately owned *Rus.DELFI.ee*; the privately owned *Rus.Postimees.ee*. Each group also received one news item from Germany's public Russian-language broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* (*DW*) plus an item from one of three of Russia's media outlets: the pro-government state owned newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*; the neutral, as of 2021 (Kõuts-Klemm & Kremez, 2021) privately owned *Kommersant*; and the independent *Novaya Gazeta*. The last-mentioned media outlet was in opposition to the government (Kremez & Kõuts-Klemm, 2021) until September 2022, when its licenses (print and online) were revoked (Russia rescinds, 2022).

The team, comprising the author and two assistants made audio recordings of the interviews and took notes. The team transcribed the interviews leaving each interviewee's words intact (Bryman, 2008), following the principle of naturalism, in which each statement is transcribed in as much detail as possible (Oliver et al., 2005), and reinterpreting what the participant said (Leech, 2002) was avoided as much as possible. However, predetermined prompt questions were available to keep the interviewees talking and to rescue questions when responses became sufficiently vague (Leech, 2002).

The next stage involved the close reading of each transcription in order to gain a deeper understanding of it (Brummett, 2018) and the reflexive thematic analysis to identify and analyze patterns across the qualitative dataset with researcher's thoughtful engagement with the analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

All translations of the Russian-language transcripts into English for this article are the responsibility of the author.

FINDINGS

ASSESSMENTS OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE

Most of the interviewees were rather satisfied with the way the media covered topics they were interested in. However, the pattern of their responses did not indicate any satisfaction benchmark:

> Interviewee 2:3 "It should be mentioned here that they [the media, MK][1] cover them in the same way throughout life. And I like don't know anything else."

Some interviewees were not satisfied:

> Interviewee 3:7 "I don't think so. There could be more, and the media could involve more different professionals in a certain field."

In this instance and in others, the interviewees demonstrated the need for more expert opinions in the news.

Some interviewees were only partially satisfied by media coverage because of the lack of reporting about the pandemic:

> Interviewee 3:4 "Generally, yes [satisfied, MK]. True, when it comes to health, not as much is being written about the coronavirus as you would like."

Several sources were considered necessary to obtain sufficient information, demonstrating wide and diverse media preferences of the audience:

> Interviewee 2:2 "Well, I read and look at several sources. After all, I read and watch, well, the Estonian press…*Postimees*, *Äripäev* [weekly business newspaper, MK]".

Interviewees pointed out that each media outlet may present information in their own distinct way and therefore several news sources needed to be included in the media repertoire:

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1 Clarifications inserted into translated transcriptions in square brackets are made by the author—Mihhail Kremez (MK)

Interviewee 2:6 "I noticed that it is covered differently everywhere. That's why I watch different news."

They felt that news can be presented in various ways in support of particular interest groups, e.g., authorities and politicians. Several interviewees talked about the suspected poisoning of Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny:

Interviewee 3:1 "…the poisoning of Mr. Navalny was very differently reported. The information was presented in different ways, very differently. (…) … in Russian state media, Russian media, Estonian media, British media."

Many interviewees mentioned special attention must be paid to coverage of political news, which could be biased:

Interviewee 1:7 "Well, arguably a political issue, and now it is related to Russia. Or elections in the US – it was a nightmare, a horror".
Interviewee 2:3 "Most of such sharp policy news and content almost automatically fall into the category of suspicious".

The media coverage in Estonia was praised:

Interviewee 3:2 "It is covered fine in Estonia".

Some interviewees trusted the Estonian media, but were critical of the media of other countries:

Interviewee 2:1 "Media in Estonia, a small country, I trust completely. Where the big European countries are involved, Russia, look at it…"

Some were critical of Russia's media coverage:

Interviewee 3:1 "If we take our European territory, information will suffice. If you take the Russian media, then there, of course, is not the same".

Satisfaction with the coverage might depend on the media outlet:

Interviewee 3:3 "Depends on the specific newspaper or portal".

The media as such was accused of being biased and taking sides:

Interviewee 1:3 "Look, when they write, it seems clear what they write, they themselves are on one side".

Several interviewees believed there were not any independent media. This is an extremely critical view on the media that can also influence their attitude to certain media outlets and news:

Interviewee 2:2 "I would say the words ,independent', ,super-independent' and ,super-objective' media (…) – I do not believe that".

One interviewee mentioned a conspiracy theory that the media publish only what is allowed to publish:

Interviewee 2:9 "Unfortunately, in general, you have to look at alternative media, because it is obviously copying of information allowed for broadcasting".

Therefore, some interviewees were confident that the biggest news agencies were under the control of interest groups, receiving instructions on content could be published.

MEDIA PREFERENCES, TRUSTED AND NON-TRUSTWORTHY MEDIA

The flexibility of the semi-structured interviews ensured the necessary confidentiality for, and the openness of, the interviewees. The variety of stimulus materials presented to three groups allowed the study to collect more information about the media preferences and attitudes of the interviewees. The interviewees were aware of most of the media outlets presented in the stimulus materials and had developed personal attitudes about them.

The Russian-language TV channel *ETV+* and news portal *Rus.ERR.ee* were popular news sources among the interviewees, well trusted and highly valued for their high-quality media coverage. Interviewees mentioned the better resources and quality of journalistic work of these media outlets:

Interviewee 2:7 "Some – of high quality, let's say yes, that's ERR. Because they have significantly better quality than other Estonian ones".

However, ETV+ was also criticized for unprofessional work for filming the same experts and in their institutions. Interviewee 1:1 called it an "event between own people", which implied the audience did not know many Estonian experts.

Thus, the credibility of the media outlet decreased if the audience saw that it was doing "cheap" work using comfortable sources and speakers.

Estonia's privately owned media were also praised and criticized. The interviewees most often mentioned the Russian-language news portals *Rus.DELFI.ee* and *Rus.Postimees.ee* (some interviewees consumed both Estonian-language versions from time to time). Many interviewees identified *Rus.DELFI.ee* and *Rus.Postimees.ee* as their "main" and "favorite" sources of Estonian news but some blamed them of "bias", "lying", "writing nonsense", "lack of self-made news", "non-professionalism", and "poor translation". The interviewees also saw variations in the coverage of the same news across language versions. They noted that the media outlets offered either a distinct form or less information to the Russian-speaking audience than to their Estonian counterparts, which could lead to societal polarization:

> Interviewee 3:5 "News is translated from one language to another, and you only watch – there is something else in Russian. Different information. It seems to me that this could lead to the division of society".

The interviewees accused the media outlets of big nations, primarily the USA and Russia, of bias:

> Interviewee 2:8 "CNN – well, the kind of channel that, like, I really think it's fake news."
> Interviewee 2:7 "There is *Russia-24* [owned by The All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, MK] in Russia. (…) If you just need news, (…) you can watch them. There are no attempts for neutrality, it is not there and will not be in the future".

But some Russian news media was considered reliable, such as the privately owned daily newspaper *Kommersant*:

> Interviewee 1:7 "*Kommersant*, well, *Kommersant* I trust".

The Russian state-owned news agency *TASS*, is used as a news source by Estonian journalists (Kõuts-Klemm & Kremez, 2021), and was considered reliable by many of the interviewees (1:3, 2:2–2:7, etc.):

> Interviewee 2:10 "If there is a source and you say it is *TASS*, does it turn out to be trustworthy? Yes, I think so, I would trust that".
> Interviewee 2:2 "But *TASS* can transmit abbreviated information that is provided, for example, by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation."

English speakers often watched *CNN*, *Fox News* and the *BBC*, but emphasized that they produced biased news. Both *CNN* and *Fox News* were mentioned in connection with the undisguised support of Democrats and Republicans, respectively:

> Interviewee 2:3 "Biden was declared the winner of the election, and *CNN* comments on it with one intonation and some summaries of it, so to speak, yes, well, but *Fox [News*, MK] comments it from basically the other side".

The interviewees admitted to consuming the news of Russia's other major media outlets. Chief amongst them were the online news portals *Yandex.ru* (owned by Russian-Dutch multinational corporation Yandex N.V as of 2021) and *Mail. ru* (owned by Russian internet company Mail.ru Group). They also watched *PBK* (mostly Channel One Russia's products that were broadcast by privately owned *First Baltic Channel*, closed in 2021) and *NTV* (owned by Gazprom Media Russian free-to-air television channel). They also consumed media outlets that are politically critical of the Kremlin. There are the online radio and news portal *Echo of Moscow* (owned by Gazprom Media and Echo of Moscow Holding in 2021), considered to be in critical of the government (Kazakov, 2018), and the private *Novaya Gazeta*, considered the most Kremlin-critical paper in Russia's media landscape (Solts, 2015). The interviewees also consumed materials of the privately owned Kremlin-critical news portal *Meduza* (Kremez & Kõuts-Klemm, 2021, p. 121), established in Latvia by Russian journalists, and the broadcaster *Dozhd* that escaped Kremlin enforced closure to exile in Latvia (Russia's Dozhd TV, 2023). *Dozhd* lost its Latvian broadcast license and obtained a Dutch license in December 2022 (Russia's Dozhd TV, 2023). But the interviewees said the politically critical media are one-sided, as they all consult the same experts:

> Interviewee 1:1 "I think *Dozhd* conveys the same point of view, only the same people are ever invited as experts, and that's not interesting".

Euronews is both a popular EU TV channel in Russian and a master of hard news.

> Interviewee 2:6 "The number one channel on television is *Euronews*".
> Interviewee 3:2 "There are the facts, the facts, the naked facts".

The interviewees talked about other media related to their more focused interests, such as the Russian-language news portal of Finland's national public broadcasting *Yle*, German Public Broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* in either language German or Russian and the Israeli Russian-language news portal *Vesti.co.il*.

Therefore, many interviewees consumed news based on their own needs and interests from across a variety of media outlets. Multilingual interviewees daily consumed news from five or more media outlets.

In summary, the interviewees consumed news they liked, even if they understood the outlet to be biased, and used as many sources as possible to verify certain facts and to obtain a complete picture.

FAKE INFORMATION AND INFORMATION DISORDER CONCERNING THE PANDEMIC IN THE NEWS

Many interviewees started to explain their topic interests through the pandemic information. Some were interested in the coronavirus topic from a professional point of view of being a medic, a pharmacist or a physiotherapist.

During the research period, the news about the pandemic made interviewees search for additional information, using other media or looking for official information on the government agencies' websites. They used a diversity of media preferences as a tool to detect fake information:

> Interviewee 1:3 "I looked for specific numbers, I really searched, I also looked directly at countries, and some sites publish aggregate statistics. The numbers were indeed confirmed."

Interviewees wanted to know more about the pandemic (those infected, restrictions and vaccines) and to be constantly informed:

> Interviewee 2:5 "They seem to update it during the day. Basically, they could write a little more".

Fake information about the pandemic was noticed initially in the social media not in the news:

> Interviewee 1:9 "By the way, I was in Tallinn when the news came that Tallinn would be locked [locked-down, MK]. And I believed it at first."

Suspicious information about the pandemic was noticed in the foreign news media, but interviewees as a rule could not tell of any specific items:

> Interviewee 3:1 "Yes, this [suspicious news, MK] was in remote regions: the US, South Asia, maybe Japan, India…"

Some interviewees emphasized the information disorder in the Estonian news media:

> Interviewee 1:6 "Yes, there has been such conflicting news about the coronavirus. In several publication. One says one thing, the other says another."

Coronavirus statistics were important to the interviewees, but reliability, presentation and contextualization of the news were equally important, e.g., interviewees accused the media of creating fear:

> Interviewee 2:9 "They write so much and so frighteningly about this coronavirus infection that it causes fear in humans."
> Interviewee 1:8 "… This [media reading, MK] caused anxiety and fear."
> Interviewee 2:8 "What I'm kind of not happy with is the fact that the media very much exaggerates."

The perceived fear even led to the rejection of some media by the interviewees, and therefore to a reduction in their media preferences.

VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

The interviewees' assessments of media coverage and attention to fake news and information disorder were related to their media literacy. Among them, some admitted they may not be right about certain statements or did not know the specifics of the events being covered, or that the topic was completely unknown to them. One interviewee, who once was a gullible victim of a media joke, now fully trusted the official news about the coronavirus:

> Interviewee 2:4 "I don't control anything. I accept that it exists. What to check here?"

But as already mentioned in the previous section on the pandemic, specifically the description of using multiple media outlets for information checking, most interviewees did prefer to check the information. Some admitted they did interact with active journalists and really knew how the press works:

> Interviewee 2:8 "I do this [question any news information, MK] because I think it is presented to me through the prism of someone's perception. (…) I just have acquaintances who have worked in information agencies."

> Interviewee 2:3 "… I have enough friends and acquaintances who are involved in the media one way or another."

The interviewees perceived variations between the quality and reliability of mediated and direct information. Thus, the more a person knows about the work organization of newsrooms, the more critical they are about the information provided. That point indicated the need to increase transparency in the work processes of media organizations, but also to reducing trust in the media (in the case of unprofessionalism).

Those interviewees who did lack knowledge in some areas, such as history or medicine, which distorted their perception of the news, were clearly vulnerable. An interviewee with insufficient knowledge might also find suspicious news that was completely reliable, or vice versa. Some interviewees concluded that the fake news in the stimulus materials was the result of people's stupidity that did not deserve to be checked.

Several interviewees went to extremes in their criticality – suspecting fake news on every topic. A closer look revealed that sharing fake information meant these interviewees believed all politicians were liars. Moreover, as there are many political issues in the content of the media aimed at the general audience, the interviewees also evaluated the content of all news media as fake information. An interviewee's personal attitude, especially towards certain politicians the media covered, could negatively impact on their trust in the concrete language of the media.

Many interviewees pointed out that they often came across unreliable information. This problem was highlighted regarding Estonia's media portals such as *Rus.DELFI.ee* or *Rus.Postimees.ee*:

> Interviewee 1:4 "Often. All the time. Maybe it made me quite cynical, I don't want to believe anything anymore."

There were interviewees who distinguished between intentional lies (Russian: *zlonamerennyĭ feĭk*) and jokes (Russian: *prikol*). Interviewees might also have considered incorrect any that contradicted their personal experience:

> Interviewee 3:4 "I think the news in *Rus.Postimees.ee* was that 80% of people in Ida-Virumaa County [the region near the border with Russia where Russian-speakers are in a majority, MK] wear masks. I know from others, and I saw for myself that this is not true."

Interviewee 2:5 had an inverse mask-wearing experience compared to 3:4's comment in that a significant part of Ida-Virumaa Russian-speaking residents were more attuned to Russia's news. The interviewee was worried that

a certain part of the population was segregated in terms of the infosphere, and it affected their behavior:

> Interviewee 2:5 "They have, in principle, a general lack of awareness of what is happening within the country in which they live. Thirty percent wear masks, I came from there yesterday."

It is believed that the closer — geographically — the event takes place, the easier it is to check the accuracy of the information:

> Interviewee 3:6 "It is easy to evaluate Estonian things. However, if, for example, the news reports the situation in Italy and shows two hospitals in which the situation is bad, it is difficult to assess exactly how it is. There are hundreds of hospitals in Italy, and perhaps this is not the case in others."

The study with stimulus materials revealed that the interviewees were mainly suspicious of the lack of references or sources and the clickbait headlines, which tend to be rather skeptical about the content:

> Interviewee 3:1 "Lack of sources, too screaming title, screaming fully that it is… clickbait."

Audiences question the reliability of media outlets and if they are viewed as unreliable, i.e., as yellow press or otherwise, the news becomes suspicious:

> Interviewee 1:2 "Since I see that was written on *Dni.ru* [privately owned Russian e-newspaper, MK], I would not say that it is true. It is the first time I have heard of such a news portal."

Topics also raise doubts. The concept of "flat Earth" has become an analogy of fake information:

> Interviewee 3,6 "And if I see that information comes from a page that has a flat Earth on the front page, for example, of course, I don't trust that page."

The control of suspicious information was usually carried out when the topic was interesting. But interviewees did not start checking if there was insufficient time:

> Interviewee 1:3 "If I have time, I can go somewhere on the Internet and see what others have written about the same problem or issue."

Most often information was sought from other media and from official sources. Interviewees searched the internet or went to the website of a specific official source:

> Interviewee 2:1 "The only option for me is to go to other sites, search the internet for that, maybe there are some other sources of information."

Discussing suspicious information with other people who are important to the interviewees was another widely used method. Therefore, interpersonal communication was another strategy for the detection of fake news. Suspicious news was discussed with relatives, friends, and colleagues:

> Interviewee 1:1 "Well, we always discuss with colleagues, we discuss everything."

But discussions with those who have a different view may be avoided in order to avoid conflict:

> Interviewee 2:7 "The family has a certain point of view – there is nothing to chat about."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the sample population is an active audience (Munday & Chandler, 2011; Livingstone, 2013), which, if consider its decoding of the news according to Hall's encoding/decoding model (2006), operates in negotiated rather than opposing or dominant code. Russian-speakers more often operate in negotiated code being balanced and skeptical, partially perceiving the encoder's thoughts, but also having their own views. But they may operate in the opposing code toward the news – reject the encoder's intended content and create their own – if it is published in a non-trustworthy media outlet or due to the extremely critical view of the media in general. They may also take the dominant-hegemonic position towards news from well trusted media outlets, decoding the messages exactly as they were encoded.

The interviewees are active consumers of Estonia's Russian-language media outlets, especially well trusted Estonian Public Broadcasting's channels, which corresponds to the results of previous studies (Kantar Emor, 2020a, 2020b; Seppel, 2021). Some consume Estonian-language news from time to time. Also, they actively consume the news content from Russia, the US, the UK, the

EU countries (e.g., well-trusted *Yle*, *Euronews*, *Deutsche Welle*), wherein many of the interviewees question the credibility of the media outlets in Russia and the US. English-speakers prefer to consume foreign news media in English: *Fox News, CNN, BBC*, etc. These findings confirm the expanding of media repertoires of Estonia's Russian-speakers in recent years (Jõesaar, 2020).

Hence, the interviewees have broad and diverse media preferences to obtain sufficient information from different sources. Russia's media is only one part of their repertoire, and they question the credibility of Russia's media outlets (especially government-controlled) and their news coverage. These findings challenge the understanding, that the Russian-speaking residents of Estonia are completely under the influence of Russian media, against which Vihalemm et al. also argue naming it "levelling, uniform view" (2019, p. 1).

Most of the interviewees are rather satisfied with the media coverage of topics they are interested in, but do need more balanced and expert information. They mention that special attention must be paid to coverage of political news, which may include the disinformation that could be used to exercise political influence according to Wardle (2020).

The supply of information is often assessed on the basis of interviewees' satisfaction with the information on COVID-19. The pandemic led them to assess the reliability of the news on the topic and search more often for additional information from other sources (official and alternative).

Pre-existing knowledge is considered the primary basis for assessing the reliability of media texts; news could be considered unreliable if it conflicts with such knowledge. The question of credibility does not appear if the interviewees deem the topic irrelevant or uninteresting to them personally. The latter supports the selective exposure theory's approach – people tend to select those aspects of information that correspond to their individual characteristics, and their choice is based on their own interests, views, and beliefs (Sullivan, 2009).

A second basis is if the interviewee is generally critical of the media outlet or has a long-established negative attitude towards the host countries of those outlets, their agents, or specific topics of the reported event.

The interviewees use the diverse sources, juxtaposition of them and discussion of the news with people important to them as strategies for detecting fake news. Attention is also paid to text-level elements: links to trusted news sources, citations, active links, and clickbait headlines. They strive for independence in their sense-making (Vihalemm & Juzefovičs 2020b) showing self-reliant media-related behavior (Vihalemm & Juzefovičs 2020a).

Based on the above, three conclusions supporting the hypothesis can be drawn regarding Estonia's Russian-speakers: First, their media preferences are broad and diverse and support their ability to be less receptive to fake news and information disorder in the news media, and there are insufficient grounds to claim

that Estonia's Russian-speaking population lives in the infosphere of Russia. Secondly, they trust Estonia's Russian-language media—especially the Estonian Public Broadcasting—but most do not believe the news blindly, being critical of both the media and the content. Thirdly, they are quite capable of recognizing fake news and information disorder, but they do need fact-based, balanced, and diverse information. The attention that Estonia's Russian-language speakers pay to fake news and information disorder is related to their knowledge of the media. They are aware of the methods for, and strategies of, verifying information in the news media, although they only apply them when the news is interesting to them personally and they have time to check.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

To ensure the diversity of the sample population their socio-demographic characteristics were recorded (see Appendix 1, Table 2). That most of the interviewees who agreed to participate in the current research have higher education reflects the invitation-response rate, which suggests that people who do not advance beyond a basic level of education were less willing to participate in interview-based research programs. The predominance of Russian-speakers whose main residence was in Tallinn (55% in the study) closely mirrors the 47%[2] of Estonia's Russians who do reside in the nation's capital and largest city[3], while most of the other 53% live in the towns of Ida-Virumaa County in the north-east and in the southern city of Tartu. The sample population included people with differing citizenship (mostly Estonian, but also Russian, Ukrainian).

The results of the study could be valuable for researchers and authorities in Estonia and in other EU countries, where significant communities of Russian-language speakers exist, and where informational segregation is possible. Further research could be focused on the study of the Russian-speaking news media audiences in other EU countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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2 https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/rahvastik__rahvastikunaitajad-ja-koosseis__rahvaarv-ja-rahvastiku-koosseis/RV0222U/table/tableViewLayout2

3 https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/rahvastik__rahvastikunaitajad-ja-koosseis__rahvaarv-ja-rahvastiku-koosseis/RV0222U/table/tableViewLayout2

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Share of Russian-language stimulus materials by each interview group

GROUP	Estonia's online media outlets	Germany's broadcasting media outlet (online)	Russia's print media outlets (online)	Fake news
Group 1	*Rus.DELFI. ee (Forum)*	*Deutsche Welle (Vaccine)*	*Kommersant (Explosion)*	*KuzPress joke*
Group 2	*Rus.ERR. ee (Explosion)*	*Deutsche Welle (Forum)*	*Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Vaccine)*	*KuzPress joke*
Group 3	*Rus.Postimees. ee (Vaccine)*	*Deutsche Welle (Explosion)*	*Novaya Gazeta (Forum)*	*KuzPress joke*

Source: author

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees (N=29)

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	n	N
Gender		
F	14	
M	15	29
Age – years		
20–29	10	
30–39	4	
40–49	6	
50–59	5	29
60–69	2	
80–89	2	
Highest level of attained education		
Higher Education	22	
Vocational Education	4	
Secondary Education	2	29
Basic Education	1	
Employment status		
Employed	17	
Unemployed	2	
Pensioner	3	29
Student	4	
Unknown	3	
Primary place of residence		
North Estonia	18	
North-East Estonia	1	
South Estonia	9	29
Western EU	1	

Source: author

Limitations of Fact-Checking on Debunking COVID-19 Misinformation on Facebook: the Case of Faktograf.hr

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Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of fact-checking to curb misinformation about COVID-19 spread through social media which has been considered the main channels for spreading misinformation in general (Newman et al., 2021). Using computational methods combined with content analysis, we analyzed Faktograf's fact-checks on COVID-19 (N=211) published between July 2020 and March 2021. Using a selected sample, we compared the debunked and misinformed versions of the same story based on the main elements of the communication process: source, channel, message, and recipient, to measure their estimated effectiveness in combating "infodemics". The main findings show that the practice of fact-checking websites to publish debunking content on their own websites and to use social media to disseminate debunking content is insufficient.

Keywords: COVID-19; Croatia; debunking; misinformation; fact-checking; infodemic; effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic created an environment of constant and unforeseeable information development, in which, people worldwide started to believe in the misinformation and disinformation about vaccines, the wearing of protective masks, or even the existence of a disease that could cause real damage to human health and life (Banerjee & Meena, 2021). As a result of this information environment, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the spread

of misinformation about COVID-19 represented a serious threat to combating the virus and called it an 'infodemic'. The WHO (2021) defines an 'infodemic' as being:

> too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak [that]…causes confusion and risk-taking behaviors that can harm health [and] …leads to mistrust in health authorities and undermines the public health response

The WHO warning occurred for a good reason. In the first three months of 2020, in the Middle East around 6 000 people were hospitalized, and at least 800 people may have died, as a result of misinformation about COVID-19 (Islam et al., 2021). The same study found that the spread of rumors, stigma, and conspiracy theories about COVID-19 also had consequences for society at large, and that Facebook, Twitter, and other online media, were the places where misinformation was mainly shared. According to van der Linden and Roozenbeek (2021, p. 150), potential solutions to the problem of [COVID-19] misinformation could be found using four approaches: algorithmic, corrective, legislative and psychological.

The algorithmic approach is already used by Google, Facebook and Twitter to ban unreliable sources, or to prevent misinformation being shown on the news feeds' or search results' pages. The corrective approach is based on the post-publication correction of misinformation by reliable and independent organizations. That kind of approach is known as fact-checking, and in the last five years there has been a huge proliferation of fact-checking organizations/websites (van der Linden & Roozenbeek, 2021). The legislative approach represents those new regulations (laws) that are making the truth as the norm. For example, France approved a law against the manipulation of information on 20th November, 2018 with the aim of preventing the spread of misinformation by foreign actors through social networks and media outlets especially during elections (French Government, 2021). The psychological approach deals with "the role of psychology, education, and the behavioral sciences in combating fake news" (van der Linden & Roozenbeek, 2021, p. 151). However, none of the four offers a complete solution to the problem.

This study examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the fact-checking approach using the practice of the Croatian fact-checking website Faktograf.hr, which was used as the source of misinformation for the analysis and an example of the practice of fact-checking because it is an outstanding example for Southeastern Europe. The website is also the only Croatian fact-checker that is a member of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program and the International Fact-Checking Network (Poynter Institute). As such, Faktograf.hr is required to follow

the International Fact-Checking Network's Code of Principles and is certified for conducting a standardized fact-checking methodology, transparency of their work, and compliance with ethical rules. Therefore, the analysis of Faktograf. hr's work can be used for a more general analysis of the fact-checking community and practice as a whole, and these results can help determine the limitations of such an approach.

We developed the following research questions with goal of assessing the efficiency of the fact-checking:

- RQ1: Which communication channels were used by the sources of COVID – 19 misinformation and fact checkers?
- RQ2: In what format was the COVID – 19 misinformation shared/published and how was this handled by fact checkers?
- RQ3: What was the reach of the misinformation and fact checks published via Facebook (likes, shares, comments and views)?
- RQ4: How long did it take to identify/expose misinformation and how do correction times affect the effectiveness of debunking misinformation?

FACT-CHECKING PRACTICE AND ORGANIZATIONS

Fact-checking became popular in recent decades as a result of the spread of political misinformation and the rapid growth of the internet. The first fact-checking attempt can be traced back to 1988, when it was used for coverage of the US presidential campaign (Young et al., 2018). After the proliferation of the process of fact-checking for special occasions (campaigns), independent fact-checking organizations were formed, particularly during the USA's intervention in Iraq and the American government's claims that there was a presence of weapons of mass destruction (Walter et al., 2020). The fact-checking organization Snopes.com was formed in 1995, with no link to journalism (Graves, 2016), and FactCheck.org in 2003, as a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (FactCheck.org, 2021).

Walter et al. (2020, p. 351) argue that "fact-checking is the practice of systematically publishing assessments of the validity of claims made by public officials and institutions with an explicit attempt to identify whether a claim is factual". Usually, the fact-checking is carried out by journalistic, or independent non-journalistic organizations, but in the latter case the people involved are often either former journalists, or are connected to universities. This paper focuses on non-journalistic fact-checking organizations similar to Politifact, Snopes.com, and FactCheck. org, which are non-partisan, non-profit, and dedicated to reducing the amount of misinformation available to citizens (FactCheck.org, 2021).

There are two major models of fact-checking that are carried out by non-journalistic organizations: "fact-checks that rely only on written analysis to assess claims, and those that also deploy a graphical meter or 'truth scale'" (Amazeen et al., 2015, p. 1). The first model provides an analysis of doubtful information, offering the correct information whilst the second model provides not only the analysis, but also an indicator of the degree of truth (Amazeen, 2012). Usually, that indicator is visual in nature and labels the fact-checks with categories: False, Mostly False, Uncheckable, Mostly True, and True (EUfactcheck.eu, 2021), in an oversimplified, metric way.

Uscinski and Butler (2013) castigate fact-checkers for their occasionally dubious fact-checking practices and naïve political epistemology. Starting from the perspective of the Social Sciences, they found that fact-checkers are failing in their selection of stories for correction, the causal relationship between facts, the prediction of the future outcomes, and the lack of explicit standards. The selection of stories for analysis can be subjective, because it is impossible to randomly sample and thus such a choice can be ideologically impartial. As Uscinski explains:

> without explicit selection criteria, fact checkers' own biases would invariably affect their choice of which actors and which statements to check. The end result of this would be to make political actors look much more truthful or dishonest than they might actually be. (Uscinski, 2015, p. 244).

Another problem were causal claims, which are hard to prove "because it is rarely clear which effects stem from which causes" (Uscinski & Butler, 2013, p. 168). Furthermore, it is impossible to check the facts of future events or outcomes, and fact-checkers can use any criteria without explaining why they have made that choice. Further, rating of the information as true or false is a philosophical error (Uscinski & Butler, 2013, p. 174). Amazeen (2015) evaluated Uscinski and Butler (2013) and argues the authors over-generalized and that there was a lack of empirical evidence to support their claims. Nevertheless, Amazeen (2015, p. 17) acknowledges the inadequate practices, but stresses that fact-checking plays a crucial role in democracy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some international organizations (e.g., WHO) and governments developed fact-checking websites in response to the "infodemic". Their goal was to verify the accuracy of the facts about the pandemic and to point out dangerous misinformation (Naeem & Bhatti, 2020).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND FACT-CHECKING

Studies on the efficiency of fact-checking show contradictory data. For example, a study by Kim Fridkin, Patrick J. Kenney and Amanda Wintersieck (2015) has shown that fact-checks, especially the negative ones, influence people's views on political information.

> Fact-checks influence people's assessments of the accuracy, usefulness, and tone of negative political ads. The fact-checks also sway citizens' likelihood of accepting the claims made in the advertisements. Fact-checks challenging the truthfulness of the claims of the negative commercial are more powerful than fact-checks authenticating the assertions made in the negative advertisement. (Fridkin et al., 2015, p. 146).

On the other hand, Nyhan and Reifler (2010)—on the basis of empirical evidence—suggest that fact-checks commonly fail to reduce disinformation and may increase the misperceptions of the most ideologically committed participants.

However, there have also been studies that arrived at neutral findings on the effectiveness of fact-checking. Walter et al. (2020, p. 366) show that "fact-checking messages positively affect beliefs, irrespective of political ideology, preexisting positions, context (campaign vs. routine), and whether it refutes the entire false statement or just parts of a statement. In fact, not all fact-checking attempts are equally effective". Walter et al. (2020, p. 367) also found that the influence of fact-checking on beliefs is weak, and that the process that have visual elements are less effective.

Similarly, Nyhan et al. (2019, p. 27) find that fact-checks can reduce misinformation, but not enough to influence respondents' attitudes toward their preferred candidate.

The effectiveness of fact-checking can be observed by the manner in which corrections (debunkings) of misinformation were communicated in response to the original misinformation. The basis for evaluating the effectiveness of fact-checking is found in Osgood-Schramm's circular communication model (McQuail & Windahl, 1993), which explains that the effectiveness of communication depends on the "behavior of the main actors in the communication process" (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, p. 19). Osgood-Schramm's model takes a source that encodes the message through various channels to the recipients, who then decode the message and send feedback to complete the communication process.

For this study, we used elements of the circular communication model (source, channel message, receiver and feedback) as a basis for comparative analysis of the effectiveness of fact-checking and original misinformation. It should be noted

that in this sense, the reach of fact-checking and misinformation can be viewed as a measure of receiver (audience) and feedback.

In the case of online misinformation, the senders are either or both various individuals and organizations that use social media and other online channels to disseminate their messages to a wider audience. The sources of debunking are, on the other hand, fact-checking websites, which by default are less persuasive compared to the sources of misinformation, which can be virtually anyone: from friends, family members, public figures, mainstream media, to alternative news sources and activist organizations. Similarly, messages can be written in various and richer combined formats such as text video, photograph, or blog. Some formats are better suited to the online environment and social media tends to algorithmically promote them more (video, photo) than other formats (text). Fact-checkers should use the same channels and formats to combat misinformation, but they rely mainly on text and usually publish debunkings on their websites and social media.

THE REACH OF FACT-CHECKS

Another problem with the efficiency of fact-checking is the reach of such campaigns. It is impossible to debunk all the misinformation as the creation of the kind of content that needs less resources than does the process of debunking (Kurtzleben, 2016). According to the Duke Reporters' Lab, there were 341 fact-checking sites in 60 countries, with the majority situated in Asia, North America and Europe, which implies the misinformation sources outnumber the fact-checkers(Stencel & Luther, 2021).

As Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Facts noticed a few years ago, fact-checking has limitations:

> because current fact checkers don't have the reach to get the message through to all those it needs to reach. There is no realistic prospect of anyone funding the communications effort it would take to get that reach. Fact checkers are outspent by campaigns 100 to 1 or more at election times. (Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Facts, 2019).

The big-data firm Alto Data Analytics conducted a study on the efficiency of the fact-checkers in Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Poland in 2019. They found between 0.1% and 0.3% of the total number of retweets, replies, and mentions could be linked to fact-checking (de Carbonnel, 2019). Less than 1% of users close to populist and far-right parties created 10% of the political posts, but fact-checkers had limited reach in these closed communities (de Carbonnel, 2019).

For example, in Germany, only 2.2% of Twitter users engaged with content that was shared by six fact-checkers (de Carbonnel, 2019). In a previous study, Strazicic et al. (2021) found that 85.4% of the students surveyed never accessed the fact-checking sites to verify misinformation about COVID-19. Similarly, misinformation on Twitter is shared about 70% more often than true information, which takes six times longer to reach 1,500 people (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

FAKTOGRAF.HR AND FACT-CHECKERS IN SEE

Although Europe has a high number of fact-checking organizations, there is a limited number of organizations in Southeastern Europe (SEE) (Stencel & Luther, 2021). There are two that are based in Serbia (http://www.istinomer.rs/ and https://www.raskrikavanje.rs/) and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (https://raskrinkavanje.ba/ and http://istinomjer.ba/). There is one fact-checking organization in North Macedonia (https://www.vistinomer.mk), Kosovo (https://kallxo.com/krypometer/), Montenegro (https://www.raskrinkavanje.me/), Slovenia (https://razkrinkavanje.si/) and Croatia (https://faktograf.hr/).

Most fact-checkers from SEE are part of the International Fact-Checking Network and the SEECheck Regional Network for Combating Disinformation, which is "working on promoting media accountability, improving media literacy and fighting disinformation, media manipulations and malign foreign media influence in the region of Southeast Europe" (SEE Check, 2020). They are funded by international foundations (Open Society, National Endowment for Democracy), foreign embassies (USA, EU), and tech companies (Google, Facebook).

Faktograf.hr is the only Croatian fact-checking website that is focused on correcting facts. It was founded in 2015 by GONG (a Croatian civil society organization that oversees elections) and the Croatian Journalists' Association, and from April, 2019, has been an accredited partner in Facebook's Third Party Fact Checking Program (Faktograf.hr, 2021). The founders of Faktograf.hr state they got the idea for launching a fact-checking website and then adapted it to Croatian conditions from the systems used by PolitiFact, FactCheck and Fact Checker The Washington Post (Faktograf.hr, 2021).

Croatia's Faktograf.hr provides two types of fact-checking: statements by politicians and public office holders, and the accuracy of claims made in digital space. In relation to the first type (in Croatian: Ocjena točnosti), they evaluate the claims of politicians and political actors, whose accuracy can be measured by objective facts while, in the second type (in Croatian: Razotkriveno), they assess the accuracy of those claims that could be found in online media and on social networks (Faktograf.hr, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Faktograf.hr established a special blog entitled "LIVE BLOG: Coronavirus misinformation" (https://faktograf.hr/2021/08/31/live-blog-dezinformacije-o-koronavirusu-2/), which was used for gathering and for gaining easier access to Faktograf.hr's fact-checks on COVID-19. In the period between January 27th, 2020, and March 26th, 2021, they published 381 COVID-19's fact-checks, which could be chronologically accessed on the blog.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on a mix of methods: computational methods for coding and retrieving data, and content analysis. The fact-checks (N=211) from Faktograf.hr that were published in the period between July 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, were scraped using Data Miner software, and were then stored in the spreadsheet format that was used for later content analysis. The analysis covered the period of the second and third COVID-19 pandemic waves, including the summer of 2020, when the number of infected people in Croatia was low, but parliamentary elections were held (July 2020) and COVID-19 was the main topic in the election campaign. The beginning of the pandemic was omitted from the analysis because it took some time for fact checkers to adjust to the COVID-19 crisis and respond to the exponential increase in misinformation about virus. The selection criteria of the general sample for analysis was adopted from Naeem, et al. (2020). The units for the analysis were the fact-checks, original misinformation (posts) and print-screens that were used by Faktograf.hr to preserve original misinformation, and were included in the fact-check. In instances where Faktograf.hr's fact-checks referred to several misinformation posts, the oldest that was still available at the time of the analysis was used. Only in instances where none of the posts were active did the analysis use the oldest archived misinformation. Fact-checks that referred to no-media content, for example, the misinformation that was shared in the form of flyers, or which contained more general debunking attempts that did not address specific online content, were excluded from the analysis. Fact-checks that referred to the same misinformation (duplicates) were also excluded.

The content analysis had 11 categories: (1) the publication date of the misinformation; (2) the publication date of the fact-check; (3) the headline; (4) the URL of the misinformation; (5) the URL of the fact-check; (6) the author of the fact-check; (7) the source (author) of the misinformation; (8) the medium or place that shared or published misinformation (if different to source); (9) the reach of misinformation on Facebook; (10) the reach of a fact-check on Facebook; and (11) the status of the misinformation. The source for Categories 1–6 were fact-checks and print-screens. Category 7 had 5 subcategories: (i) social media,

(ii) a person, (iii) alternative media, (iv) mainstream media, and (v) other. Subcategory 5 involved instances where the original misinformation was edited by shortening, subtitling, or similar, and the author of the misinformation was recorded as being the editor and not the original author. Category 8 represented the name of the medium/place. Categories9 and 10, both on Facebook had 3 subcategories: (i) likes, (ii) comments, and (iii) shares. Although these subcategories represent engagement with Facebook content and capture only a portion of a post's overall reach, we consider them equal because it was not possible to obtain data on post views. For this category, the data were collected using the URL address of the misinformation and fact-checks and the software CrowdTangle, which Facebook developed that can be used for "…follow[ing], analyz[ing], and report[ing] on what's happening with public content on social media" (CrowdTangle, 2021). Category 11 represents the data that answers the question as to whether that misinformation is still available online, and has 2 subcategories: (i) yes and (ii) no. Because the data contained extreme outliers, correlations were computed using the online Spearman's Rho calculator created by Jeremy Stangroom (2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### SOURCES AND CHANNELS OF COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

The findings showed that of the 211 fact checks, 61% of the debunked misinformation was attributed to people, 19.3% to social media (groups, pages) 7.5% to alternative media and 3.8% to mainstream media.

In cases where people were creating misinformation (N=130), the most active were the accounts of Marija Stojakovic (n=11), Petar Radenić (n=5), Srećko Sladoljev (n=5) and Viktor Jagarinec (n=3). In the social media category (N=41), the most active were the Facebook pages of "Građansko buđenje" (n=4) and "NovoNormalno" (n=2). The most active of the alternative media that were creating misinformation (N=22) were logicno.com (n=7); 2012-transformacij-asvijesti.com (n=5); istinomprotivlazi.info (n=5), and HOP.com (n=5). The most active of the mainstream media (N=8) were Jutarnji list (n=3) and RTL (n=2).

The authors of misinformation came from various parts of society, including religious groups (e.g., Ivan Dominik Iličić), right wing and anti-system party members (e.g., Ivan Pernar), etc. The social media includes profiles/pages/groups that have been opened under fake names (e.g., Michael Poulsen), or names that came from terms used to describe the contemporary pandemic world or conspiracy

theories (e.g., Bolji Svijet [Better World]; NovoNormalno [New Normal] and Novisvjetskiporedak [New world order]. The third group of authors represents online alternative media (see previous paragraph). The last group were activists who promoted their views on the contemporary world by denying the existence of COVID-19, promoting the non-wearing of protective masks, or anti-vaccine views. For example, Henna Maria had a YouTube channel and founded the Dawn of Peace in November, 2019 with the aim to "lead people beyond the current doctrine of apathy, deception and domination into a culture of compassion, truth and freedom" (Perić, 2020b). Similarly, Marija Stojaković has a YouTube channel and a Facebook profile, on which she publishes "subtitled videos promoting various conspiracy theories" (Perić, 2020a). The findings show that some of these were more influential than others. Marija Stojakovic was shared 337 times in publicly accessible Facebook pages and groups, Transformacija svijesti 133 times, logicno.com 108 times, Petar Radenić 106 times and Michael Poulsen 74 times.

Figure 1. Sources of COVID-19 Misinformation
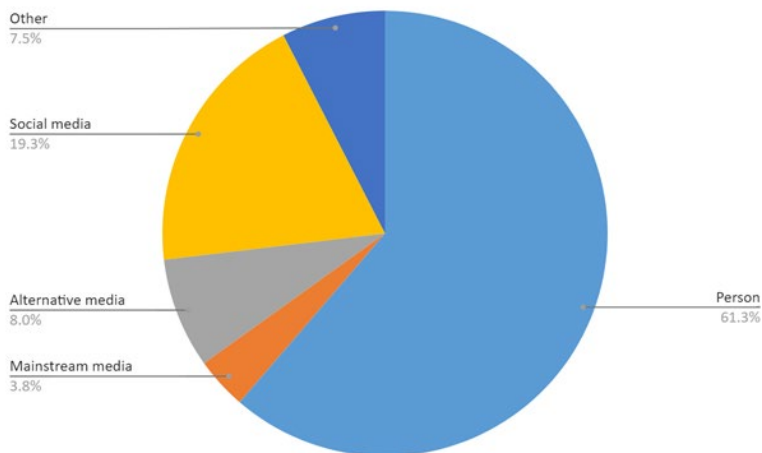
Source: Authors

The location of the publication of the misinformation (N=211) were social media (72.4%), alternative media (N=46, 21.7%) and mainstream media (N=12, 5,6%). In a comparison to the data published by Naeem et al. (2020, p. 144), Faktograf. hr debunked 22.2% more social media content.

On the other hand, Faktograf's debunkings were published by just a few of the fact checkers working for this organization on their websites and blogs about COVID-19. Still, Faktograf did share all the debunkings on the organisation's Facebook page with a limited number of other pages, groups, and individuals who further disseminated them. Brautović (2022) shows that during the

two-year period (January 1, 2020-December 31, 2021), Faktograf's debunkings were shared by SEE Check network (n=109), the journalist Denis Latin (n=39), and the Facebook group "Koronavirus Hrvatska – COVID19 – savjeti i informacije" (n=20).

TYPES OF THE MISINFORMATION AND DEBUNKES

The content that contained misinformation was mainly made up of text (n=85), video (n=68) and photos or infographics (n=50). All the fact-checks comprised textual information, in blog form, that was published on Faktograf.hr.

Figure 2. Types of Misinformation Content
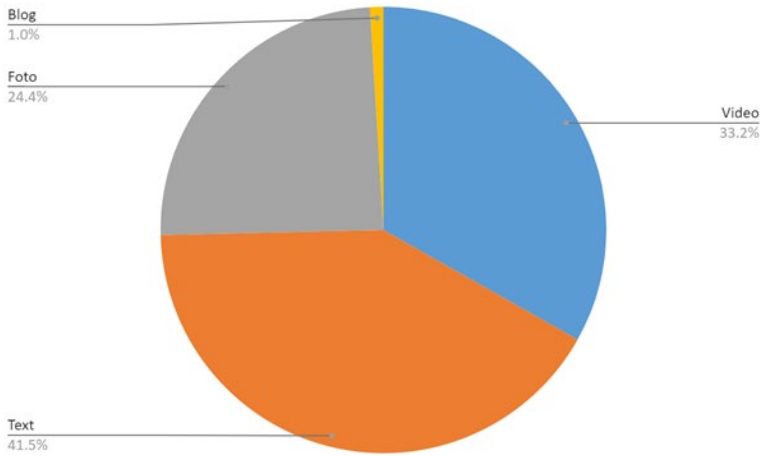
Source: Authors

In the case of Faktograf.hr, all debunking was originally published in text form on the website and later shared on Faktograf's blog about COVID-19 disinformation.

THE REACH OF THE MISINFORMATION AND DEBUNKES

The analyzed misinformation (N=211), in total, had 21.9 million of likes, 5.2 million of comments, 37.7 million of shares, with 13.5 million views (and were mainly made up of video content). On the other hand, fact-checks accomplished 28 thousand likes, 21.6 thousand comments, and only 7 thousand shares.

Table 1. Facebook Engagement of Analyzed Misinformation and Fact-checks

	likes	comments	shares	views*
Misinformation	21,949,541	5,202,750	37,740,074	13,524,873
Fact-checks	27,965	21,627	7,066	-
Ratio	784.9	240.6	5,341.1	-

* including data from YouTube & webpages stats

Source: Authors

On average, misinformation had 103,535 likes, 24,535 comments and 178,019 shares. The fact-checks' mean value for likes was 131,102 for comments, and 33 for shares.

In total, the misinformation that was analyzed had 784.9 times more likes, 240.6 times more comments and 5,341.1 times more shares on Facebook, than the fact-checks did. The results may be partially explained by the low level of co-operation between the fact-checking sites in the SEE region. As the data show, they rarely collaborate or share fact-checks. In 22.6% (N=48) of the fact-checks we recorded that Faktograf.hr's fact-checks were shared by other Facebook pages or groups. Mainly, this was done by See Check (n=22), the journalist Denis Latin (n=10) and the Facebook group "Koronavirus Hrvatska – COVID19 – savjeti i informacije" (n=8). On the other hand, the misinformation was heavily shared by a high number of Facebook groups and pages that cover the SEE region (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, etc.), or the SEE diaspora in Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand.

The Facebook Groups/Pages that were most active in sharing misinformation during period observed were: Saznajmo istinu o Koroni (N=42), Glavna grupa stranke Ivana Pernara (N=35) (, Borba protiv Okupacije (N=34) (, Grupa podrške Ivana Pernara (N=32), NAJBOLJA HRVATSKA (N=29, Vučić te laže, ne veruj šta ti kaže (N=23), Poštovaoci lika i djela dr Branimira Nestorovića (N=23), Narodni Referendum (N=21), and FORUM (N=17). In total, 560 public groups/pages shared misinformation 1551 times.

This special case represents the sharing of Faktograf.hr fact-checks) as a form of confirmation of misinformation or criticisms of Faktograf.hrs' work (the backfire effect). For example, in January, 2021, Faktograf.hr published a fact-check on how some misinformation had spread from Ireland to Croatia. The fact-check was later shared on the Facebook page of Građansko buđenje (Civil Awakening), with the comment "Again 'Authoritative, expert, credible' F … graph revealed: the truth and the facts" (Građansko buđenje, 2021) The fact-check caused people to comment and to compare Faktograf.hr with criminal organizations (Građansko buđenje, 2021). Similarly, in January, 2021, Faktograf.

hr published a fact-check that related to rNA vaccines not causing cancer. The post was picked by the Occupy Croatia Facebook group, which criticized the work of Faktograf. One of the users wrote "Hmm let's see, who to trust … a Nobel Prize winner, or a pimply student who spends all day on the computer surfing the internet and writing for Faktograf … mumble mumble … as soon as I decide, let me know …" (Occupy Croatia, 2021).

TIME TO SPOT/DEBUNK MISINFORMATION

On average, it took 26 days for Faktograf.hr to correct misinformation. The sample was influenced by some fact-checks that were correcting information before the COVID-19 pandemic, or at the very beginning of the pandemic and, after their exclusion, the average time between the publication of the misinformation and debunking it was 10.9 days. The correction time that most often occurs in the data set (mode), was 4 days.

As the lifespan of a Facebook post is relatively limited, to perhaps just a few hours (Fiebert et al., 2014), we can speculate that the time taken by Faktograf.hr to correct such misinformation is too long (Kauk et al., 2021), and this is partially responsible for the readers' low engagement with fact-checks. Table 2 shows that correction time moderately corelate with engagement with fact-checks. This result confirms previous findings but for a limited number of cases as negative correlation, although statically significant, was relatively low $r(209)=-0.21882$, $p=.00138$. The positive and limited correlation was found between engagements with misinformation and fact-checks $r(209)=0.1381$, $p=.0451$. So, based on this finding we can claim that there is a good chance that more popular misinformation will result in fact-checks are also becoming more popular. Also, when fact-checking organizations provide late responses to misinformation, the tardiness limits the number of people who access those fact-checks.

Table 2. Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Correction Time and
Total Engagement with Misinformation and Fact-checks

	Misinformation	Fact-checks	Correction time
Correction Time	$r(209) = 0.11564$, $p = .09386$	$r(209) = -0.21882$, $p = .00138$	-
Misinformation	-	$r(209) = 0.1381$, $p = .0451$	$r(209) = 0.11564$, $p = .09386$
Fact-checks	$r(209) = 0.1381$, $p = .0451$	-	$r(209) = -0.21882$, $p = .00138$

Source: Authors

The findings presented in Table 3 showed that we could not find statistically significant correlation between type of the misinformation content and engagement with that content. As Faktograf.hr was using only text to correct information from visual content we could not investigate the efficiency of fact-checking based on content type in this case.

Table 3. Spearman's Rho correlation between correction time and different engagement types (likes, comments, shares) and types of the content used for sharing misinformation*

		Correction time			
		Likes	Comments	Shares	Total engagements
Misinformation	Video	r(66) = 0.06916, p = .52936	r(66) = − 0.00843, p = .93898	r(66) = − 0.04264, p = .69841	r(66) = 0.02915, p = .79114
	Photo	r(48) = − 0.04764, p = .74254	r(48) = 0.00426, p = .97659	r(48) = − 0.02248, p = .87687	r(48) = − 0.06066, p = .67561
	Text	r(85) = 0.07106, p = .55884	r(85) = − 0.08711, p = .47332	r(85) = 0.10456, p = .38903	r(85) = 0.05526, p = .64955

* Fact-checks were appearing in only one form – text; correlation for misinformation in the form of text and blogs were calculated together

Source: Authors

The source of misinformation had negative correlation with correction time only when fact-checks were correcting social media content (Facebook and YouTube). From this we can speculate that the longer it took Faktograf.hr to correct information originating from social media the lower was social media users engagement with their fact-checks. In case of the alternative media and mainstream media, correction time did not have any statistically significant correlation with engagement.

Table 4. Spearman's Rho correlation between correction time and total engagement with misinformation and fact-checks based on the source of misinformation

	Social media (Facebook & YouTube)		Alternative media		Mainstream media	
	Misinformation	Fact-checks	Misinformation	Fact-checks	Misinformation	Fact-checks
Correction time	r(152) = 0.10969, p = .17567	r(152) = − 0.19343, p = .01624	r(44) = 0.13931, p = .36142	r(44) = − 0.24415, p = .10603.	r(10) = − 0.09146, p = .80159	r(10) = − 0.43903, p = .2043

Source: Authors

In total, 19.3% of all of the analyzed misinformation was deleted after debunking, but that approach, as a way of combating misinformation on social media has some limitations. Our study recorded the cases when, even after the deletion of the original inaccurate content, it was still available as a snippet on Facebook. For example, the Serbian online media srpskidnevnik.com published a story "Started! They die from the vaccine in Norway, Israel and Slovenia, paralysis in Mexico!" in January, 2021, which was about people dying after receiving vaccines (Srpski dnevnik, 2021). The story was later shared by several Facebook groups and pages but the original was deleted. The story still lives on as a Facebook snippet (see Figure 3), which was liked 3531 times, commented on 838 times, and was shared 1351 times.

Figure 3. Print-screen of a snippet of deleted srpskidnevnik.com's story on September 14, 2021

Source: Damnjanovic, B. (January 8, 2021), Facebook

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown the extent of the infodemic, in terms of its quantity and the reach of the misinformation about COVID-19, in relation to which misinformation spreads beyond national borders, and cannot be combated by applying the approaches mentioned. The findings also question the efficiency of the

fact-checking approach in several ways. The data regarding the source of misinformation show that the ecosystem of online misinformation is quite complex, and that debunking campaigns cannot address all the possible sources, as they tend to be put up by people and are neither static websites nor pages/groups/accounts/channels. Deletions of accounts or profiles are quickly replaced with new ones. The study also found cases where the deletion of the original misinformation did not delete the snippets of shared misinformation on Facebook, if that content had originally been published somewhere on social media.

Although visual content on social media (videos, photos) leads to higher engagement and reach (Li & Xie, 2020), we did not find any statistically significant proof for that in the case of misinformation.

The reach of fact-checks is also limited. One website, or several websites, are unable to combat the misinformation that is given on hundreds of websites or pages, groups, accounts or channels. Another problem that is presented to fact-checking sites is based on national borders, as our data shows that misinformation has neither concrete nor insubstantial ones. Misinformation spreads online independently of both time and fact-checking attempts. Likewise, the response time is too long. At the moment that the fact-check is published, the original misinformation has already been spread, and it is only those rare users who will stumble upon corrections. Therefore, fact-checking organizations must devote their resources to reducing correction times as much as possible. As Kauk et al. (2021) contend "an early response combined with strong fact-checking and a moderate level of (…) deletion is necessary to control the diffusion of a conspiracy theory through a social network".

Although fact-checking has limitations, which are caused by the motivation of the audience and the reduced reach and coverage of the fact-checkers, it should still be conducted, because it defends the culture of truth.

> Even if the audience for fact-checking and community engagement is small, and even if an even smaller part of that audience is persuaded by it enough to trust the media and become more engaged and civicminded, it may still be worth doing. Defending a culture of truth is important, as is signaling that journalism plays a role in keeping public officials and institutions accountable. Showing audiences that journalists are part of their community is surely not a bad thing. Being optimistic about your audience, and hoping they can learn to prefer quality news, and getting them involved in news gathering, is a good thing, to (Stiglitz, 2020, p. 133).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has limitations in relation to the sample and the methods deployed. In future work, the sample should be extended beyond Faktograf.hr's content, because it has debunked only a small part of the misinformation that has been shared on social media. The method should also be extended through the observation of routines inside fact-checking organizations and with in-depth interviews with those people who conduct fact-checking. Another direction of research about fact-checking efficiency should be directed to the analysis of those Facebook groups and pages that share misinformation, the misinformation snippets, and the role of time in the life span of misinformation.

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The Impact of the Media in Election Campaign During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Kosovo

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ABSTRACT: During the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2021, Kosovars overthrew the national government, which generated a snap parliamentary election. The pandemic affected the election campaign with the restrictions of movement amid strict lockdowns. The pandemic revealed the significance of media usage for political parties and the impact of the pandemic on the relationship between traditional and social media. This article explores the extent to which new and transitional media shaped the election campaign during the Kosovan pandemic. Drawing on media monitoring and surveying, the article found that media—regardless of the quality and frequency of their use by political parties and candidates—do not have a determining role during the pandemic election campaign. Under the conditions of ever-greater use of social media, the article finds that voting preferences and affinity towards specific political parties and candidates is a long-term process that cannot be changed by the quality of the election campaign. On the other hand, regardless of their use, the potential impact of social media turns out to be conditioned by the usage duration and the ability of political entities to interact with the audience.

KEYWORDS: media; election campaign; permanent campaign; political parties; COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in political communication is decisive, not only in broadcasting or transmitting information, but also in shaping the essence of messages communicated to the public, indeed as McNair (2000, p.12) argues "the media do not simply report, in a neutral and impartial way, what is going on in the

political arena around them". Contemporary media, especially the internet has a much more sophisticated role in interacting with the public through social media, blogospheres, and digital platforms for personalization of communication (Norris, 2004). Although television continues to be the most powerful media outlet as a source of campaign news (Anderson, 2016), social media have become dominant especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers have found that social media played a crucial role in connecting citizens during the lockdowns, thus compensating for the lack of F2F social interaction and in-person communication. As research shows, "Social media were an exceptional resource utilized for risk communication by most national leaders, as well as a way for citizens to stay connected despite lockdown" (Lilleker et al. 2021, p. 339).

In Kosovo, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was accompanied by a political crisis caused by the overthrow of the government, with political developments dominating the media's agenda. Recent research reveals that

> [t]he political crisis meant that space for COVID-19 in the mainstream media was limited, as mainstream television news focused on political topics. The same happened with the main online media, and there were many cases when the main news items on the front page were only about politics. (Gërguri 2021b, p. 321)

However, in the relationship between traditional and new media, as Sartori (2013) notes, the problem does not lie in overcoming television but in integrating various aspects of communication within a specific digital media platform and application. Gilardi et al. (2021) describe this integration: "The Internet and social media have created new 'hybrid systems' that have increased the number and types of actors potentially capable of shaping political discourse and agenda" (p.2). Yet, we have limited knowledge of whether these new social media shape voting preferences. Indeed, we have limited knowledge of the impact of the concentration of electoral campaigns during the pandemic.

The study focuses on the role of media in the context of changes in election campaigns as a result of new communication technologies. We aim to analyse the relationship of media usage with results achieved by the political parties during the February 2021 snap national election in Kosovo. The concept of the permanent campaigning has made the research of this topic important, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. As Blumenthal (1980, p.7) argues, permanent campaigning is "the political ideology of our age, which combines image-making with strategic calculation". Joathan and Lilleker (2020, p. 27) argue "a theoretically informed model for the study of permanent campaigning (…) can be developed as research responds to the diffusion and appropriation of technological innovations for political communication". However, in an increasingly digitized

environment, the non-stop battle of the government and the opposition for public approval has made the campaign permanent, while the media mainly have a long-term impact on voters.

This paper measures the extent, to which the use of media during the campaign has affected the outcome of elections held in the pandemic. Drawing on media monitoring, surveying, comparison and data analysis, we argue that regardless of the type of media (traditional or new) and their usage, the media do not have a decisive impact during the election campaign because voters are usually predetermined as a result of permanent campaigning. Accordingly, the February 2021 elections in Kosovo have demonstrated that the opposition's permanent campaign was successful in converting citizens' dissatisfaction with the government's performance into political support for their party. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the use of social media in election campaigns, their impact on voters remains conditional on the ability of political entities for long term interaction with them. So, the election campaign during 2021 was further strengthened by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting anti-COVID measures that were implemented during the campaigning. However, the results of the elections also suggest that the use of social media and the way in which political parties report their campaigns do not necessarily reflect the electoral results.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, it offers a brief overview of the context of electoral politics in Kosovo. Then it examines and applies to Kosovo the concept of permanent campaigning enabled by the rise of social media and digital politics.

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Since the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, the country has undergone a significant political, economic, and social transition. The country with the help of the international community, has managed to develop state institutions and the economy, a vibrant civil society, and solid media infrastructure and within two decades, Kosovo has managed to consolidate its democratic institutions and organize free and fair elections. Yet, the country still faces many challenges, such as unresolved disputes with Serbia, limited international integration, and the large migration of its population abroad. On the diplomatic front, Kosovo still remains unrecognized by five European Union (EU) Member States and is still not a member of the United Nations (UN), as its admission

was opposed by Russia and China in the UN Security Council.[1] For this reason, the UN General Assembly, on September 9, 2010, adopted a resolution accepting the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)[2] on the legality of Kosovo's independence and welcoming EU's readiness to facilitate a normalization dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. The dialogue started in 2011, but it has not yet been concluded due to the confrontational positions of the two sides. Serbia continues to oppose any recognition of Kosovo, while Kosovo does not accept any compromise that would violate its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order.

This political process is considered to have a significant impact on the popularity of leaders both in Kosovo and Serbia, therefore the approach of the parties to the dialogue has been a key theme of electoral campaigns (Shahini-Hoxhaj, 2018). Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV), a centre-left party that convincingly won the February 2021 elections has consistently opposed the dialogue and the agreements reached so far, including the contested provisions on the establishment of an Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities.[3] The focus of the Government of Kosovo in this process resulted in economic stagnation and the continuous increase of corruption, factors which caused a gradual decrease of legitimacy of the Government and repaid increase in people's dissatisfaction. Through a populist discourse and being the first in the use of social media (see Gërguri, D. (2021a) that would increasingly penetrate the public, LVV focused on the concept of a *permanent campaign*, and managed to turn citizens' dissatisfaction into political support.

Figure 1 shows the gradual and proportional increase of political support for LVV with increasing dissatisfaction over the years for the work of previous governments. Thus, in 2010, when LVV competed for the first time in the general elections, the level of citizens' satisfaction with the government's performance was higher, which decreased as the support for LVV increased. In other words, the opposition's permanent campaign played a decisive role in reducing the

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1 Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus are the five EUcountries that have not yet recognized Kosovo's independence—declared on February 17, 2008. Russia and China thatare permanent members of the UN Security Council continue to oppose Kosovo's membership of the UN

2 UN General Assembly, Adopting Consensus Resolution, General Assembly Acknowledges World Court Opinion on Kosovo, Welcomes European Union Readiness to Facilitate Process of Dialogue, available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/ga10980.doc.htm; EEAS (2013b), Declaration by High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union on the ICJ advisory opinion (12516/10 Presse 2013), 22 July 2010, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/115902.pdf (accessed 28 November 2021).

3 EEAS (2013a), Association/Community of SerbmajoritymunicipalitesinKosovo, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/statements-eeas/docs/150825_02_association-community-of-serb-majority-municipalities-in-kosovo-general-principles-main-elements_en.pdf (accessed 28 November 2021).

previous government's popularity and laid out the foundations for subsequently overturning the popular support for established parties.

Figure 1. Correlation Between Citizen Dissatisfaction and Support for LVV
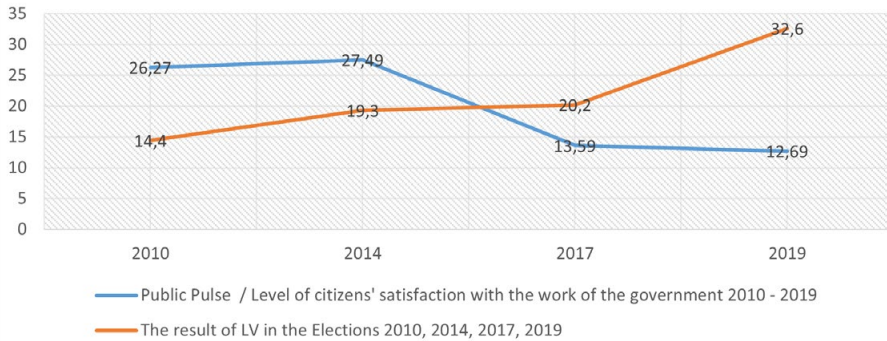
Source: Central Election Commission (CEC) and the "Public Pulse" of UNDP

Kosovo is still a fragile democracy (Freedom House, 2021), with a weak economy which has been further worsened by the COVID19 pandemic (Luka, 2020), with stagnation regarding the rule of law and obstacles in full international recognition because of which it continues its dialogue with Serbia, mediated by the EU. The February 14th 2021 snap parliamentary election was held due to the decision of the Constitution Court declaring the government led by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) in coalition with the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), the Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA) and minorities was unconstitutional[4]. The motion initiated by the LDK was supported by all the other parties, including the opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). At the same time, Kosova's citizens were panicking because of the threat of the 'invisible enemy' of COVID-19. This situation magnified the anger of citizens towards the old traditional parties that ruled the country after the war and enabled them now bring down a new government in the middle of the pandemic. Moreover, stagnation, corruption scandals and nepotism reported over the years in the media created a public opinion that held those parties accountable.

The government overthrown in 2021 was formed following the successful no-confidence motion against the previous government that had emerged as a result of the October 6, 2019 election. This was a coalition led by LVV as the first party in coalition with the LDK. The latter abandoned the coalition after just 51 days, which coincided with the onset of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kosovo (Bytyqi, 2021). Alongside these developments

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4 Constitutional Court decision on subject KO 95/20, available at: https://gjk-ks.org/en/decisions-from-the-review-session-held-on-21-december-2020/ (accessed 28 November 2021).

and tensions that deepened the political polarization in Kosovo, the February 2021 election were held under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected many aspects of election campaigns around the world. Indeed, many countries initially postponed their elections and later campaigns were subjected to anti-COVID measures, resulting in changes in the form of implementation (Asplund et al., 2021). In this context, the elections, in addition to similar developments regarding social media penetration, have shown that results of political parties do not match the use of media and the way of their reporting during election campaigns.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE CONTEXT OF PERMANENT CAMPAIGNING

Election campaigns have evolved continuously as a result of technological development, but the necessity for the presence of the media has remained unchanged. Richard Perloff (2013) defines the campaign as the key to elections that meet the goal of democracy. Based on the periodization of Pippa Norris, the modern campaign from the 1950's to 1980's identifies with television, while the postmodern campaign identifies with the internet (Norris, 2004). Both periods are also characterized by the strategic use of media outside the official periods of the campaign. Hess (2000, p.44) argues that along with changes in the way journalists covered campaigns and changes in what constituted campaign coverage, there were changes in the technology of the media. There were also changes to the economics of the media that would also affect why and how politics and government came to be reported as part of a permanent campaign (Hess 2000, p. 44).

Considering this continuous transformation, the theoretical framework of this research is based on the concept of the *Permanent Campaign*, which the journalist Sidney Blumenthal (1980, p.7) originally defined and "suggests that political representatives need to pursue actions consistent with election campaigning in non-electoral periods to maintain a positive image among the public and thus enable future electoral successes". However, while the concept of permanent campaigning comes from an offline (analogue) era, recent studies have suggested that the introduction and continued development of the internet has made these practices easier than ever before. The possibilities of self-publishing and control over messages has increased the importance of the internet, especially for less-established political parties, due to the low costs and the parties' limited access to traditional media outlets. The rapid proliferation of social media and their increasing use as primary news sources (Reuters Institute, 2017) has instigated a significant transformation of political communication, with parties and candidates utilizing these digital tools to communicate directly with their

electorate, thereby bypassing the traditional gate-keeping role of mainstream news media (Stetka et al., 2019).

The traditional role of media consists of informing citizens, educating them about the meaning of facts, providing a platform for public discussion and having the watchdog role to institutions through which it influences the formation of public opinion (McNair, 2009, p.33). By contrast, as Tenhunen and Karvelyte (2015) argue, social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have rapidly grown in importance and today are the central platforms used for political activism that promote citizen engagement in political life. Social media also enable direct and faster communication of politicians with citizens without the mediation of mass media and allow the attainment of new audiences through the distribution of messages posted on personal accounts (Tenhunen & Karvelyte, 2015).

Benjamin Peters points out the democratizing effect of social media, where "all people online will have more voice than before" (2020). As for their impact during the COVID-19 pandemic, Peters emphasizes the substitute role of political-civic interaction. He argues the pandemic has diminished the importance of face-to-face communication with voters and increased online interaction in that "[t]his fact has further increased the power and audience of social media in 2020 compared to previous elections" (Peters, 2020).Considering the increase of democratic media oversight as a result of new communication technologies and a positive development, McNair (2009, pp. 210–211) maintains that "the Internet has increased the difficulty for politicians to control the dissemination of information they would like to keep secret". An example of this in Kosovo is the Pronto Affair, which has continuously been used in the political discourse against PDK and even during the 2021 national elections[5].

However, social media have also expanded possibilities of political manipulation. As McNair (2009, p. 38) notes "[o]nly those who have a naive belief in the ethical purity of politicians would deny that manipulation plays an increasingly important role in modern (or postmodern) democratic politics". The effects of political communication are determined not only by the content of the message, but also by the historical context in which they appear and especially by the political environment that always prevails (McNair, 2009, pp. 43–44). Therefore, the links between a party's campaign and its expected votes may not be obvious. Referring to UK elections like those of 1992, when polls failed to predict the Conservatives' victory, McNair argues that voting behaviour patterns change, and the result may not match the quality of the campaign.

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5   In August 2016 the newspaper *Insajderi* published a series of recordings that implicated PDK officials in corruption scandals and that have led to a lawsuit against them. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvOQ79xZ_BI (accessed 28 November 2021).

Contextualized in the case of the 2021 elections in Kosovo, this means that the campaign might not have had a significant impact on the electorate. For example, the PDK campaign was praised by commentators, and considering the crises this party experienced after the arrest of its leaders, it would have scored an even worse result if it had not run a good campaign. As Jay Blumler puts it

> at a time when public confidence in many social and political institutions has plummeted, voters have become more dependent on the media… to create the impression of what game is being played, while previous suppliers of governing structures have lost their credibility. (Blumler 1987, p. 170)

This means that the decline of the pyramid model of political communication (the flow of messages from politics to the media and thence to the audience, which Blumler says elite staff largely organized) with the advent of the internet, has made audiences a communication force that the former monopolists of political communication must follow closely (Blumler, 2016).

The internet has also changed the structure of political communication, which unlike television is limited to the visual effect. Sartori's (2013, p.87) conclusions about the effect of video politics, which has almost destroyed mass parties (collection of votes no longer requires a capillary organization of headquarters and activists), also applies to LVV. Although the party did not have an extended and well-established structure, has achieved a historic result in the last election. Community life in rural and urban areas of Kosovo differ greatly, the greater increase of virtual socialization in cities as a result of greater use of social media and better performance of LVV in urban areas, its success can be explained by the long-term effect of media and its permanent campaign through social media. Joathan and Lilleker (2020) contend "a theoretically informed model for the study of permanent campaigning can be developed as research responds to the diffusion and appropriation of technological innovations for political communication".

Explaining the differences between campaigning and governance, Helco (2000, p.12) emphasizes that the first is an exercise in persuasion that consists of promises and affirmations, while the second presupposes deliberation and efforts to reach consensus even with opponents. In an increasingly digitized environment, the non-stop struggle by the government and the opposition for public approval has made the campaign *permanent*, while the media mainly have a *long-term impact* on voters. It means that during the official campaign, neither social media nor a good campaign can restore the public's lost trust. In sum, technological advancement has changed the way campaigns are conducted, with the internet playing a major role in the success of campaigns. Politicians are no longer dependent on the traditional media to reach their electorate but

are now able to reach them directly through social and digital media. This has allowed for more direct communication between politicians and their electorate and has also allowed for greater opportunities to control the preferences of voters. The internet has increased the difficulty for politicians to control the dissemination of information and, as a result, has increased the importance of media oversight and has also changed the structure of political communication, with video politics now playing an important role in the success of campaigns.

METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on the campaign during the pandemic (held between 3–12 February 2021) for the snap parliamentary elections held in February 2021 in Kosovo. To compare the use of mainstream media and social media by political parties during the campaign, research for this paper included television, because television remains the most trusted media type in Kosovo (Zeneli, 2021, p. 141) and Facebook, the most used social media (Internet World Stats 2021). The data used regarding television were generated from the media monitoring report during the early election campaign 2021 (Independent Media Commission, 2021). The data on Facebook were manually extracted from personal accounts of candidates for the post of Prime Minister and the accounts of their respective parties: Enver Hoxhaj of the PDK; Avdullah Hoti of the LDK; Ramush Haradinaj of the AAK and Albin Kurti of the LVV). Facebook's data involved measuring activity (posts) and interactivity (shares, likes and comments) during the campaign period.

Furthermore, as the Covid-19 pandemic social distancing and lockdowns had rendered face-to-face interactions impossible, an online survey was conducted with 270 respondents through random sampling, from June 1 to 14, 2021. The questionnaire was distributed via FB, with the announcement that only those who had voted in the February 2021 elections should answer (see Table 1). This meant that the sample represented 48.78% of the citizens who participated in the voting, respectively 871,796 out of 1,851,927 registered voters.[6] The sample becomes even more representative because the list of voters also includes citizens living in the Diaspora (Kosovo is a country with a high rate of emigration of citizens mainly to the countries of Western Europe). According to the data from the Population Census of 2011, the Diaspora of Kosovo had 703,978

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6 Central Election Commision, Zgjedhjetpër Kuvendin e Kosovës 2021, Rezultatet Përfundimtarenga QNR, Available at: https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/1.Statistikat-e-pergjithshme-1.pdf (accessed 28 November 2021).

citizens or 28.34% of the total population[7], because according to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021), the resident population is only 1.74 million inhabitants. Analysis of the data extracted from SPSS on the variables revealed the samples demographics, that most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18–35 years (63%), 36–50 years (31%) and 51 yeas and older (6%). These statistics generally correspond to the data of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics that claims half the population of Kosovo is under the age of 35[8], which mirrors the age of the majority of social media users (Zeneli, 2021, p.147). Meanwhile, Kosovo's population in the context of the urban (52%) and rural (48%) divide, is split almost 50/50 and while internet penetration is 96% of the population (Eurostat 2021), as many rural residents have access to the internet and social media as do their urban counterparts.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender		Residence	
Female	141	Rural	129
Male	129	Urban	141

Age		Education	
18–35	169	High school	27
36–50	84	University	243
51 +	17		

Source: Authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2021 elections in Kosovo demonstrate a significant change of party support in Kosovo. Table 2below shows that all traditional parties had a negative result, while the LDK suffered the biggest loss by the number of votes. These results showed that despite greater activity on social media and the way media was used during the campaign, none of these parties managed to retain the electorate of two years previously. The use of social media and the digitalization of the political communication process has led to the development of permanent

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7 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Migrimi Kosovar, Prill 2014, Available at: https://ask.rks-gov. net/media/1379/migrimi-kosovar-2014.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2wDB221kW4XdzzNaznpsTXhXILr- vo5NC-q0wjxp3S5a1QSojaWNGGfh3A (accessed 21 July 2022).

8 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Kosovanë Shifra 2021, Available at: https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6861/ kosova-n%C3%AB-shifra-2021.pdf (accessed 22 July 2022).

campaigns, an environment where voter behaviour is not only influenced by the official campaign, but also by the long-term effect of media and the permanent campaign through social media. Considering the 2021 elections in Kosovo, it seems that the traditional parties were unable to restore the loss of trust by the public, while the newcomer LVV did manage to benefit from the permanent campaign.

Table2. Results of Political Parties in 2019 and 2021 National Elections

	2019 election	2021 election
LDK	24.55 %	12.73 %
PDK	21.23 %	17.00 %
AAK	11. 50 %	7.12 %
NISMA	5 %	2.52 %
LVV	26.27%	50.27%

Source: Central Election Commission (CEC)

During the election campaign, voters were informed more on social media than on television, although in Kosovo television continues to be the most reliable media (Zeneli 2021, p.141). As shown in Figure 2, over 52% of respondents stated that they were informed mainly through social media, while only 28% of were informed through television.

Figure 2. Usage of TV and Facebook in the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo
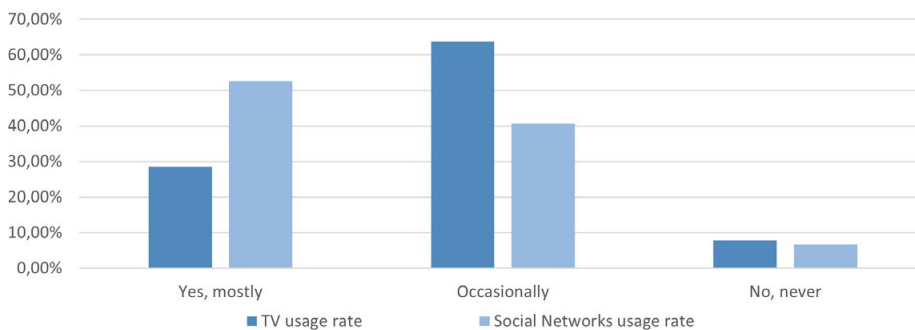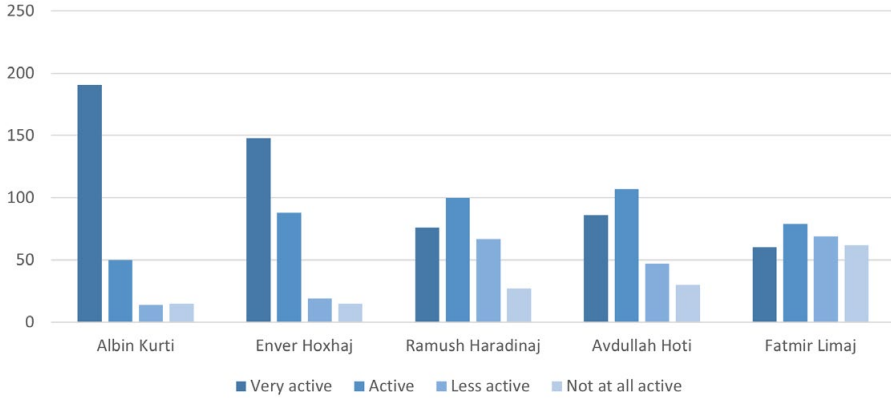

Source: Author

Facebook, as the most popular social media in the world, has the highest usage rate in Kosovo (Statista, 2021). This was confirmed by results of the survey, since 54% of respondents stated that they use this social media platform, which suggested political parties have focused their campaign mainly on Facebook. According to the respondents' perception, (see Figure 3) the most active candidates

on Facebook during the campaign were Albin Kurti (LVV), followed by Enver Hoxhaj (PDK), then Avdullah Hoti (LDK), Ramush Haradinaj (AAK), and finally Fatmir Limaj (NISMA).
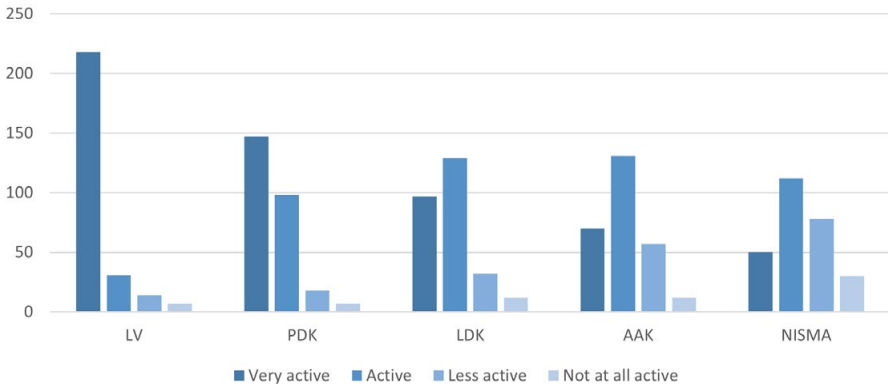
Figure 3. The most active political party leaders on Facebook during the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo

Source: Authors

Figure 4 shows the activity of the political parties.

Figure 4. The most active political parties on Facebook during the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo

Source: Authors

By contrast, the data processed from the Facebook accounts of each party's candidate shows a variation in the results, which can be explained by the high degree of interactivity (likes, comments and shares) by Albin Kurti over other candidates (see Table 3). This means that despite a smaller number of posts, each has appeared to more people through comments and shares, which has created the

impression of Albin Kurti having been the most active candidate during the campaign. Indeed, the most active candidate on Facebook was Avdullah Hoti (LDK), whom respondents ranked third most popular out of five candidates. Even in this case, the perception is related to the level of *interactivity*, for which Hoti was ranked lower than the two candidates before him (especially with the number of shares).

**Table 3. Interactivity of political party leaders on Facebook
during the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo**

Leader	Posts	Likes	Comments	Shares
Albin Kurti	23	Max. 34 k Min. 5	Max. 11 k Min. 386	Max. 1,8 k Min. 92
Enver Hoxhaj	79	Max. 10 k Min. 396	Max. 2,7 k Min. 33	Max. 512 Min. 13
Avdullah Hoti	141	Max. 8.4 k Min. 129	2,9 k 9	Max. 293 Min. 12
Ramush Haradinaj	71	Max. 9.4 k Min. 880	6,8 k 42	Max. 534 Min. 223

Source: Authors

Thus, the explanation of the discrepancy between the results of the research on activity and interactivity in social media, which correlates with the ranking of political entities from the results of the 2021 elections, supports the second hypothesis, which conditions their influence on voters with the ability of political parties to interact. In this context, there should be consideration that LVV is not only the first political party in Kosovo to have started using social media but has also benefitted from it more than other political parties.

The results of research on the use of media during the 2021 elections campaign show the same trend in the case of television. The Independent Media Commission Report, which included the monitoring of three channels with national coverage: the public broadcaster (RTK1) and the two commercial televisions (KTV and RTV21). The most frequent presence was the LDK, although in this election it was the biggest loser with only 12.73% of the vote. On the other hand, LVV which had the least presence on television (except for NISMA, which did not cross the 5% threshold in the election), by largely boycotting debates and avoiding interviews as shown in Table4, achieved the biggest victory with over 50% of the total vote. This means that even the level of television use did not have a significant impact on voters' decision on whom to vote, which supports the main hypothesis that during the campaign media did not play a decisive role due to the greater influence of the political context. However, here the context implies the dominant opinion in the public sphere, which is nevertheless a result of the long-term effect of media.

Table 4. TV usage by political parties during the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo

	RTK			KTV			RTV21		
	News	Debates	Interviews	News	Debates	Interviews	News	Debates	Interviews
LV	16.74	15.07	0	22.23	26.72	9.31	19.53	8.58	0
PDK	17.57	22.26	16.66	19.17	26.35	24.56	19.66	24.10	52.25
LDK	17.55	21.77	29.83	21.06	25.31	27.92	19.56	26.44	47.75
AAK	17.82	18.64	28.53	20.39	18.89	25.24	21.86	18.69	0
NISMA	15.25	17.08	24.98	17.15	2.73	12.97	19.39	9.58	0
Other political parties	15.1	6.2	0	0	0	0	0	12.7	0
Total	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**

Source: Independent Media Commission (Monitoring report –
Snap Parliamentary Election in Kosovo 2021)

Indeed, the campaign was conducted in under conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictive measures in force, such as the mask mandate or prohibition of gatherings with more than 50 people, and which were not complied with by political parties. This assessment is shared by most respondents, but also by most organizations that have monitored the election campaign, such as Democracy in Action (2021)—a civil society election monitoring coalition.

> Political parties kept organizing activities with a large number of citizens, ignoring the restrictions regarding the allowed number of participants. At the same time, non-compliance with physical distance and mask mandate rules has been evident in almost all monitored activities. (Democracy in Action (2021)

On the other hand, over 77% of respondents said that these measures were not complied with at all, while 20% of them think that political parties have partially complied with them.

This shows that political parties have not only been focused on the media campaign. In order to explore this, Facebook posts of the candidates and their political parties are categorized, according to the content: direct posts—messages inviting citizens to vote; indirect posts—informative messages related to candidates and their political parties; and in combined posts—both informative and vote mobilizing messages. Monitoring of Facebook activity shows a smaller number of direct posts compared to other categories, which means that the use of social media was focused on informing about activities rather than in mobilizing or persuading voters to vote for respective candidates and political parties (see Table 5).

Table 5. Each candidate's Facebook posts during the 2021
election campaign in Kosovo, according to content.

	Direct posts	Indirect posts	Combined posts
Enver Hoxhaj	19	38	5
Avdullah Hoti	9	48	3
Ramush Haradinaj	4	35	8
Albin Kurti	7	8	0

Source: Authors

However, despite the increase in activities in social media, largely dictated by the pandemic, the candidates' posts on Facebook were dominated by campaign related promotional content. Meanwhile, personalization of elections messages in social media dominated communication by campaign candidates (Fetoshi, 2016, p. 589–600). Research shows that citizens' voting patterns in election were predetermined. The survey results show that 83% of respondents stated that they had known prior to the campaign which party would gain their vote, which is indicative of the role of the political context in determining voters' behaviour.

Most respondents (44%) stated the political context (performance of political parties in the past) influenced their decision on the vote, while only 5.2% stated they have been influenced by media. Meanwhile, the image of the leader according to this poll, influenced the citizens' votes by 18.15% and the party program by 32.59 %.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of pre-determined voters (N=270) and factors influencing
the voting decision (%) during the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo

		What has determined your vote?				Total
		Political context	Leader	Media	Political party program	
9. Did you know before the campaign which party you are going to vote for?	YES	5.93%	1.85%	3.70%	4.82%	16.30%
	NO	38.15%	16.30%	1.48%	27,77%	83,70%
					Total	100%

Source: Authors

Even when crosschecking the data on audience of social media, television or on the basis of variables like residence, educational background or age, the results again display the context as the most influential factor for citizens' voting patterns. So, since LVV during the official campaign did not use the media more than other parties shows that the party managed to use them more effectively in a longer term through permanent campaigning.

In summary, the 2021 parliamentary elections in Kosovo were marked by the increased use of social media, which had a limited impact on voters' decision making due to the greater influence of the political context. Contemporary media, mainly television and social networks, were used mainly for promotional content, while personalization of messages was dominant in communication through social media. Despite the increase in activities in social media, the political context, specifically permanent campaigning, played the decisive role in determining voters' behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the role of media in the 2021 election campaign in Kosovo was minimal, as the political context determined the voters' choices. Social media did play a conditional role, in which long-term interactive communication was more influential than the official campaign. This showed that media have a greater impact when used for permanent campaigning and that public opinion is a decisive factor in the election results. In particular, the use of media during the election campaign did not reflect the performance of political parties competing for power. The votes in Kosovo in the 2021 election were pre-determined due to the context, which was primarily related to the citizens' accumulated dissatisfaction over years with the traditional political parties. A secondary correlation was the overthrow of the government led by LVV in autumn 2020—i.e., in the middle of the pandemic. Data on the use of media, both television and social media, showed that their roles during the election campaign were minimal. Although they were used more by parties other than LVV, this political party achieved the biggest victory in the history of national elections in Kosovo, confirming the main hypotheses of this article. This finding should not be understood as relativizing the role of the media in election campaigns. On the contrary, the media have gained even greater importance, but in the framework of the continuous transformations of election campaigns.

As Larsson (2016) observes in a quantitative study of the permanent campaign on Facebook, small political parties have managed to compensate their limited access to the mainstream media through the internet. The primary use of Facebook over other social media for communication with the public, combined with the political context explained above, favoured LVV in relation to the other parties in 2021 snap election in Kosovo. Voters were not affected by the image or quality of the campaign, as they voted to punish all parties that had governed in the past. However, the unexpected outcome was that for the first time in the parliamentary history of Kosovo, a single entity (since the successful Guxo candidates ran as a 'list' within the LVV) won over 50% of the vote. While many analysts

considered this outcome impossible due to the electoral system[9], the result confirms the hypothesis that voters are largely predetermined by the context of political developments and that official campaigns usually have minimal impact on undecided voters. The result showed that the use of media (traditional or digital) during the official campaign does not have a decisive role in election results, while the analysis of the survey data revealed that *political context* is the most influential factor in determining citizens' votes.

The result that citizens use more social media (52%) than traditional ones, confirms their greater impact through long-term interactive communication and supports the thesis of transforming the campaign in favour of a permanent campaign. As Bobbio (1987, p. 83) suggests, public opinion can have an impact on political reality only when the acts of anyone in supreme power are subject to public scrutiny, showing how visible, consistent, achievable and accountable they are. This means that no matter how good or expensive a party's campaign is, it will not have an electoral effect if it goes against the expectations of public opinion.

On the other hand, despite having been less active on Facebook than its political counterparts, LVV had greater interaction (likes and shares) with Facebook users. This result confirms the hypothesis of the conditional impact of social media on this election campaign. The discrepancy between the data obtained from monitoring and those of the survey regarding the degree of media use confirms the thesis of permanent campaigning due to new political communication platforms and reaffirms the theory of the long-term effects of media. In the circumstances of a public space overloaded with information, the political opinion of the majority has become a constant vector that changes more slowly as a result of consistency and consensus of the media.

Moreover, with the increasing use of social networks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, research has shown that they have not replaced face-to-face communication, which would have avoided violating restrictive measures by the candidates. Apart from monitoring organizations, respondents of the survey confirmed the non-compliance with anti-COVID-19 measures. This means that political parties were not focused on online campaigning, which is supported by the parties' Facebook accounts having had more informative posts about campaign activities than influential content seeking to persuade voters. These dynamics also impacted this research, primarily in relation to the sample size and because its socio demographic structure cannot be very clear due to the survey being online. These limitations notwithstanding, this paper can be useful as an attempt to explore the changing trend of election campaigns

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9 Kosovo has a proportional electoral system with open lists and only one constituency. Available at: http://old.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2010–256-eng.pdf (accessed 28 November 2021).

in the triangle between political actors, media, and the public. Therefore, in order to generalize the results of the research, future research on this topic should be aimed at including a larger number of respondents who represent the voters' structure as clearly as possible.

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What Does Google Opinion Rewards Require and Get from Users?

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Abstract: This article focuses on the mobile app called "Google Opinion Rewards" (GOR), which is used as a data collection tool in market research and academic research. Developed by Google Surveys, GOR deals with voluntary participation of app users in data sharing in return for rewards. In this context, a test account was created in the GOR app to analyze the surveys, the app sent to the account for a period of three years. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants from the USA, the UK and Turkey to gain comprehensive knowledge about the app ecosystem. The aim of the interviews was to understand the motivations of GOR users for using the app, and explore the counter-surveillance strategies users have developed to avoid surveillance. The findings indicate that most GOR users share their information recklessly even if they have security concerns and that users who are actively involved in surveillance, knowingly or unknowingly, and who want to maximise their income develop masking strategies against surveillance.

Keywords: communication; digital surveillance; counter-surveillance; data sharing; mobile apps.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, Matt Bryant, from Alphabet Inc.'s Google communications team, told Reuters they sent a Google Opinion Rewards (GOR) questionnaire to some users, asking them whether they had experienced flu-like symptoms in the past three days. Bryant explained the research was done at the request of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) researchers who aimed to forecast the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. Bryant also emphasized that the data obtained from the participants would be aggregated and anonymized (Dave, 2020). Roni

Rosenfeld, co-leader of the CMU Delphi research group and head of the Machine Learning Department, stated that coronavirus cases could thus be forecast a few weeks ahead. Rosenfeld pointed out that they were extremely grateful for the support they received from Facebook, Google and their other partners, and that the data they provided were "invaluable". He also stated that, when they were capable of starting predictions for the deadly epidemic, their self-confidence would increase thanks to these data (Carnegie Mellon University, 2020).

Rosenfeld's describing the data as "invaluable" and "trust-building" for third parties makes questionable both the qualities attributed to these data and the nature of free mobile apps that mediate the use and transfer of personal data to third parties. Developed by Google Surveys (GS), a product of Google LLC, GOR, which is a 'market research' app through which users earn Google Play Credits by answering short survey questions or receive payments via PayPal. The application (henceforth—app) has been downloaded by more than 100 million users from mobile app markets, and it is just one of the free apps available in both Google Play and Apple's Store (Statista, 2021). Although the app is free for users, it could be they are paying with their data, because data collection is tightly associated with monetization (Cecere et al., 2020). Some previous studies on this topic (Book & Wallach, 2015; Demotriou et al., 2016; Meng et al., 2016; Razaghpanah et al., 2018) suggest free mobile app developers sell the personal data of their users to third parties. Many studies on free mobile apps that result in personal data leakage, and are therefore security problems themselves, have focused primarily on data leakage and security threats (Zhou et al., 2011; Gibler et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2013; Ullah et al., 2014).

Another issue as that is just as important is that people *voluntarily* share with such apps their personal data, which they often avoid giving away, even to their closest relatives. In this context, this study aims to reveal GOR users' strategies for using the app and the main motives for voluntarily sharing their personal data with GOR in exchange for a reward, despite GOR carrying the risk of data leakage and invasion of privacy. In other words, the paper aimed to reveal the main motives for GOR users to behave like *app labourers* (iSlave, cf. Qui, 2014) serving Google products.

THEORY REVIEW

In today's information societies, monitoring, supervising and controlling the daily activities of people in order to measure the potential political, cultural and economic tendencies of people and manage market risks constitute a part of the capitalist entrepreneurial view. Sustaining the productivity and profitability of capitalist investments requires surveillance focused on personal data

(Lyon, 2001), and this results in mass collection and exploitation of personal data across various platforms. Zuboff (2019) asserts 'behavioral surplus' is obtained by surveillance capitalists seizing personal data.

In the twenty-first century, the increasing appetite for mass data collection generates a variety of opinions regarding the value attributed to these data. Data is the economy's new oil (Humby, 2006) or the currency of the internet economy (Gurria, 2008), which shows the significance of the value appraised to personal data. Zuboff (2019) disagrees in claiming that these nomenclatures are problematic as personal data are not mines but just exist in nature. Obviously, personal data exists in digital environments and communication technologies make it possible to keep it under surveillance and thus compete for it. Indeed, every new digital technological product is integrated into the existing surveillance technology. This dynamic activity introduces not only various types of, but also expands the scope of, surveillance (Lyon, 2001; 2007).

As individuals become dependent on communication technologies, digital surveillance reaches a critical highest level because individuals become subject to liquid surveillance (Bauman & Lyon 2013). Individuals can develop unique techniques to evade surveillance as they become more exposed to digital environments. Individuals, in their attempts to evade surveillance, are Marx (2003) claims, very inventive, which is manifest in various forms, particularly in digital realms. Indeed, individuals who devise evasive tactics invariably conduct counter-surveillance moves, which Burton (2007) argues are the processes of detecting and reducing scrutiny (Burton, 2007). Therefore, although digital environments serve as surveillance tools for governments and businesses, these tools also strengthen counter-surveillance capabilities (Kadivar, 2015).

Marx (2003) reveals that individuals have developed at least ten counter-surveillance strategies, of which the "blocking" and "masking" strategies. Individuals use these strategies to protect themselves from the possible negative consequences of activist movements such as political (Kornstein, 2019), citizen journalism (Ataman & Çoban, 2018) and video activism (Wilson, 2012), thereby reducing the negative effects of surveillance to the greatest extent possible.

On the other hand, when collecting large-scale personal data through mobile apps, users' awareness of the purpose for which their data is collected is minimal (Tay et al., 2021), and when installing a mobile app without detailed information or a partial acceptance option, users should only consent to third-party access (Karafiloski & Mishev, 2017). Even if mobile platforms such as Android warn users of the permissions requested by an app and trust that the user will make the right decision as to whether they should install the app, many users ignore the warning (Jorgensen et al., 2015). Users may also fail to understand the risks arising from the diversity of data kept in mobile devices, the use of multiple types of identifiers, the complex mobile app ecosystem, the limitations of app

developers, and the extended use of third-party software and services (Castelluccia et al., 2017). Thus, the assumption that users will understand the permissions requested before installing an app cannot go beyond wishful thinking (Jorgensen et al., 2015). At this point, Tay et al. (2021) argue inexperienced users who do not have sufficient information to comprehend and process the complexity of the permission and privacy information of an app, agree to install it intuitively without conducting a cost-benefit analysis (Tay et al., 2021). As users driven by their intuition become increasingly dependent for their daily activities and needs on mobile apps that record and store their personal data, not only do significant risks arise in terms of their security and privacy, but also they become the target of third parties (Arp et al., 2017; Polykalas & Prezerakos, 2019).

What is the role of users who are too lazy to evaluate the abovementioned risks from their own perspective and those who do not comprehend these risks adequately and, therefore, make intuitive decisions? Wenz et al. (2019) respond that "[t]hey have both active and passive roles". In this sense, users play an active role in this process while performing actions such as taking photos or responding to survey questions. The point to note here is that users have direct control over these actions. However, Bluetooth linkage to external device and GPS running in the background make the users passive and their control is minimized. Furthermore, although users may encounter privacy concerns (Jung et al., 2015; Ham, 2016; Segijn et al., 2021), most are not willing to fulfil the requirements of this concern[1]. This indifference, which is called the privacy paradox (Barnes, 2006; Kokolakis, 2017) has proven to be extremely common among mobile phone users (Zhou, et al., 2011; Shklovski et al., 2014; Taddicken, 2014; Gerber et al., 2018; Han et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2019; Afolabi et al., 2020). Indeed, even if they have serious privacy concerns, users become involved in surveillance by submitting their data to continue using the app and thus they destroy their privacy rights themselves (Bauman & Lyon, 2013). Most of the users who believe that this is the price for getting a "free" app will not see any issue in paying unless there is a negative outcome (Shklovski, et al., 2014; Book & Wallach, 2015; Meng, et al., 2016).

The prerequisite that makes users consent to such an arrangement is that it is not a paid-for app. In this sense, free apps have three possible solo or combined monetization in-app strategies: (i) advertising; (ii) purchases; and (iii) users' personal data. While in-app ads are mostly used by apps downloaded fewer than 100 million times, those downloaded more than 100 million times mostly

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[1] These requirements largely consist of paying attention to the access permissions of the app and reading the privacy policies and terms of service. However, the freedom to grant or deny access permissions is frequently not in the hands of the user because it is impossible to use many functions of the app without these permissions. Furthermore, the lengthy privacy policies and terms of service make them difficult to read and are often overlooked by users.

earn their revenues by selling personal data (Cecere et al., 2020). Various studies reveal that GOR and similar free mobile apps demand more access to personal data than paid apps (Hyrynsalmi et al., 2012; Leontiadis et al., 2012; Polykalas & Prezerakos, 2019), which strongly suggests that the business model of free mobile apps is based on personal data abuse: "When the mobile app is free, the product is your personal data" (Meng, et al., 2016; Polykalas & Prezerakos, 2019).

This is the case for GOR, which is an online survey app. Users answer questions on the mobile platform in return for credits for books, music, and apps, and they answer demographic questions when they initially download the app (Kanyadan & Ganti, 2019; Hogan et al., 2020). At this point, in the only study directly dealing with GOR, Fernandes and Oliviera (2020) found that the app collects users' personal data and earns money by sharing this data with advertisers, and this data can include information such as the user's device, location, search history and app usage. Users provide this data to Google by responding to surveys and are paid in return. However, this payment may be below the actual value of the user's data. In this study, we look at the GOR app from the users' points-of-view. Therefore, the questions this study seeks to answer are as follows:

- RQ1: What are users' GOR usage strategies?
- RQ2: What are users' biases and attitudes regarding GOR?
- RQ3: What are the primary motivations of GOR users to voluntarily share their personal data with GOR in exchange for a reward?

METHODOLOGY

This study, which aims to reveal GOR users' strategies for using the app and their main motivations for voluntarily sharing their personal data with GOR in exchange for a reward, utilized a phenomenology design, which is a qualitative research method. The design that focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of (Groenewald, 2004), is suitable for qualitative research because it aims to understand individuals' lived experiences and how they experience a particular phenomenon. Therefore, this design is particularly useful when it comes to gaining insights into subjective experiences (Donalek, 2004). There were three reasons for choosing the phenomenological approach as a qualitative research design and the in-depth interview method as a data collection method. First, it supports document analysis, and secondly it can reveal the details or problems that lie in the depths of the cases compared to quantitative studies, and thirdly it allows us to look at these cases from a multi-faceted perspective.

We started to form the data set of the article by creating an individual test account for GOR and storing the survey questions sent to us by the app as of 2017.

For three years 2017–2020, we answered the survey questions, took screenshots of them, and obtained a total of 150 surveys. We mapped the surveys, analysing the questions and their options. Afterwards, we conducted document analysis by combining the surveys sent to us and the screenshots of surveys shared by GOR users on Reddit, categorizing the intended use of these surveys. Finally, by diversifying the data collection method, we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 GOR users between the ages of 18 and 37 years, who used the GOR mobile app and reside in three countries (USA, UK, and Turkey). The prerequisite for us to select the participants for the in-depth interview was that they actively used GOR and shared the screenshots of surveys in Reddit.

In this context, criterion sampling was used to identify participants, which is extremely useful when specific cases are purposively sampled based on prede-termined criteria (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 248). Via direct messages in Reddit, we asked users whether they would volunteer for an interview and out of 126 messages, there were 17 responses. We excluded users under the age of 18 years. Discovering that the comments made during the interviews were repeated—a clear sign of data saturation—we limited the number of the participants to 12 (4 participants from each of the three countries). Before starting the interviews, participants were informed about the subject and purpose of the study and were informed that their personal data would be kept confidential and that they could terminate the interview at any time.

Interviews with users were conducted on Discord which is instant messaging app. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. All conversations that occurred during the interviews including those that were outside the scope of the study were first written in the interview form. These written data were then transferred to the NVivo 11 program, which facilitates the creation of categories related to the research topic for the researcher. Three main themes were iden-tified, consisting of (i) the users' strategies to use GOR, (ii) their motivation to share their personal data on the app, and (iii) privacy concerns about their usage data. Analyses were carried out on these three main themes.

FINDINGS

After the GOR app was installed on the smartphone, we were welcomed by the survey trainer and the first survey started. The app warned us that the first survey was a paradigm of the types of surveys that would be sent and that there was no reward. Moreover, the app asked us to give true answers to the questions as the answers would determine whether we would be approved for receiving more surveys. The app then asked us to turn on the location history of the smartphone. Location history records the places smartphone owners travel

to with their devices even when they are not using any Google services. If location history is switched on, surveys about the places visited are sent. The app, thus had the prerequisite data for displaying personalized ads to users (Shoaibi & Rassan, 2012; Bauer & Strauss, 2016) because location share gives marketers an advantage in offering personalized ads to their customers. Afterwards, we were asked to approve the GOR Terms of Service (the screenshot of this section could not be stored due to the security policy), and the app informed us that we accepted the Google Payments Terms of Service by using the app.

USERS' STRATEGIES

When we evaluated the first survey of GOR, we found that the app measures the user's attention, and that answers to the questions establish the basis for surveys that will be sent later: The survey trainer measures the level of attention by first asking a control question and then proceeds to demographic questions involving languages spoken, age range and gender, the survey closes with a question of interest. Based on these data, GOR gradually gets to know the user and follows the paths opened by the data to show them more relevant surveys.

Every time the app sends a survey question to a user, it specifies the purposes for which the survey can be used and asks for the approval of the user. These purposes are as follows: (a) showing users more relevant surveys (providing new surveys based on demographics and interests); (b) showing more relevant ads (displaying personalized ads based on data obtained); (c) sharing data with the research organisation paying for the e-survey (ROPES), which targeted both GOR and GS plus selling collected data to the ROPES); and (iv) developing Google products by asking questions about Google products or the Google company.

Table 1 shows the categories we created by the thematic analysis of the data we obtained from in-depth interviews with the GOR users who shared on Reddit:

Table 1. Categorical coding of qualitative data in the interviews (N=56) ranked by frequency.

Category	Code	N
Location	My location history is on	13
Demographic	Gender and age	9
Area of interest	Sports I do	7
Purchasing behaviour	To display advertising	7
Psychological	Stress, anxiety	5
Google identification	Google Chrome, Google Maps	4
Political	Political trend	3
Health	Covid-19	3
Control question	You must answer correctly	3
Cultural	Reliance	2

The category frequency of the surveys sent to us and the ratio of these categories to the survey questions are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of categories in all the surveys (N=150) ranked by proportion (%).

Category	N	Proportion (%)
Location	61	40,67
Demographic	45	30,00
Area of interest	31	20,67
Purchasing behaviour	7	4,66
Google identification	3	2,00
Psychological	3	2,00
Control question*	1*	-

* not included in the calculation of N

Regarding the working principle of the app, we thought that GOR, after receiving the answers given to the demographic questions, was unlikely to ask such questions again. We were wrong, as the app continued to ask them. This was true not only for demographic questions, but also for the other categories such as "interests":

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Primary Survey Questions (N=150).

Primary survey questions	Category	Frequency (N)	Incidence of appearance in all 150 surveys (%)
Which of the following places have you visited recently?	Location	61	40,67
Which of the following sports do you watch?	Area of interest	24	16,00
Do you work in one of the following sectors?	Demographic	11	7,33
Which of the following categories best describes your job situation?	Demographic	10	6,67
Which of the following sports do you do?	Area of interest	7	4,67
Which of the methods of electricity generation for residential use do you know?	Purchasing behaviour	7	4,66
Are you a parent of a child who lives in the same house?	Demographic	7	4,67
What's your marital status?	Demographic	6	4,00
Is your house rented or owned by you?	Demographic	6	4,00
Are you currently a university student?	Demographic	5	3,33
Which of the following Google products have you used in the last 30 days?	Google identification	3	2,00
How many hours did you sleep each night on average last week?	Psychological	3	2,00
Which of the following are continents? *	Control question	1*	

* not included in the calculation of N

We can assume that GOR did so because the ROPES had set a long time frame for the duration of the survey, which could mean that the survey sent to the user can be repeated. In addition, we believe that GOR may be repeating the questions to enable its users to sustain their continuity and motivation because the alternative is dire for the app. An absence of surveys means there no user responses for the ROPES to audit and thus no new surveys to be sent to the user.

As for questions about location, we noticed that the app identified almost all the places we visited. The day after any store visit, we were subjected to questions regarding the precise location, such as: "Which store/brand did you visit?"; "When did you visit it?"; and "How did you pay?". At this point, we assume that credit card payment behaviour might be shared with credit card companies or ROPES paying for the user's current location:

> The day after I visit a store, they send a survey. Mostly, they send the questions of "Which store have you been to at most?", "When did you go there?", and "How did you make your payment?". You meet someone… It's kind of starting to learn things about you. "What are your likes?", "What sports do you do?", or "Do you do your shopping in cash?" Do you use a credit card? By learning them, it's capturing your data – and in a way, capturing you. (P12. TUR).

Given that GOR is a market research app, it is normal that it asks users questions to get to know them. However, receiving money or rewards in this trade also appears to reveal an employee-employer relationship. In some of Google's products (e.g., YouTube), consumers are referred to as "partners," but there is no similar declaration in GOR. Users create an implicit employee-employer relationship without any employment contract with GOR and generate added value in favour of Google, which shows us that users are exposed to exploitation of "immaterial labour"[2].

Parallel to exploring the demands that GOR makes from users and how it wants to get to know/identify them, we categorized and mapped the surveys sent to us as primary questions and their subcategories (See Figure 2). We noticed that, while many of the 150 survey questions were asked in the same way, some questions were asked in a way close to each other; even in some of them only the placing of some words were different. The findings from the in-depth interviews revealed that three participants expressed discomfort with being asked the same questions repeatedly:

> *It's like being called a liar and it bothers me. (P1. USA).*
> *Asking the same question persistently bothers me after a while. Even if I'm lying it's uncomfortable for him to hit me in the face. (P6. UK).*
> *I think GOR is testing whether I am honest or not. It measures whether I've given true answers to the questions, and whether my answers to the same questions asked at different times are consistent. It can't be so difficult for them to keep this data. (P10. TUR).*

Asking the same questions over and over to evaluate the users' behavior and discover the sort of attitude they might build in response is another aspect of behavioral surplus. The study of personal behaviour enables the forecasting of users' conduct, thus providing unique preliminary information for a prospective. A key finding from the interviews was that the more detailed the questions are in the surveys, the greater are the rewards, so that as one user states rather than giving the true answer, they may give deceitful answers in order to get follow-up questions:

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2 Immaterial labour encompasses tasks that are not generally considered employment (Lazzarato, 1996). New types of work have evolved in today's information society, and the workers who do these forms of labour, namely the labour of users, are exploited. People who spend time on digital platforms typically provide added value through their actions to organizations having these platforms. Given GOR users' relationship with the app, it would not be incorrect to suggest a substantially greater amount of labour exploitation.

The longer and more detailed the survey, the greater the reward. You cannot earn much money from the surveys that you've completed quickly. For example, if you answer "no" when asked "Do you play football?", the survey ends there, and you earn a tiny amount of reward. Say, if I earned a similar amount of reward each time I fill out a survey, I would tell the truth; I wouldn't extend the survey. More precisely, I wouldn't bother to extend it. If my reason for filling out a questionnaire is to earn a reward, it's normal for me to take advantage of every opportunity. (P9. TUR).

Associations between Survey Questions, Categories, and Purposes of Use

We continued our analysis by examining the linear associations between GOR's purposes of use of survey questions, the categories we obtained from in-depth interviews, and the survey questions sent to us. We determined that some survey questions have more than one purpose of use, and that they were included in more than one category. Figure 1 shows all the questions (in categories and subcategories) sent to us:

Figure 1. Associations of Survey Questions Sent to us in terms of Categories and Purposes of Use.
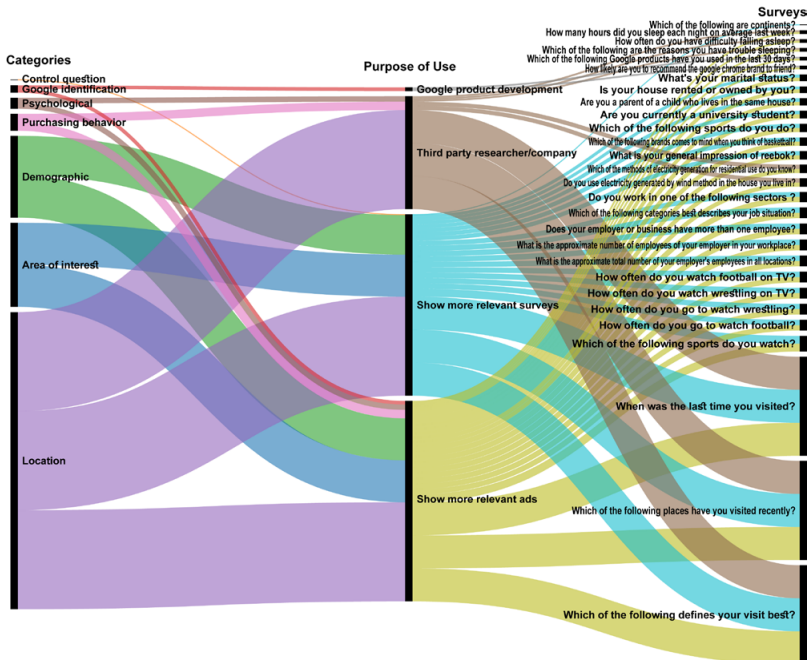
As shown in Figure 1, the category of "location" was associated with three purposes of use, while the questions regarding "interests" and "demography"

were associated with two purposes of use: It is evident that "location", "interests", and "demography" are the most convenient data collection categories for GOR. Among the demographic questions, the ones regarding age, gender, and marital status range are used to send more frequent and relevant surveys. The statement provided by one of the interviewees also corroborates this finding:

> *A few days after questioning my marital status, it learnt if I have a child, too. Since I don't have a child, certainly, it'll no longer show me any ads for diapers or ask a question about it. (P7. UK).*

Via Reddit and in-depth interviews, we found out that the questions in GOR surveys are not limited to those sent to us; on the contrary, they are asked in many ways and the variety of survey questions is constantly increasing:

Figure 2. Associations of Surveys Collected by Reddit and In-depth Interviews as well as Surveys Sent to Us in terms of Categories and Purposes of Use.
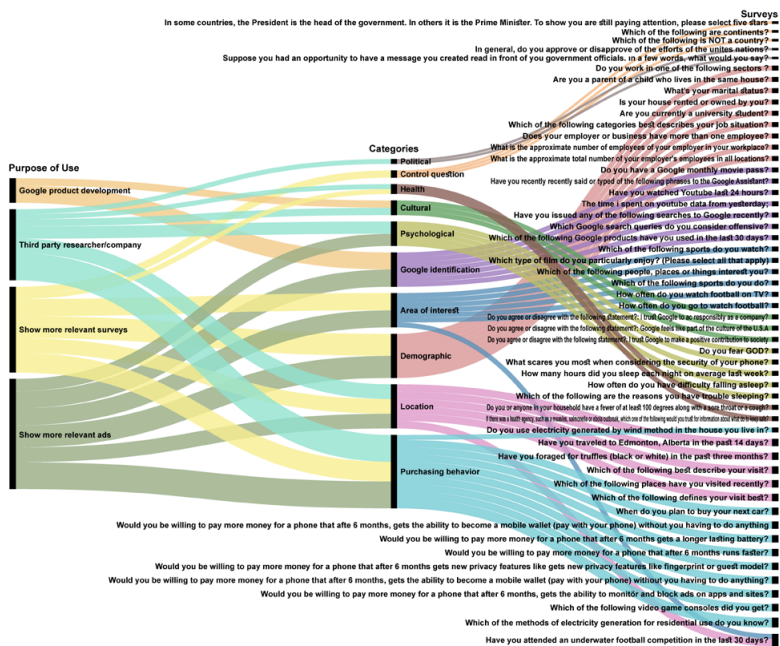
As shown in Figure 2, there are also categories (culture, health and political) not included in Figure 1. While the category of "purchasing behaviour" is associated with two purposes of use in Figure 1, it is associated with three purposes of use in Figure 2. In addition, with the increase in the questions associated with the category of "purchasing behaviour", its association with the purpose of use also diversified. There was also a rise in the questions regarding "location" and these questions were asked more specifically (Have you travelled to Edmonton,

Alberta in the last 14 days?). Similar to the questions regarding "purchasing" and "location", both the questions about "interests" and the variety of questions saw an increase. One of the differences at this point is that the question about "location" is associated with the relevant field (Have you attended an under-water football competition in the last 30 days?). Another remarkable question is "Are you afraid of God?", which we placed in the category of "psychological". Participants were asked to share their views about this question. Three participants stated that they had not encountered it, and yet if such a question were asked, they would not find it odd:

> *I think human psychology plays a role on whether someone will do shopping. If a person is afraid of God, he is generally a believer. If companies know you're a believer, this will strengthen their hand. (P3. USA).*
> *Whether you believe in God or not can affect some dynamics in human life, which must be the main reason why this question is asked. (P8. UK).*
> *OK, this question hasn't been asked OF me, but I wouldn't say "How dare they ask such a private question?". Nobody gives anything to anyone for free. If you don't want to answer it, you can just skip the question or ignore it. (P11. TUR).*

In essence, GOR's sole trump card is the reward that allows its users to reveal even the most private or deepest secrets; in addition to the data it gets through its hundreds of apps, Google acquires far more distilled information – even if this data is manipulated, they are significant for Google – in return for very small rewards.

MOTIVATIONS OF USERS TO SHARE THEIR PERSONAL DATA ON GOR

Bauman and Lyon (2013) note that we destroy our privacy rights voluntarily, or perhaps just consent to the loss of privacy as a price to be paid in exchange for the appealing elements offered to us. For them, only a few resilient people who do not act with herd mentality can make a sincere attempt against the app logic. As revealed in the in-depth interviews, it was clear that two participants were indifferent to sharing their personal data to win varying amounts of prizes.

> *I've handed over all my information for $20 in 5 months. Am I regretful? Of course not! (P5. UK).*
> *I made 50 TL (about $4) in a year. Considering that it took me 12 or 13 seconds to fill out a survey, it sounds like a good deal to me. (P11. TUR).*
> *Now that my data is useless, I think it's a nice trade-off to get paid apps for free. If I come across an app that pays money directly, I can give all my information and fill out a survey. (P12. TUR).*

PRIVACY CONCERNS OF GOR USERS

Based on our in-depth interviews and our findings on the importance of demographic questions, we asked the participants "Do the questions about your demographic data asked by GOR raise any privacy concerns for you?". The participants' views, as captured in the in-depth interviews, corroborate the notion that although they have privacy concerns, one Turkish and one UK participant have not developed a defense against the current privacy violation:

> *Privacy? According to whom? To me, there is no such thing as privacy. They even know where I live… If Google were my next-door neighbour, I guess it wouldn't have that much information. (P8. UK).*
> *This makes me worried about privacy, that's for sure. But since you first started using a smartphone, they've been storing almost all your data. Let's say, I didn't use this app; I use Gmail, I use Chrome, I use Google Maps. Even if I get concerned, I realize it is an unwarranted worry. (P9. TUR).*

As the preceding statements demonstrate, people who use Google and its products have the misconception that, if they use any Google product, their information has already been collected, and that it is useless to take measures to prevent any app they use from accessing it.

According to the findings from the in-depth interviews, two participants who think Google cannot be cheated believe that this will be noticed in the future, and after a while, the app will stop sending surveys. This attitude of the participants provides a summary of the idea that Google surveillance cannot be resisted. It is also evident that the barrier to resistance to surveillance is the outcome of accustoming people to personal data extortion and invasion through a kind of combination of helplessness and surrender, as Zuboff (2019) put it in the "Cycle of Dispossession"[3]:

> *You can't cheat Google. Like it doesn't know who you are. At least, it knows your age range. (P4. USA).*
> *I don't think Google can be tricked. First of all, the operating system used belongs to Google. It has an app market and also hundreds of apps. I search in Chrome… I use Google Maps… Many apps that are integrated with each other. (…) you'll get caught out finally. (P5. UK).*

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3 Dispossession, according to Zuboff, imposes a new kind of control over people, masses, and society. As the corporation learnt how to counter and transform public resistance as a necessary prerequisite for the protection and expansion of its behavioural surplus franchise, the theory and practice of dispossession were developed and perfected.

On the other hand, masking themselves is the only anti-surveillance strategy for the users who voluntarily download the GOR app and are actively involved in surveillance—wittingly or unwittingly. Blocking and masking moves are common especially in communicative surveillance. By blocking, subjects seek to make communication physically inaccessible or useless (Marx, 2003); however, masking is more widely used in volunteer surveillance. Another reason why users are not concerned with the surveillance in this system, in which they voluntarily engage, may be because they believe they are masking and hiding themselves.

In this context, one interviewee thinks that GOR can be manipulated in order to win more prizes. Immediately after installing the app, users set up their demographic information in such a way they can receive more survey questions, which shows that users develop a strategy unwittingly to evade surveillance by masking themselves:

> *This app can be tricked sometimes. Some of my friends are trying to be someone the app wants; more precisely, they give deceitful information and try to get more follow-up surveys. For example, while installing the app, he signs up as a young female… He acts as if he had a high income, someone constantly shopping… Because he believes he will get more surveys if he acts like that. (P9. TUR).*

DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss the analytical perspectives of our approach and evaluate the results. Our first aim was to analyse GOR's initial survey. Our analysis showed that the first survey set the ground for subsequent survey questions. However, based on the data obtained from the participants, the striking aspect was that the app contains a system which is vulnerable to manipulation in terms of demographic data. There is a variety of information in Reddit showing how the GOR app can be tricked. Basically, participants agree that when they provide misleading demographic information, they can get more survey questions and, as a result, they can earn more rewards. Furthermore, users who wish to maximize their revenues in GOR unwittingly utilize a counter-surveillance tactic, masking themselves to prevent surveillance.

Google provides ROPES that use the GS product with the option of collecting data by targeting GOR while creating a survey (Google Surveys Help, 2021). The demographics of the users targeted by using GOR can be determined in line with the sample of the researchers; demographic metrics such as country-region (the countries that can be targeted with GOR as of 2020 are Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Holland, UK, and the USA), language,

age, and gender can be used to narrow down the targeting. In addition, on the website of Google Surveys Help (2020), GOR's target audience is defined as users who tend to use technology more and are more likely to be young and male. There expected sampling biases such as, in comparison to the general population, GOR users are described as highly educated, physically active, less likely to own a home and visit a doctor, and more likely to own or use a DVR or video-on-demand. However, it is controversial to what extent this demographic information is provided truly or completely by the users.

This is a possibility even for our interviewees. Therefore, in addition to demographic information, it is unclear to what extent the answers given to the survey questions reflect reality. Moreover, information on the GS website indicating that GOR users are well-educated in comparison to the general public contradicts concerns about privacy and the low amounts of rewards. From another perspective, as previously indicated, users deceive the program by presenting themselves as highly educated suggests that the expected user profiles of GS are unfounded.

When we analysed GOR's survey questions and answers, we found some findings about the repetition of several questions. Although asking the same questions at different times is a strategy to detect changes in the general opinion of the public over time (Pew Research Center, 2021), we believe that this may be due to GOR's intention to confirm previous answers given to survey questions. Alternatively, it could be an experimental development process for machine learning or artificial intelligence. In addition, we found some findings that the repetition of questions puts pressure on users loyal to the app, which can create a feeling of a control mechanism on the users that is mostly unnoticeable.

On the other hand, the aspect that the questions in GOR are brief and relatively easy to answer indicates that they are in accord with GOR's short survey policy, and that they can motivate the user with shorter and more frequent surveys. One can assert that placing "I don't want to answer" and similar responses among the options of almost all the survey questions is nothing more than an effort to give the impression that GOR cares about the privacy of its users. Especially, as we know that GOR is aware that the user knows the survey will end if they chose this response. In addition, one must bear in mind that users' refraining from answering questions creates data for Google as well. The existence of branding strategies included in the answers to the survey questions is not surprising at all, considering that GOR is basically built on the strategy of getting to know and identifying the user.

Our second aim was to examine the association between survey categories and purposes of use. We noticed that the questions in the category of location were frequently asked. The aspect we found intriguing is that, although Google mostly knows the user's location precisely, it still asked "Which store did you visit?" and "When did you visit there?". The reason why GOR is asking these

questions is a means to ask the real question. The data GOR is interested in is the answer to the question "How did you make the payment?", which is under the category of "location". This is because GOR mostly does not need passive data collection methods to learn offline purchasing behaviour and decision-making mechanisms of the user. In addition, it is evident that demographic data, which includes age-gender, marital status, income status, parental status, and the user's residence information, is one of the most influential data categories delivered to GOR in terms of determining which ads will be displayed to the user. Considering the classification of people as targets and garbage while setting user profiles (Turow, 2011), demographic questions become more important.

Like recent studies (Benndorf & Normann, 2018; Winegar & Sunstein, 2019; Alfnes & Wasenden, 2022; Prince & Wallsten, 2022), we found that users exhibit a heterogeneous image in terms of willingness to sell their personal data for a certain reward. However, it is worth remembering again that the people who appear to have sold their personal data are users who can manipulate GOR to earn more rewards. We observed that the main problem likely to be experienced in transferring data to third-party ROPES as an intended use is the ambiguous attitude of users in answering the survey questions. Therefore, this is likely to pose a problem for the reliability of the data obtained by the ROPES.

In particular, the data regarding the trueness and certainty of the answers to the survey questions is a preliminary indicator of the complexity that can be encountered in displaying personalized advertisements and obtaining data for academic researches. Because GOR has not only been used for market research but also in many academic studies as a data collection tool (Sell, Goldberg & Conron, 2015; Harbach et al., 2016; Cornesse & Bosnjak, 2018; Ruktanonchai et al., 2018; Kanyadan & Ganti, 2019; Hogan et al., 2020). Participants in all these studies were rewarded with Google Play credits that they could spend in the Google Play Store. Considering that research on the coronavirus and other potential epidemic diseases can be carried out in the field of health in the future by targeting GOR users, it will once again become controversial over whether the data to be obtained is reliable owing to GOR users' application of masking as a counter-surveillance strategy.

Even if there appear to be no negative impacts on the surveillance mechanism's functionality (mobile apps are the very embodiment of this "surveillance mechanism"), the information obtained because of masking may be misleading or worthless, and it is likely that the authorities in charge of surveillance are not even aware of this (Marx, 2003). Therefore, in such mobile apps that may be developed in the future, the operation of a fairer and more reliable ecosystem in terms of voluntary data sharing by users will be developed. This will enable both the researchers who collect data and the users who will share their personal data to obtain a mutual benefit. In this context, while a privacy policy alone may

not be sufficient to address all consumer privacy concerns, it plays a crucial role in communicating with consumers and establishing accountability within an organization. By publicly disclosing its data practices, an organization can start to develop trust with consumers. Additionally, when a privacy policy is accessible through the app store, users can evaluate an app's privacy practices before deciding to download or buy it. Furthermore, a comprehensive privacy policy enables the FTC and State Attorneys General to enforce the commitments that apps make to consumers (Future of Privacy Forum, 2016).

The notion is believable that GOR users serve as app labourers who work for Google, handing over their personal data to its brand value and products recklessly in return for relatively low amounts of rewards. We are of the opinion that the most important cause for this is the more legal creation of surveillance in digital environments, and that the exploitation of "immaterial labor", which has been on the agenda in recent years, particularly in the digital area, is becoming more widespread.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to analyse the working mechanisms of the GOR mobile app, investigate the voluntary data sharing of app users, and to discover how the users utilize the app. The design of the GOR mobile app as a data storage application in return for a reward has been a reference for us in understanding the basic dynamics of mobile app users' sharing their data willingly in return for a reward.

Based on the basic working principles of GOR and the findings we obtained from the research results throughout the study, we determined that the data collected by mobile apps and shared willingly were used in academic research and market studies by third party ROPES researchers organisation paying for the e-survey. It can be argued that the use of GOR is a free action depending on the willpower of users. However, given that these data will be used to display personalized advertising to users or considering the purposes of use stated above, it is essential to conduct more comprehensive studies focusing on counter-surveillance strategies employed by users as well as mobile apps. There is amongst mobile apps an increasing manifestation of data abuse, not only because the attraction of winning awards is a driving force that directs the user to such apps, but also because it is challenging to decline to use these and similar technological products.

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Big Data Techniques to Study the Impact of Gender-Based Violence in the Spanish News Media

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Abstract: Despite being an underreported topic in the news media, gender-based violence (GBV) undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. Research has studied many of the factors that generate or maintain this kind of violence. However, the influence of the media is still uncertain. This paper used Big Data techniques to explore how GBV is depicted and reported in digital news media. By feeding neural networks with news, the topic information associated with each article can be recovered. Our findings show a relationship between GBV news and public awareness, the effect of well-known GBV cases, and the intrinsic thematic relationship of GBV news with *justice* themes.

Keywords: Big Data; domestic violence; gender-based violence; media; news.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is directly related at an individual based on their biological sex or gender identity (Heise et al., 2002; Violenciagenero (2019) and includes verbal, physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, occurring in either public or private life. All genders globally experience GBV, but women are disproportionately harmed (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; UN Women, 2021; WHO, 2013).

Despite its prevalence, the media largely misreport GBV (Boyle, 2005; Cullen et al., 2019; Moorti, 2002). Recently, the voices of victims, survivors and activists have once again put the spotlight on the issue and raised public awareness by the media through movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Niunamenos, #NotOneMore, #BalanceTonPorc (Alexander, 2006; Luengo, 2018).

News media are key to understanding how society and the general population react to a topic (Cullen et al., 2019; Dijk, 1995). News can influence public perceptions and consequently, social policies (Carlyle et al., 2008; Cullen et al., 2019; Gillespie et al., 2013; Maydell, 2018), which is the case with GBV with news media being one of the main sources of information. Media may report available help resources added to the piece of news (Comas-d'Argermir, 2015). In Spain, where more than a thousand women have been killed in the last two decades (Menéndez, 2014; Teruelo, 2011), many notorious cases have attracted media attention as never before. For instance, The Manada [wolf pack] case (see News Desk (2019) – a group sexual assault in 2016 that lead to a series of protests across the country. This event (and its corresponding social, juridic and public response) motivated us to study the reporting of GBV news in Spain (LSE, 2020) utilizing Big Data analysis techniques.

Big Data is a novel tool for examining the reporting of GBV in digital media. Moreover, its applications might be used in the future to prevent this kind of violence through the news media. Also, this method could be used for the study and research of other social problems.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence is a pervasive global issue that affects the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims, particularly women and girls. GBV is "violence that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender or sex and includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty" (UN Women, 2012). While GBV can result in physical injuries, psychological trauma, and long-term health consequences (WHO, 2013) of individuals, it also has social and economic costs, including reduced productivity, increased healthcare expenses, and decreased educational attainment (Heise et al., 2019). Research has explored numerous factors to understand the causes and drivers of GBV, including cultural and social norms, economic inequality, and political instability (Heise et al., 2019; Jewkes et al., 2017). However, the role of the media in perpetuating or challenging GBV is still uncertain. Research suggests that media representations of GBV can have significant effects on public attitudes and understanding of the issue (Baker & Ascione, 1995; DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). However, the nature

and extent of the influence of media on GBV is not well understood. Research on the media coverage of violence against women has shown that it is often characterized by various patterns of problematic reporting (Boyle, 2005; Cuklanz, 2014). One common issue is the use of victim-blaming language and framing (Moorti, 2002; Wong & Lee, 2018). News media may focus on the victim's behavior or clothing as a cause of the violence, rather than the perpetrator's actions (Howe, 1997). This approach shifts the responsibility for the violence onto the victim and reinforces harmful stereotypes about women's behavior and responsibility for their own safety. Another point is the sensationalizing of violence against women, which can result in graphic and voyeuristic depictions of violence that can further traumatize victims and reinforce harmful stereotypes about women's vulnerability. The use of sensationalist headlines and images can also trivialize the seriousness of the issue and lead to a lack of public engagement (Tranchese & Zollo, 2013). Furthermore, the media often fail to provide context and information about the social and cultural factors that contribute to violence against women. For example, the role of patriarchal beliefs and gender inequality in perpetuating violence against women may be downplayed or ignored (Rollè et al., 2020; Sutherland et al., 2019). In addition, the media may present a narrow and limited view of the aspects that constitute violence against women, with a focus on physical violence rather than other forms of abuse, such as emotional or economic abuse (Easteal et al., 2018). Recent advances in technology and the availability of Big Data have provided an opportunity to explore the manner the media depict and report GBV. By analyzing large datasets of digital news articles, it is possible to gain insights into the ways in which GBV is represented and reported, as well as the factors that shape these representations. This paper aims to use big data techniques to explore the role of the media in perpetuating or challenging GBV. By feeding neural networks with the contents of digital news articles, we recover the topic information associated with each article and analyze the representations of GBV.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

DATASET EXTRACTION PROCESS

We used a Big Data technique called 'web scraping' to extract a great amount of news from the main Spanish online newspapers. This technique requires a group of servers querying massive quantities of data from public pages on the Internet.

We deployed a network of cloud servers and a local server to break up the load of the work. One of the servers stored data and the others searched the Internet for news items of the seven selected Spanish online newspapers— *La Vanguardia,*

El País, El Mundo, ABC, 20minutos, Público and *diario.es*. A local server first trained the neural networks to classify the subjects in the news, and secondly analyzed the full database and by using neural network models, calculated the probability that each news item had of covering the subject of GBV.

This process resulted in a dataset of 784 259 news items from January 2005 to March 2020. Online news media classify every piece of news with tags, which are keywords helping to describe the text and allows search functions to find the tag. Tags are not only descriptive of topics like justice, economy, politics, international, technology and health but also combinations of several data, such as media outlet, title, content, and date.

DATA MINING USING NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING

Natural language processing (NLP) is a subfield of Artificial Intelligence concerned with the interactions between computers and human language, in particular how to program computers to process and analyze large amounts of natural language data. Its goal is to build algorithms capable of understanding the contents of documents, including the contextual nuances of the language within them. The technique can then accurately extract information and insights contained in the documents as well as categorize and organize them.

After the data extraction process using web scraping, we used NLP (Chapman et al., 2011) to analyze local news articles from the selected Spanish online media. Natural language processing consists of a type of data analysis focused on transforming free text (i.e. unstructured data) in documents and databases into normalized, structured data suitable for analysis (Coppersmith et al., 2018; Farzindar & Inkpen, 2017; Mori & Haruno, 2021; Goldberg, 2017). This process enabled us to classify the news. To obtain the main subjects of written media content, we used neural networks (Mikolov, 2017; Goldberg, 2017). Neural networks, with an accuracy of 98%, were also used to obtain news topics related to GBV. This enabled us to formulate three research questions (RQ):

- RQ1—is there a relationship between GBV news topics and public awareness;
- RQ2— do high profile GBV cases in the media affect public awareness,
- RQ3—are there any intrinsic themes in media coverage of GBV.

TOPOLOGICAL DATA ANALYSIS METHODS (MAPPER ALGORITHM)

Topological based Data Analysis (TDA) is an approach to the analysis of datasets using techniques from topology. Extraction of information from datasets that are high-dimensional, incomplete and noisy is generally challenging. The application of TDA provides a general framework to analyze such data in a manner that is insensitive to the particular metric chosen and provides dimensionality reduction and robustness against noise. Beyond this, TDA inherits functoriality,

a fundamental concept of modern mathematics, from its topological nature, which allows it to adapt to new mathematical tools.

One key part of our TDA analysis is the use of the 'Mapper' algorithm (Singh et al., 2007), which focuses on the way that the parts of a system are connected rather than the distance between them. This is useful for analyzing and visualizing data. We used Kepler Mapper, the flexible python implementation of the Mapper algorithm, to study the connectivity of GBV news and other news within a specific period (Veen et al., 2019).

DATA EXTRACTION AND TOPIC CLASSIFICATION

The study used NLP techniques to transform unstructured text into structured data. Also, it allowed topic classification of news based on the list of tags each piece of news contained (such as justice, economy, politics, international, technology, feminism.). However, Spanish media—both analogue and digital—do not commonly use the phrase *,la violencia de género'* (GBV) as a tag or topic. To bring light to this issue and, in addition, enhance the description tags, we extracted the subject for each news article and the probability it was related to GBV. To achieve this outcome, we applied a stack protocol that consisted of two consecutive neural network models for NLP: first, by analyzing the content of each text, we extracted the general subject classification. Secondly, we applied a binary GBV classification, which produced a probability rate, where zero means a lack of GBV content in the individual piece of news considering tags such as feminine, domestic violence, female sexual abuse and sexual crimes against women.

ANOMALY DETECTION

In data analysis, anomaly detection (also referred to as *outlier detection*) is the identification of rare items, events or observations which deviate significantly from the majority of the data and do not conform to a well-defined notion of normal behavior. Such observations may arouse suspicions of being generated by another mechanism, or appear inconsistent with the remainder of that set of data.

We used the Prophet forecasting model (a Facebook open software algorithm) (Shen et al., 2020) on our GBV average probability. Prophet is a procedure for analyzing time series data based on an additive model where non-linear trends are fit with yearly, weekly, and daily seasonality, plus holiday effects. This model works best with time series that have strong seasonal effects and several seasons of historical data.

RESULTS

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NEWS MEDIA AND PUBLIC AWARENESS—RQ1

To understand the GBV press coverage in more detail, we analyzed the GBV probability over time, i.e. the temporal changes (Tsay, 1989; Mills, 2015). Considering the whole corpus of news, we measured the temporal monthly average of GBV probability. The larger the probability, the greater the chance to be related to GBV in a certain month. Figure 1, Chart (a) shows how GBV probability rises over time, by a factor of 1.8 in the last three years. Remarkably, 20% of the news in 2020 had GBV connotations. We compared such enhancement with public awareness concerning gender movements. Thus, we examined the social perception of GVB using the monthly survey CIS (Centre for Sociological Research, a Spanish public research institute) (Violenciagenero 2019). We applied the same seasonal-trend decomposition model see Figure 1, Chart (b). Comparing Charts (a) and (b), the monthly GBV probability in news and gender violence awareness have the same upward trend. Furthermore, quantitative information about the consistent trend behavior is obtained from the time correlation between average GBV probability against the opinion survey about domestic violence as a function of the displacement of one relative to the other, see Chart (c).

Figure 1. Gender Based Violence (GBV) Time series.
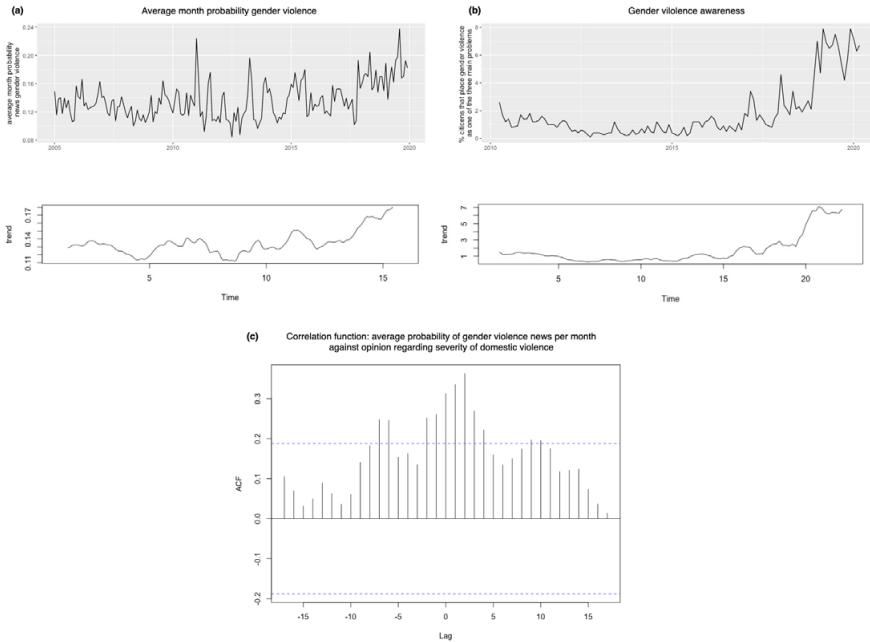
Source: Authors

Key: Chart (a) Monthly GBV probability and its corresponding trend. This time series was obtained by using NPL over each new in the dataset and then grouping by month.

Chart (b) Monthly percent of citizens that place gender violence as one of the three main problems (Centre for Sociological Research data) and its corresponding trend.

Chart (c) Cross-Correlation Function of the Temporal GBV and the Temporal feedback opinion. Cross correlation measures the relationship between two time series, in particular it measures if lags in the first time series can be used to predict future values of the second.

THE IMPACT OF FAMOUS GENDER VIOLENCE CASES—RQ2

Our results show that the GBV monthly probability has increased over the years. A similar trend can be observed in the daily grouped data. Figure 2 shows the temporal trends (green lines) of the GBV data (black symbols). Although it seems that the data fits well in the plot, certain days are out of the range: these are anomalies. Anomalies are understood as values that are sufficiently different or that do not fit the trend of the previous ones and are depicted as red spots.

Figure 2. Prophet forecast model analysis showing Gender Based Violence (GBV) anomalies.
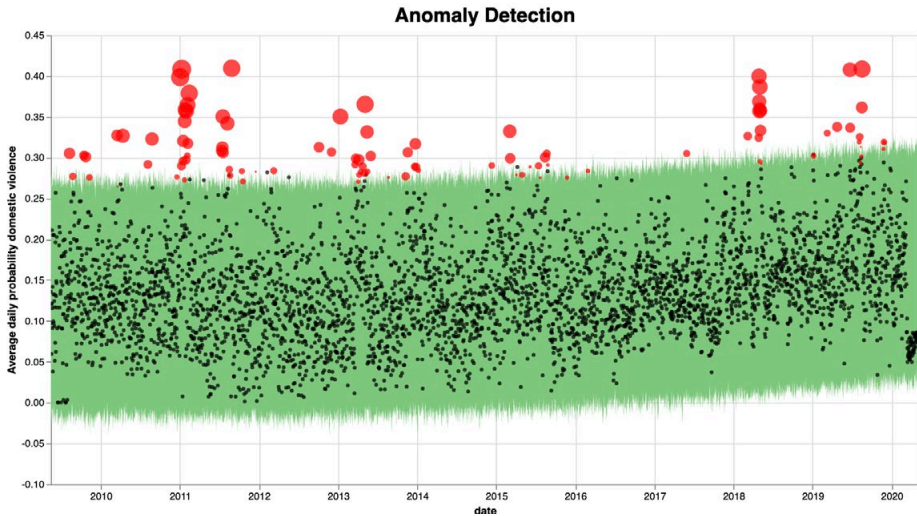
Source: Authors

Key: Prophet forecast model fit of the temporal GBV probability. Solid symbols = GBV data; green lines = the fitting curve; red symbols = the anomalies.

Table 1 shows the list of anomalies detected during 2018 and 2019 by the previous analysis (marked as red points in Figure 2), the corresponding average GBV probabilities, and the event in the news. Note that several of these anomalies correspond to the court's sentence at the end of the 'La Manada [Wolf-pack] rape case' (Aurrekoetxea, 2020; Egea, 2019; News Desk 2019).

Table 1. Gender Based Violence (GBV) anomalies in Spain, 2018–2019, with the corresponding average probabilities and the event.

Date	GBV Average Probability	Event
2019–08–17	0.4085262	News coverage of the murder of a female surgeon in a GBV case. https://www.elmundo.es/madrid/2019/08/17/5d57c84a21efa0ab3b8b45cb.html
2019–06–22	0.4075814	Concerning the Manada (Wolf-pack) case, the Supreme Court of Spain upgraded convictions for sexual abuse to that of continuous sexual assault, and handed down 15-year prison terms.
2018–05–02	0.3866444	News coverage of the case of a GBV victim who was killed in Guadalix. https://elpais.com/politica/2018/02/05/actualidad/1517833337_571770.html
2018–04–29	0.3687508	The five members of the Manada (Wolf-pack) were each condemned to nine years on charges of sexual abuse.
2018–04–28	0.3995969	The five members of the Manada (Wolf-pack) were each condemned to nine years on the charges of sexual abuse.

Source: Authors

To visualize the anomalies and the dates of high GBV probability in more detail, we used a heatmap plot (see Figure 3), where all the dates of 2018, 2019 and 2020 are shown. Lighter colors relate to higher average GBV probabilities. Surprisingly, high probabilities of GBV not only correspond to the anomaly day, but also extended for several days. In addition, the heatmap shows how the years get lighter (in terms of probability of GBV news), which confirms the upward trend observed in the time series (see Figure 1).

Figure 3. Gender Based Violence news heatmap for probabilities each day between 2018 to 2020.
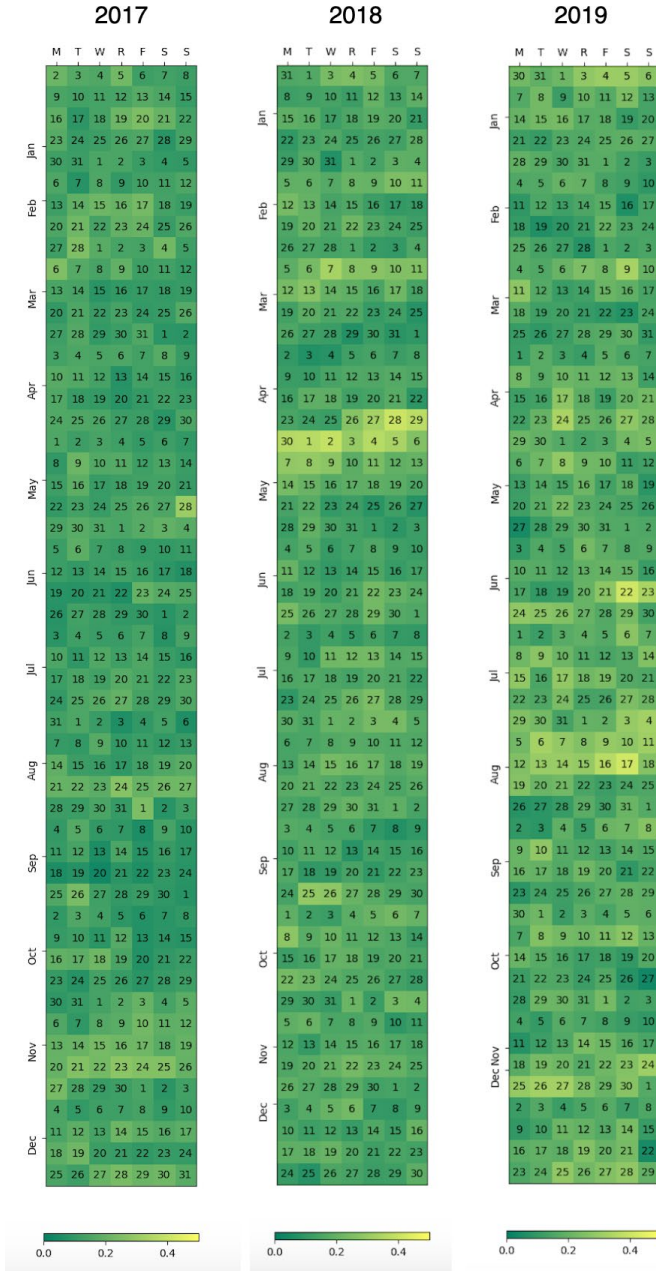
Source: Authors

Key: Colour (= probability) Dark Green (0); Semi-Dark Green (0.2); Semi-Light Green (0.4); Pale Green (0.5). The values depicted were obtained applying Natural Language Process to all the news in the data set and averaging per day.

SUBJECT ANALYSIS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE NEWS

Next, we focused on the intrinsic connection of subjects (or tags) in the news—RQ3. We used the extracted GBV probability to discern, which news were about this issue. We considered a piece of news to mainly cover GBV if the probability returned by the neural network was greater than 0.9999, i.e., if the neural network confirmed it almost without doubt. We thus obtained a set of 5375 news items that covered GBV. Then, we proceeded with a subject classification neural network to tag these news items and to find out their main subjects.

Figure 4. Top topic classification of the Gender Based Violence news by subject frequency (percent).
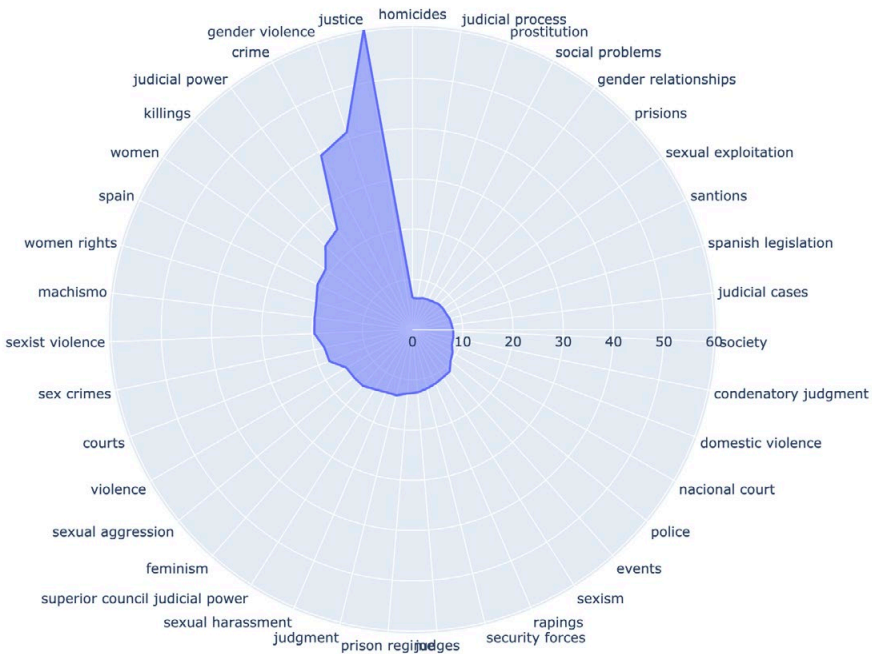
Source: Authors

Figure 4 shows the resulting classification. The most common tags were justice, gender violence and crime. Using TDA, we obtained a mapper algorithm in a diagram (Figure 5) that summarizes the closeness of the news' tags with a geometric interpretation. The resulting graph draws a node for each cluster of news for those close in the context of their themes. The size of the node reflects the quantity of news items they contain. Note that if these nodes overlap, i.e., there are news items belonging to more than one cluster, the nodes will be joined with segments. This allowed us to see the ways that not only subjects change but also news organize themselves in terms of closeness.

In Figure 5, the colour schematic is dark blue (cool-low probability) through green (warm) to yellow (warmer-high probability). The yellow nodes represent news (or groups of news) with higher GBV probability. Each branch represents news' clusters whose subjects evolve similarly. As Figure 5 (2019a) shows, the GBV branch forms at a junction between feminism and politics. These findings fully accord with the central node of the GBV in regard to legislation and court cases. We repeated the analysis for news in the following year, see Figure 5 (2020b), where the GBV branch merges with that of justice.

Figure 5. Interdependence between topics in the Spanish news for 2019a and 2020b.
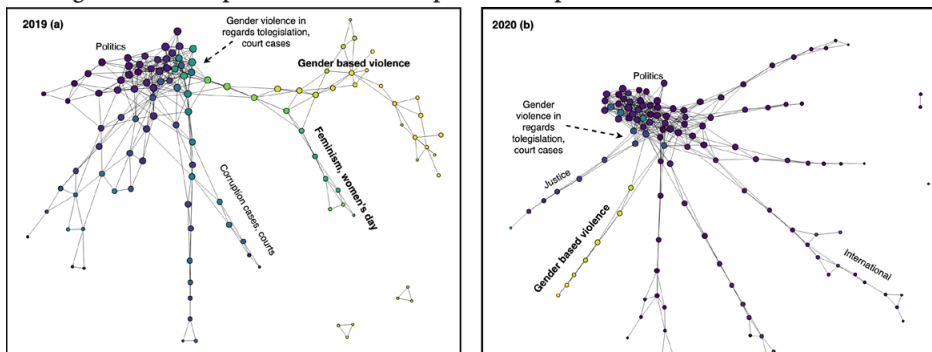
Source: Authors

DISCUSSION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a worldwide issue that despite its prevalence has been grossly under-covered in public institutions and also, in the news media (Cullen et al., 2019). Fortunately, awareness of the problem has been growing for years, thanks to social movements and increased media coverage (Luengo, 2018). The media has helped in spreading social awareness about GBV (Luengo, 2018) and transforming a public issue into a social problem (Alexander, 2006). However, GBV depictions continue to be represented wrongly in the news media (Boyle, 2005; Cullen et al., 2019).

In this paper, we presented an analysis of news coverage of GBV using novel Big Data techniques. Our study was limited to Spanish media, but we believe that our methodology has general validity. Our results show that GBV news do not have a specific topic or tag, which contributes to the invisibility of the problem and forces the news to be classified by numerous related tags. However, justice subjects are highly related to GBV news, which can be explained by the famous cases that end up in court or that public attention is fixed on the judicial process.

Additionally, when covering GBV, the media usually present legal communications or discuss protecting the laws.

We found that the media have of late begun to spotlight GBV, the recent feminine movement and gender victims' voices. Our analysis shows an enhancement of the public perception of GBV in recent years resulting from the amount of news about the topic, which echoes well-known events. Moreover, we found that the public opinion lags behind the news media for several months, which means that after a relevant GBV event, people react to it. Indeed, the proposed anomaly detection method showed that a match between the anomaly and the GBV cases confirms this impact. Our results demonstrated that the impact of a GBV event lasts for several days and media has an influential role in raising both social awareness and conscience for the topic.

Our study's strength is the utilization of a GBV probability for each news and how it evolves over a certain period. We mapped how GBV probability appears daily and pinpointed related events that push both the topic's increase in the news and public awareness (UN Women, 2017). Moreover, we used TDA techniques to extract how certain topics (or tags) are related in the news. Our approach shows that GBV tends to relate to the subject of justice and rarely with that of feminism.

Violence against women is a serious social issue and appears in the news media rather frequently. The way that news media portray GBV has significant implications for public perception and policy responses. Research on the media coverage of violence against women has shown that GBV is often characterized by various patterns of problematic reporting. Women's role is usually depicted in the news media as victims (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2019; Busso et al., 2020) and this influences the way GBV is covered. Still, information regarding GBV is biased and the problem it poses is usually silenced by explicit details (Buiten & Salo, 2007; Cuklanz, 2014; ElSherief et al., 2017; Wong & Lee, 2018). Overall, the portrayal of violence against women in news media is a complex issue that requires critical examination and attention. Media outlets should avoid victim-blaming language, but provide context, and accurately reflect the experiences of survivors to raise awareness and promote effective policy responses (Easteal et al., 2015; Sutherland et al., 2019; Wolf, 2018).

Previous research on GBV has utilized Big Data techniques to show some interesting outcomes (Subramani et al., 2018, 2019; Xue et al., 2019). Those works tend to focus on social media, which is an important way of conveying social concern, but none of them approaches this issue in the way, this study did.

Our findings provided a new point of view and representation of the news about GBV that should lead to better reporting. On this line, the creation or improvement of already existing guidelines could be an interesting objective (GenderIT, 2012; UNESCO, 2019). Hence, news media would help raise awareness

on the problem that GBV poses, and thus, promote resources for its prevention. Furthermore, as the media reflects the concerns of our societies, it should help to neutralize GVB and combat it.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The source code used in this study is publicly available on GitHub.

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Participative Art Marketing Communication and Creativity of User-generated Content

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Abstract: This paper deals with participatory communication in the field of the promotion of cultural institutions. Creativity is an important factor in the success and effectiveness of marketing communication. This phenomenon has not yet been explored in relation to the creativity of user-generated content. This research addresses the question of whether creativity is a significant factor in the success of UGC (user generated content). Analysis of the outputs generated by the recipients of the communication issued by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles – and their interpretation of the works of art available to the museum. We used a modified method of evaluating creativity developed by Smith et. al. (2007). We used correlation analysis to analyze our data. The findings show that creativity is an important factor in the design of the communication strategy rather than in the success of specific UGC products.

Keywords: art marketing; participatory marketing; creativity.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of our paper is to identify the degree and direction of creativity in participatory art marketing products—in the specific case of the Getty Museum campaign at the time of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic after the museum was closed to the public. We will focus on the role of the recipient with particular attention to their creativity, which was manifest in the outputs shared in online space as a response to the communication from the art institution.

The paradigmatic changes in the concept of marketing communication in the present-day late postmodernism, shift and even eliminate the boundaries between

the recipient and the creator of communication to such a degree that a recipient of communication becomes its multiplier (as its known from viral marketing), co-creator, and bearer of new meanings. This phenomenon plays a special role in art marketing, which aims to promote art, artistic institutions and cultural heritage; and its other specific role is the use of art in marketing. Interactivity and participation have increasingly become the typical features of art, and since the time of the first happenings and similar forms in the middle of the last century, they have also become the reception modes among the recipients of art.

THE POSTMEDIA ART, MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATIVE DIGITAL CULTURE

The recipient's participatory role in art marketing blurs the boundaries between art and amateur creation and participatory marketing communication, and various hybrid communications often emerge with the hallmarks of social responsibility, participation and civic engagement. This also results in the building of the artistic community on social networks through the participation of art recipients: we are talking about "building brand awareness" within the bounds of the theory of digital marketing communication. The concept of user generated content (UGC) and user created content (UCC) is a special model of digital participatory culture (see Jenkins et al., 2006; Lutz & Hoffman, 2017) with a strong emphasis on creativity. Although the opinions on its origin differ (see Lobato, Thomas & Hunter, 2012), its theoretical anchoring can be identified in the definition of memes. The phenomenon of internet memes refers to the conceptual overlap of semiotics and intertextuality, with the defining frameworks such as:

> remixed, repetitive messages that members of a participatory digital culture can disseminate rapidly for the purpose of satire, parody, criticism, or other discursive activity. Its function is to visually argue in order to initiate, expand or influence discourse (Wiggins, 2019, p. 11).

In this context, the definition of "floating artwork" is proposed, which is

> re-created with each moment of perception [and compared to traditional artwork] (…) a floating artwork is not an entity, but a state transformed on the basis of the ever-changing influences (…) and is mobile and dynamic (Dinkla, 2002, pp. 27–41).

The above attributes defining the digital participatory forms when building a community of art recipients on social networks were also characteristic of the

Getty Art Challenge and Museum Art Challenge phenomenon in the start of pandemic in 2020.

There is evidence that UGC can have a positive impact on consumers in terms of the promoted product. (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Luca, 2015; Malthouse, Calder, Kim & Vandenbosch, 2016) Research even suggests that UGC affects the recipient's behavior more than the content generated by standard marketing (Tsiakali, 2018). The UGC factors that Cresp, Gutiérrez and Mogollón (2015) identify as key for the subsequent use by their recipients, are mainly associated with information value, credibility of the source and interaction between the two variables. The similarity between the users and content creators on social networks was not significant. Despite the above, UGC also has its critics. This is especially true not only in relation to copyright issues, but also to the fact that content creators create content free of charge (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2010, Senftleben, 2019). This phenomenon became popular as early as in 2010 (B. Gunter 2010, online) and it turns out that it has been increasingly used for the dissemination of socially beneficial ideas, such as in health promotion campaigns (Hether & Calabrese, 2020). The UGC phenomenon has also appeared in the work of non-profit organizations, which use this tool for information and educational purposes, see for example the campaign #SafeHands Challenge initiated by the WHO in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic (Sanga, 2021). The use of UGC in the field of art marketing of cultural institutions is another example of these educational, popularized and socially beneficial possibilities.

CREATIVITY AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The essence of creativity is originality (novelty, uniqueness, unusualness, including a certain element of surprise) and relevance (Runco & Garrett, 2012; Walia, 2019; Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2021; Pichot et al., 2022). The recipients tend to enjoy creative advertising more (Lehnert, Till & Carlson, 2013) and it has a significant potential to attract attention (Reinartz & Saffert; 2013, Till & Baack, 2005) and improve the attitudes of the recipients of communication towards advertising (Ang, Lee & Leong, 2007). These issues can be found in all three components of attitudes as Rauwers et al. (2018) who find that compared to traditional advertising, creative advertising improves the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of consumers. Baack, Wilson and Till (2008) argue that creative advertising increases the recognition ability of the advertised entities and this positive effect increases over time. Their results also suggest that the effectiveness of creativity in advertising depends on its type: cinema advertising, just like traditional advertising, increased recall, and creativity is an important aspect in ambient advertising (Šula, 2018; Wojciechowski, 2016, 2018).

However, creative advertising placed at airports did not have such a significant effect (Baack, Wilson & Till, 2008). By contrast, Wulandari and Darma (2020) suggest that creative advertising of fashion products on Instagram has demonstrated a causal relationship to efficiency and purchasing decisions. Similarly, H. Choudhary (2021) confirms that highly creative advertising has a significant communicative effect. This suggests that the degree of effects of creativity in advertising is also moderated by its other specificities – especially by its type and the goods or services it promotes. Consistent with the above, we believe that creativity could be an important factor when increasing the impact of participatory marketing.

THE GETTY ART CHALLENGE

The call issued by the Getty Center in Los Angeles (known in the digital media environment as the Getty Art Challenge, Museum Art Challenge) followed the Dutch initiative of "Tussen Kunst & Quarantaine" supported by the Rijskmuseum in Amsterdam (Potts, 2020). The initial impetus was the call of the Dutch communication agent and social event manager Annelos in Dutch. The call was an interesting impetus to fill the void caused by lockdowns, which were imposed on most countries in Europe and the world in the spring of 2020, and it was also a good marketing opportunity for museums. The art challenge was an original and creative way to compensate for social deprivation, the deficit of social communication, and was instrumental in sharing the hitherto unknown pandemic situation. Altogether three conditions were defined within the call: select a well-known work of art, use household objects and photograph and share the recreated (interpreted) work on social networks. The challenge was specific for its deliberate intertextuality with social isolation and the pandemic, and its focus was beyond the typical content shared by the social network users (e.g. home exercise, cooking, childcare).

The Getty Museum campaign was a success even according to the search metric in Google Trends (Graph 1) and it made the museum's website popular among internet users. Three significant spikes are clearly visible in the graph: the first is not the result of a well-structured campaign, but of the fires that broke out in the immediate vicinity of the museum at the time (October 27, 2019 – November 2, 2019). The second significant spike falls within the period of Getty Art Challenge, which included the call for the museum followers to get involved in the creation of works of art. This spike occurred about a month after the announcement of the call (April 19 – 25, 2020). Although this challenge followed almost immediately after its original model of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the nonstandard fluctuations cannot be deducted in the case of the European

Challenge even though it has almost continually registered more search queries than the Getty Museum. This can be interpreted in many ways, with two most salient explanations: first, it must be noted that the Getty Museum call was verbalized in a world language while the Rijksmuseum call predominantly used Dutch (approximately 17.4 million inhabitants, of which 15.88 million use the internet, compared to the 245.43 million internet users in the USA (Roser, et al., 2015). The second probable reason is that the original communication strategy was more of a random initiative by a museum worker at the place of inception of the original idea, but the Getty Center call was of an intentional marketing nature. We can also factor in other possible variables, namely the degree of penetration of digital social networks in the given areas.

Graph 1. Development of search queries of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in the period from March 1, 2019 to October 28, 2021
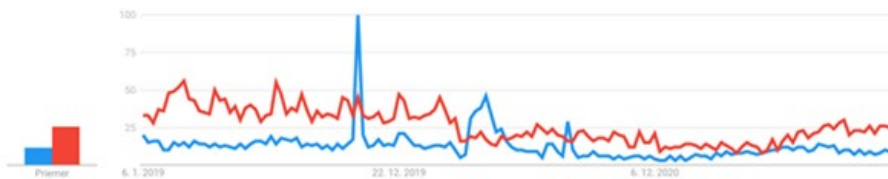
Legend: red = Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Holland; blue = J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, USA, data from March 1, 2019 to October 28, 2021. Source: Google Trends

In both cases, the campaigns gained considerable traction with the public. We hold that some of the motivations included the opportunity to showcase own creativity and transition from mere recipients of art to its co-creators and active participants. On the other hand, the interpretations and individual shifts of the original works by ordinary gallery visitors, which brought unusual and fresh ideas to the recipients, and were often transformed by the experience and reflection of the present. The pandemic situation was novel with all its contexts and the changes in our daily lives (ranging from the lock-downs and the need to deal with them, to the panic shopping for certain items).

RESEARCH SECTION

Based on the above, we formulated the following research problem: Is there a significant positive relationship between the creativity of adverfacts (products of participatory art marketing) and their sharing on Twitter in the period under review? In our study, we focused on identifying the possible correlations between creativity and selected communication effects – the degree of sharing of communication messages.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research material consisted of adverfacts generated by the recipients of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles call for user generated content[1]. At the time, Getty Museum in Los Angeles had on Twitter 6820 views, 1.3 million followers, 10,708 retweets, 3490 quote tweets and 26,226 likes. The period under review started on the date of publication of the call by the museum, i—March 25, 2020—and ended on February 4, 2020. We identified a total of 308 posts published in the museum call thread. Of these, we selected 20 adverfacts with the highest retweet rate (100 and more, with a maximum of 1200 retweets per post). The posts shared by the museum also included a link to the specific artifacts in the museum's collection.

Figure 1. Samples from a set of adverfacts generated by the recipients of communication by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (pairs from left to right, line by line: G, L, B, A, H, C)

Sources: G: Getty (2020b), L: Embee (2020), B: rachelforest (2020), A: Getty (2020a), H: Ann Zumhagen-Krause (2020), C: Kyle Bates (2020)

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1 Note: 'adverfact' is a melding of advert(ising) + fact, and while it is an analogy to the word 'artefact', the melding is an advertising communication and not any product of human activity. M. Zelinský (2007) coined the word.

To identify the creativity of adverfacts, we used a modified creativity assessment tool by Smith et. al. (2007) (in the original "Measurement scale"), which identifies multiple facets of creativity using expert scoring. Of all the available factors, we only used five in our research – namely those to which the authors also offered preliminary standards, and those that met the specifics of the assessed material. We present the criteria and their specification in Appendix A. Evaluators in accordance with the recommendations of Smith et. al. (2007), and each criterion is assigned a value of 1–6. The criteria are based on the confluence models of creativity, especially the approach of Guilford (1975, 1992), but also on the model of Dacey and Lennon (2000) that derives from Guilford and is oriented towards the divergence and relevance of ideas. Divergence consists of several factors, for example originality, which is understood as the infrequency of an idea in the population. Other factors include fluency (number of ideas) and flexibility (variety of solutions). The factors used by Smith et. al. (2007) are specified in Appendix A. Two experienced scorers (1 male and 1 female) participated in the scoring-process. They received a detailed description of a modified version of the tool by Smith et. al. (2007) and detailed instructions on the scoring procedure. The scorers have been dealing with creativity for a long period throughout their professional careers —15 years of expertise on average. Both are devoted to the topic both theoretically and practically. They have lectured and implemented several projects focused on the creativity of adverfacts, and they also did foreign internships, stays and invited lectures on creativity in marketing communication. They are also active as judges in adverfact creativity competitions. A satisfactory degree of agreement was reached between the two scorers in four out of five factors: originality ($r(18)=0.7383$, $p=0.000202$), flexibility ($r(18)=0.5167$, $p=0.01967$), elaboration ($r(18)=0.6139$, $p=0.003986$) and artistic value ($r(18)=0.63449$, $p=0.00266$). (After completing the Sidak correction ($p_{Sidak}=0–0085$), the correlation for the flexibility factor can be seen as weaker). In the area of synthesis, the resulting inter-rater reliability was too low ($r(18)=0.4433$, $p=0.05027$), we therefore did not take this factor into account in the subsequent analysis. We processed the data using inferential statistical procedures. The data are presented in tables.

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND RESULTS

The maximum number of points an adverfact (marked with letters of the alphabet) can score is 6 in each of the evaluated areas. The most creative adverfact scored 23 points out of 30. The least creative only scored 6.5 points. For each of the factors, Smith et. al. (2007) define the relevant norms, which indicate which values can be considered to signal a high level of creativity. Smith et. al. (2007) list several options (e.g. averages of highly creative ads – award winners). In this study, we relied on the author's data presented as "across all ad", with all those that reached above-average values (AM + sd) assessed as creative, and those

that achieved below-average values (AM-1sd) assessed as having low creativity. The specific limit values are presented in the footer of Table 1. As the data in the Table suggest, the occurrence of uneven scores was rare in the examined material; they were only achieved in some indicators and only by the adverfacts "I" and "L", which also achieved the best results in the overall comparison.

The data analysis results suggest that even the highly retweeted adverfacts did not score significantly in the creativity factors (Table 1). This is also evidenced by the identified correlation coefficients (Table 2), on the basis of which it can be stated that creativity is not a factor that increases the probability of retweeting, or a higher number of "likes" or comments. This finding does not correspond to the research results presented by J. Mohammad, et. al. (2020), which confirmed that the content, quality and emotional values of UGC are significantly related to the impact of UGC. Likewise, G. Christodoulides, et. al. (2011) see creative efforts as an important part of UGC. In contrast, A. J. Kover, S. M. Goldberg and W. L. James (1995) arrived at similar results in their research – they identify some creative ads to be effective, some effective ads to be creative, while other ads in their research were neither creative nor effective. In our research, the findings show similar variations.

Table 1. Indicators of the impact and degree of creativity identified in a set of 20 most commented on adverfacts generated by the recipients of the call issued by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, 24.03.2020

Adverfacts	Degree of impact			Degree of creativity					Total	Ordering
	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Originality	Flexibility	Synthesis	Elaboration	Artistic value		
A	111	1200	9800	3.5	2	2	1.5	2.5	*11.5*	13.5
B	89	1100	9200	4	2.5	3	1.5	5.5	*16.5*	6
C	57	556	6000	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	3.5	*13*	12
D	37	464	5200	4	4	4	3	2	*17*	4.5
F	58	369	4200	3.5	2	2	3.5	3.5	*14.5*	9
J	82	368	3300	2	1	1.5	3	6	*13.5*	10.5
I	33	354	3400	5	5	4.5	4.5	3	*22*	2
E	50	351	5000	2.5	1	1	2.5	3	*11*	15
H	54	327	3600	4	2.5	1.5	1.5	2	*11.5*	13.5
CH	18	278	3400	4	4.5	2	1	2	*13.5*	10.5
G	29	244	3800	1.5	1	1.5	1	1.5	*6.5*	20
M	66	202	2700	2	3.5	3.5	3	4	*16*	7
K	26	196	3200	2	3	2	1	1.5	*9.5*	18
L	33	193	2900	5.5	5	5	4	3.5	*23*	1
R	30	175	2300	3	2	1.5	2	0.5	*9*	19

Adverfacts	Degree of impact			Degree of creativity					Total	Ordering
	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Originality	Flexibility	Synthesis	Elaboration	Artistic value		
U	21	166	2000	3.5	2.5	2	3	4	15	8
P	21	149	2000	3.5	2.5	2	4	5	17	4.5
W	34	122	2400	2.5	2	1	1.5	3.5	10.5	16.5
N	13	110	1400	3	2.5	2	2	1	10.5	16.5
O	19	100	862	4	3.5	2.5	4	5.5	19.5	3
sd	26.76	317.11	2242.75	1.04	1.21	1.12	1.12	1.57	4.31	n.a.
AM	53.07	443.00	4692.86	3.28	2.73	2.33	2.50	3.20	14.03	n.a.
Smith norm. max.				5.87	4.74	5.72	5.19	6.08		
Smith norm. min.				2.53	1.8	1.94	2.39	2.74		

Legend: an adverfact can earn a maximum of 6 points in the
degree of creativity in each of the factors

Source: own processing (columns 1–4) and own research (columns 5–11), the
last two lines with the norms processed by: R. E. Smith et. al. (2007)

**Table 2. Correlation analysis results of the observed variables
in a set of adverfacts generated by the recipients of the call issued
by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, 24.03.2020**

	Comments	Retweets	Likes	Originality	Flexibility	Elaboration	Artistic value
Comments	1	*0.00001*	*0.00002*	0.638275	0.15533	0.541899	0.161111
Retweets	**0.829**	1	*0.00001*	0.560633	0.56751	0.279863	0.521518
Likes	**0.799**	**0.971**	1	0.810694	0.46576	0.158001	0.813622
Originality	-0.112	0.138	0.057	1	**0.00035**	<u>*0.036249*</u>	0.666572
Flexibility	-0.331	-0.136	-0.174	**0.72**	1	0.091399	0.870326
Elaboration	-0.145	-0.255	-0.328	0.471	0.388	1	<u>*0.023525*</u>
Artistic value	0.326	0.152	0.056	0.103	-0.04	0.504	1

Regular = Perarson coefficient value R, **bold** = significant result, *italics* = level of significance,
bold+italics = high significance after Sidak correction (see: Goss-Sampson, 2020)
p_{Sidak} = 0.00244, *italics + <u>underlined</u>* = originally significant result, after Bonferroni correction
without significance. The values that did not reach the significance level were not corrected

Source: own research

The user-generated content that received the lowest creativity score achieved a good (medium) success rate in the responses (Fig. 1 G). However, even the most creative design has average to subnormal results in the responses (Fig. 1 L). By contrast, the designs with the highest amount of "likes" and retweets (Figure 1 A and 1 B) had an average degree of creativity. There were only a few cases where the generated output had a high degree of creativity and a high

response rate (e.g. 1 C). However, some situations are the exact opposite, with a highly creative design (Fig. 1 O) not significantly successful in reposting and receiving a low response (20th position out of 20). The design H (see Fig. 1 H), a response to Warhol's pop-art work, received medium success and fitted into the pandemic context relatively well, in which the Warhol's interpretation of Campbell's Soup was replaced by Xanax (an anxiolytic, anti-anxiety drug). The sales of anxiety drugs during the pandemic exhibited a growing trend (see e.g. Benzodiazepine Market Information, 2021), and a more pronounced effect than the identified one can be expected in this area. Based on the above data, the answer to the formulated research problem whether there was "a significant positive relationship between the creativity of adverfacts (products of participatory art marketing) and the degree of their sharing on Twitter in the period under review" was negative. Such a relationship could not be demonstrably proven.

LIMITATIONS

The present study has several limits. The most striking one is the relatively small scope of research material and the focus on a single case use of UGC. However, a wider selection of adverfacts would, on the other hand, have meant materials that were retweeted below the numerical limit (and therefore did not meet the criteria), and they would most probably and paradoxically increase the detected correlation (taking into account the low number of retweets and unattractive and uncreative content). It is also necessary to mention certain metric pitfalls of the modified method by Smith et. al. (2007), which we used in our research, and in which we found a lower degree of agreement between the evaluators in one particular case. At the same time, our research suggested that in order to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of content reposting by the recipients, it would be necessary to identify several intervening variables.

These would have included the age of recipients and their affiliation to a given generation (Štrbová & Boldišová, 2021), motivational variables (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, et al., 2021), or factors related to the medium and audience preferences (e.g. Black, 2020; Mikuláš, 2020). These factors could be subjected to a multivariate analysis, thereby providing a more complete picture of the preferences of the audience. Such an approach rather requires an experimental research plan which, however, loses the advantages of spinal reactions, which are key for this topic (the well-known "Hawthorne effect" in the research by E. Mayo (1945), or the "guinea pig effect" described by M. Disman (2002)). For these reasons, it is vital that the presented results be viewed as specific findings requiring further elaboration but also serving as a stimulus for more in-depth research in the field, and especially as a probe into the hitherto unexplored topic.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we approached some aspects of the use of UGC, which is gaining more and more popularity in art marketing. O'Herm and Kahle (2013) suggest that we can even discuss a paradigm shift in marketing communication thanks to UGC because the boundaries between consumers and businesses are becoming fragmented. There is a clear trend, in which an ever-increasing number of users are becoming active contributors, and not mere recipients of innovation and promotion. Digital media channels are generally preferred over traditional or offline channels on the consumer decision journey (Black, 2020).

User generated content also has a huge potential in the field of art marketing; users respond significantly well to the opportunity to become co-creators of content although it turns out that their level of creativity is not related to the success rate of their products (as confirmed by our research). This finding does not correspond to the knowledge base about the function of creativity in advertising communication (see e.g. Smith, Yang, 2004, Aichner and Shaltoni (2019). It can be stated that the designers of the UGC strategy must be especially creative to make the challenge attractive for the target group, while the success or failure of particular UGC is rather linked to other factors. To reveal these intervening variables, it is necessary to perform a deeper analysis of UGC as well as an analysis of audience preferences that repost the content. The motivations of potential UGC authors and multipliers can significantly differ among individuals and across cultures (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, et al., 2021) and, as Maggioni et. al. (2020) contend user behavior may also show signs of randomness. At the same time, it will be necessary to consider the selection of shared content by the museum itself. Future research will show those elements that contribute to the success of specific user-generated outputs, and to what extent.

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APPENDIX A.

Selected criteria of adverfact creativity according to the "Measurement scale" by R. E. Smith, et. al. (2007) and their brief description

Criterion	Description	Score
Originality	The adverfact's* ideas are rare, surprising, or move away from the obvious and commonplace. The adverfact´s ideas was "out of the ordinary". The adverfact broke away from habit-bound and stereotypical thinking. The adverfact was unique.	Each criterion: max 2 points, total max. 6
Flexibility	The adverfact had different ideas and shifted from one type of subject matter to another. 2.1 The adverfact contained ideas that moved from one subject to another. 2.2 The adverfact contained different ideas. 2.3 The adverfact shifted from one idea to another.	Each criterion: max 2 points, total max. 6
Synthesis	The picture combined or connected normally unrelated objects or ideas. 3.1 The adverfact connected objects that are usually unrelated. 3.2 The adverfact contained unusual connections. 3.3 The adverfact brought unusual items together.	Each criterion: max 2 points, total max. 6
Elaboration	The adverfact provided numerous details. The picture finished, extended, and detailed basic ideas so they become more intricate or sophisticated. 4.1 The adverfact contained numerous details. 4.2 The adverfact finished basic ideas so that they become more intricate. 4.3 The adverfact contained more details than expected.	Each criterion: max 2 points, total max. 6
Artistic Value	The adverfact striking visual and/or verbal elements. 5.1 The adverfact was visually/verbally distinctive. 5.2 The adverfact ideas come to life graphically/verbally. 5.3 The adverfact was artistically produced.	Each criterion: max 2 points, total max. 6

* Note: In the original, the "adverfact" rating is replaced by "ad"

Source: Smith et. al. (2007, p. 830)

Media Culture Kaleidoscopes:
The Core of a Media System

Interview with Professor Peter Gross

In the Interview for the Central European Journal of Communication in Fall of 2014, we discussed an urgency to reorientate our scholarly studies from systems to cultures. You said we need: "The cultural kaleidoscopic prism through which one can examine media systems is yet to be tested". How does that look from the lenses of media and communication scholarship over the last decade?

Many of our colleagues have for some time recognized that culture is intrinsic to understanding the character and ways of functioning of media systems. However, a cultural approach to the study of these systems was hampered by the absence of both theoretical and methodological shortcomings. Specifically, the argument that the values, beliefs and attitudes of media owners/elites, political elites, and the media systems' rank-and-file, in the larger context of their national cultural characteristics, remained undeveloped. Most importantly, the articulation or outlining of cultural values that are germane to assessing was not available.

Why that's so difficult? Is it through various media policies and the dynamics of changing contexts (human-machine communications, Generative AI)? Or that's about the divergence of cultural path dependencies and imaginative futures?

Not alone among their academic colleagues, media scholars have shied away from constructing cultural approaches partly because these are qualitative ones and, additionally, politically suspect in some academic quarters, something I briefly flag in my latest book. Suffice it to say, overall, the cultural and psychological legacies of the past requires that an explanation be provided as to why the new political, social and economic system functioned as they did immediately after 1989 and beyond. Meaning that studying the transition and transformation of East and Central European societal systems demanded either

a departure from the reigning political and economic approaches or at the very least their accompaniment by a culture-based understanding of their evolution.

> **You recently published your new book, "The Cultural Core of the Media Systems. The Romanian Case" (Lexington Books, 2023). What are the key findings?**

My book's starting point was the question, if East and Central European countries now share democratic systems and free markets, how is it that the nature and manner of functioning of their media systems is in large measure different from those of their Western counterparts?

I constructed a hybrid framework for a cultural-driven consideration of media systems by starting with six of Lawrence E. Harrison's ten elements of his "progressive-static" division of societies that are most pertinent to the functioning of media systems (time orientation, community, justice and fair play, ethical code, merit, and authority). These values encompass the short-term vs. long-term orientation; collectivist vs. individualist; industrial vs. post-industrial dimensions; "power distance" notions; the effects of corruption and levels of trust, and "uncertainty avoidance" factors. In many ways, each is at the core of media systems' hierarchical structures and the media owners/elites influence on them, on the nature and functioning of the systems and their individual media outlets. This framework provides a cultural prism for assessing media markets, political parallelism, clientelism and instrumentalization, as well as the nature of the relationship between the media and political actors, professionalism, and the degree and nature of state interventions.

When looking at the Romanian media systems through the cultural prism, it provides us an underpinning explanation for the impetuses that describes why and how they evolved in this Eastern European country after 1989.

> **What's the story behind the concept of Kaleidoscope? How to apply the Cultural Prisms concepts juxtaposing theory with practice?**

By kaleidoscopic, I simply meant the varied factors that describe and are part of a cultural approach, as related in my answer to the question above. The cultural prism that I offer is really a work in progress, as is a cultural theory of media system. It is my hope that my book offers a starting point that allows for refining a theory, framework and a methodology. I consider the cultural prism that I outlined to be much like a Lego set. That is, pieces can be added or left out, which is a necessity both in and outside East and Central Europe, because while there may be cultural differences between regions there are also between the countries of each region.

What have been the key methodological researchers' challenges, studies on organisational culture, values, people and their perceptions/emotions?

In the last few decades, as a generalization, scholars have created discipline-specific silos. There needs to be an across-the-board reversal of this trend. I have based my cultural prism predominantly on the work of sociologists, social psychologists and cultural studies' scholars. The results of a cultural approach to studying media systems may in turn inform their work.

How universal can the Kaleidoscope method be, a tool to assess the cultural diversity in Romania, Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond?

By employing my cultural prism, both similarities and dissimilarities among East and Central Europe media systems and their ways of functioning can be detected. In my view, this takes comparative studies in the field beyond the assessment of political and economic differences, similarities and influences, which as mentioned, are themselves affected by the values, beliefs and attitudes of the media elites and rank-and-file.

What are the next big things to come in global media culture research?

In my estimation, the ubiquity and growth of digital media will require even greater attention to their cultural underpinnings. Perhaps we will find that either great cultural divides or increasingly fewer differences are at the core of the reasons for, nature of and ways of functioning of media systems, and their effects on audiences, national and/or international public spheres. Will cultural differences be reduced to the point where we can talk about a European public sphere and a Europe-wide media system? Or are cultural differences so very entrenched that despite their slow but changing nature, they will re-create the same kind of media systems, generation after generation for the foreseeable future in each country? These questions are some that need to be asked and not only regarding media systems but also the political, social and economic systems in every country.

Ultimately, in my view media systems typologies, tied to judgements that are solely predicated on the political and economic systems, are no longer sufficiently descriptive or explanatory explanations of the nature and ways of functioning of these systems. Values, beliefs and attitudes underline the individual and group behaviors and practices of those who lead, influence and carry out the work in and of media systems in every society and, in fact, provide a more fundamental way of deciphering the functioning of all societal systems.

Peter Gross was interviewed by Michał Głowacki

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Peter Gross, PhD, is a professor emeritus and former Director of the University of Tennessee's School of Journalism and Electronic Media (2006–2016). His research focus is East and Central European societies, media, journalism, and cultures. Among his 12 authored and co-authored scholarly books, textbooks, and co-edited book collections are: *Entangled Evolutions. Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe* (2002) and *Media Transformations in the Post-Communist World: Eastern Europe's Tortured Path to Change* (2013), which he co-edited with Dr. Karol Jakubowicz (Poland). His latest book, *The Cultural Core of the Media System: The Romanian Case* was released in June 2023.

SUSANNE FENGLER, TOBIAS EBERWEIN, MATTHIAS KARMASIN (EDS) (2022). *THE GLOBAL HANDBOOK OF MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY.* OXON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 614 PP., ISBN: 978-0-367-34628-7. DOI: 10.4324/9780429326943.

The book *The Global Handbook of Media Accountability*, edited by Susanne Fengler, Tobias Eberwein and Matthias Karmasin offers a theoretically based comparative analysis of media accountability regimes. The book is particulary relevant as the annual global freedom and human rights monitoring alert that democracy and media are challenged and 'in crisis', 'under siege' or 'in retreat' (Freedom House, 2022; Reporters Without Borders, 2022). Consequently, the need for accountable and responsible journalism is now more important than ever.

This book addresses the concept of media accountability and its instruments in 44 countries worldwide – it covers representatives of seven world regions: 1) Anglo-Saxon countries; 2) Western Europe; 3) Central and Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space; 4) MENA region; 5) Sub-Saharan Africa; 6) Asia; 7) Latin America. The publication constitutes (probably) the first interdisciplinary academic framework, which compares structures of media accountability across the globe, therefore it may be perceived as a follow-up to the *European Handbook of Media Accountability* (Eberwein et al., 2018).

Before addressing the *status quo* in each analyzed country, the introductory chapter provides an intelligible outline of media accountability. The editors offer a read through key concepts and definitions, with references to the works of Bertrand, Bardoel & d'Haenens, McQuail, Nieminen, and Puppis, who – among others – have attempted to analyse and describe it. They also elaborate on the notion of comparing media (accountability) systems, to key context factors of media accountability: political systems; journalism cultures and professionalization; media markets, audiences and technologies; transnational processes, globalization, and media development. Although the book does not formulate any new definition of media accountability, the editors explain in the introduction (p. 38) that they summarized and combined:

> "(…) a stakeholder (and thus actor-oriented) and a structural (and thus interactional) perspective, (…) and we understand media accountability as a process, in which various models of media accountability are realized in a range of social settings".

For the analysis, they used a five-frame model of media analysis (based on the one by Bardoel and d'Haenens, 2004), which distinguishes five groups of actors (professional, organizational, societal, political, international) involved in holding media accountable, which are characterized by the use of their own media accountability instruments to pursue their own accountability goals.

Following the introductory chapter, the succeeding parts cover an analysis by country, preceded by a regional overview. Although the editors argue that the phenomenon of media accountability is a genuinely Western idea (p. 3), one of the advantages of this book is its global perspective well beyond Western (and even European) borders. It is a valuable study on how historical background, political system and journalistic culture influence the amount and type of media accountability instruments all around the world. This is important especially because in many countries this concept has not been the subject of internationally recognized research before *The Global Handbook of Media Accountability* (p. 43).

Each chapter of the collection is structured in a similar way, providing an introduction with the context of the country's media system and journalistic culture, as well as the assessment of the media accountability instruments present in the analyzed country and conclusions. Such a system makes it easy and quick to compare the state of media accountability in countries selected from the research sample. The aspect that gives this book added value is looking beyond the well-known models of media self-regulation, which have attracted the majority of publications so far. The focus of this research is journalism studies, and therefore it considers multimedia approaches. Moreover, each chapter was written by the country's leading expert(s) in the field of media accountability, which, in turn, provides insightful information on the media system and media accountability instruments typical in each analyzed country. The study concludes that most media systems still rely on the traditional media accountability instruments, such as media councils and codes of ethics. Unexpectedly, *The Global Handbook of Media Accountability* proves that media accountability instruments exist even in repressive regimes, but they always face the risk of being instrumentalized (see country report for Russia, China and the MENA region).

On one hand, this book presents the advantages of large-scale comparative research: it shows an extensive overview of media accountability, crossing borders beyond the Western world. It also considers new developments, particularly those fueled by new technologies and de-Westernized approach to this issue, showing a new spectrum of media accountability measures: an amended version of the media accountability instruments axis model (p. 556). Complementing the measures established in the well-researched Western countries, new media-internal (i.e. journalism awards, festivals and whistle-blower activities), media-external (i.e. university observatories, media monitoring by NGOs, media criticism), and non-institutionalized (i.e. demonstrations, training projects) instruments were observed.

On the other hand, this book also shows the risks of conducting such large-scale research. The publication remains at a rather descriptive level, providing only outlines of accountability instruments available in each researched country. The focal point of self-regulation is not only the existence of such instruments, but rather their active use while creating an accountable journalistic culture. Unfortunately, some chapters mention the implementation of the accountability measures in a simple, brief way. Furthermore, the study excludes the accountability mechanisms for telecommunications and internet platforms, which deprives it of a holistic, convergent approach to the issue.

Nevertheless, the book is extremely useful, as it creates an invaluable basis for further research and policymaking. The comparative analysis helped to retrieve eight models of media accountability, which are introduced and detailed in the final, ninth chapter of the book. Among them are: 1) the professional model; 2) the company model; 3) the public model; 4) the dysfunctional model; 5) the foreign donor model; 6) the statutory model; 7) the mimicry model; 8) the regulation model. The editors are aware that they are only descriptive categories, therefore many hybrid forms of media accountability systems may occur around the globe.

In my opinion, *The Global Handbook of Media Accountability* is a valuable contribution to the discussion about the models of media self-regulation and newsroom transparency. The editors did indeed achieve their goal to de-Westernize the academic debate on media accountability by examining its current state in 44 countries around the globe, adopting the premise that the best way to evolve and bring about change is to learn from each other. I strongly believe that – besides functioning as a handbook for scholars and students of journalism and media studies, mass communication, sociology and political science – this publication may also appeal to policymakers and media practitioners.

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BERNHARD POERKSEN (2022).
DIGITAL FEVER. TAMING THE BIG BUSINESS OF DISINFORMATION.
CHAM: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 213 PP.,
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The burgeoning sense of a rapidly growing number of frightening crises challenging humanity is all-pervasive. Even worse is that the shifting media landscape with a thriving disinformation industry and the imminent risk posed by social bots or brainwashing propaganda shows no signs of mercy. Now Bernhard Poerksen provides the thought-provoking opportunity to learn more about the roots of the information society problems and explore the lurking dangers of the digital age. However, unlike most researchers, the author of *Digital Fever. Taming the Big Business of Disinformation* does not leave the readers without hope for change as he paves the way to a brighter future (or at least he tries to).

The first of the seven chapters, entitled *Clash of Codes: Or the Age of Indiscreet Media*, offers a quite informative and truly engaging introduction to the topic. The starting point for further consideration is an accurate remark regarding media users who suffer from titular *digital fever*, which manifests by a severe flood of push notifications about yet another supposedly "shocking" affair. Nowadays, this never-ending breaking news cycle is constantly fueled by indiscreet media that easily publish often secret or confidential information, thereby destroying the remnants of privacy. Moreover, these serious incidents or worthless pseudo-scandals are interpreted in an extreme variety of ways resulting in the immediate confrontation of multiple modes of perception, also known as the *clash of codes*. Bernhard Poerksen, by bringing up these threads at the beginning of the book, clearly presents the subject matter, and that undoubtedly helps readers define what to expect and decide whether to continue reading.

The second chapter, *The Crisis of Truth: Or the Suspicion of Manipulation*, is not only a knowledge pill about the networked world where almost every media user can find confirmation for their blind fanaticisms but at the same time is afraid of being cheated or manipulated. It is also a concise overview of factors contributing to the situation, in which certainties are incessantly called into question. Within this synopsis, Bernhard Poerksen smoothly adapts, as well as extends, current approaches, and introduces original concepts – for example, *information laundering* – that can enrich the ongoing discussion. And, to top it all, the author is not afraid to challenge accepted theory: even though some readers

might consider the rejection of the diagnosis of a *post-factual age* as far-fetched, it is still worth familiarizing yourself with a fresh line of argumentation.

In the third chapter, *The Crisis of Discourse: Or the Diminishing of the Gatekeepers*, readers are provided with a brutally honest description of how public discourse has changed in the digital age. However, reflections on society's struggle with ever-changing limitations on what can be said while the culture of hate is flourishing in the background are not so intriguing as the valuable thoughts on the fifth power, also included in this book's section. Furthermore, Bernhard Poerksen – with the characterization of the transition from the media democracy to the *outrage democracy* – not only provokes by saying the final goodbye to the gatekeepers of the old type but also tries to familiarize the public with the new order in the form of an algorithmic prefiltering system.

A new perspective on the relentless but unsuccessful pursuit of role models can be found in the fourth chapter, entitled *The Crisis of Authority: Or the Pains of Visibility*. Bernhard Poerksen's pertinent comment on the disappearance of the protected spaces of intransparency and the growing importance of being under permanent observation casts doubt on the possibility of becoming an old-fashioned role model nowadays. Nevertheless, on the one hand, those who still do not wish to lose their authority status should as soon as possible familiarize themselves with the *fourfold effect of the disclosures* and the *general over-illumination* constructs. On the other hand, those who would like to earn people's respect immediately need to become acquainted with the redefined idea of authority described as the *ideal of authenticity*.

The fifth chapter, *The Crisis of Complacency: Or the Collapse of Contexts*, raises a question that will haunt readers long after they have finished the last page: is it already time to banish the *filter bubble* theory in favor of the notion of *filter clash*? While finding a clear-cut answer seems unrealistic, Bernhard Poerksen neatly points out that despite being closed in pre-filtered information environments, media users are continually confronted with various kinds of news presented in multiple ways. This riveting and comprehensive description of today's reality, where digital publicists take over the role of instances of agenda setting, is spiced up by concepts worth careful study, such as *simultaneity of the disparate*, *digital butterfly effects*, or *context violation*.

The sixth chapter, *The Crisis of Reputation: Or the Omnipresence of Scandals*, makes readers aware that pillories are no longer the exclusive domain of the elite, and, as a result, each man in the street can become a victim of public hatred. By accurately picturing the mechanisms of scandals in the digital age, Bernhard Poerksen reminds media users how vulnerable and defenseless they are against online bashing, which, despite numerous counteracts, might completely destroy someone's reputation. Nevertheless, reflections on the anatomy of scandals are not as absorbing as the delineation of the clash of two colliding visions of scandal:

one as a positive aspect that might consolidate social norms and the second as a destructive feature that damages systemic trust. As an aside, regarding all the above-mentioned threats, it is impossible to agree that the author tries to tame the big business of disinformation: the considerations presented in this book go much beyond the disinformation aspect.

Despite presenting the bleak description of the new media landscape, at the end of the book, Bernhard Poerksen encourages readers to fight the digital challenges. The author's recipe for success lies in creating an *editorial society*, a community that, through education in the form of a special school subject, not only knows but also follows the rules of good journalism. On the one hand, given the ease of publishing any content, the idea that both journalists and internet users should adhere to principles such as transparency of procedures, truth orientation, or a plurality of perspectives sounds sensible. On the other hand, it is unknown who will be responsible for implementing this ambitious plan which – as a not-so-former student from a country where media education is not a part of the curriculum and educators report a lack of skills to teach how to become media literate (Stępińska & Halagiera, 2022) – bothers me deeply.

Moreover, this enthusiastic dream is accompanied by a righteous willingness to redefine the journalistic role, from omniscience proclaimer to listener, moderator, and discourse partner. However, in light of media workers' perceptions of increasing work difficulty and declining institutional support (Picard, 2015), calling for change may fall on deaf ears. However, it is even more difficult to believe in the last part of the plan, which aims to harness social media platforms by implementing discourse or transparency regulations. Guidelines, ethical codes, ombuds-committee, and transparency reports sound like a pipe dream as Twitter suspends the accounts of several journalists who have been critical of the company and Elon Musk's takeover (Isaac & Conger, 2022). After all, the seventh chapter, *The Tangible Utopia of an Editorial Society*, should be viewed as a constant reminder of what values are worth pursuing and what solutions are worth considering.

On the whole, Bernhard Poerksen uses plain language and clearly explains the intricacies of the new media environment. Moreover, non-specialist readers will not feel lost or confused at any moment as the principles of the digital age are deftly illustrated by real-life examples. In turn, experts – for whom part of the considerations might be just a repetition of well-known facts – should be (at least) triggered by dumping the *filter bubble* theory, which may result in picking up the gauntlet and trying to accept or reject newly-coined constructs. Finally: if it is impossible to defeat enemies until while not knowing who they are, *Digital Fever. Taming the Big Business of Disinformation* is worth a try.

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JÁN VIŠŇOVSKÝ, JULIÁNA MINÁRIKOVÁ, MIROSLAV KAPEC (2022): *SLOVENSKÝ MEDIÁLNY PRIEMYSEL* [THE SLOVAK MEDIA INDUSTRY], PRAHA: WOLTERS KLUWER, 135 PP., ISBN: 978-80-7676-596-2.

From their origin onwards, media have become an inseparable part of our modern society. While having an impact on their users and consumers, due to the development of modern technologies and various changes in modern lifestyles, there are several iterations in their current operating formats. Contemporary states, their representatives and citizens face numerous challenges to make media function in the best possible way. First, suitable legislation is needed that meets the criteria of our new and dynamically changing times, with constantly developing technologies and emerging topics. Transparency is crucial in the context of concentration of media ownership and the funding of media outlets. Furthermore, the performance of journalists must be professional and highly ethical to provide high-quality work and provide a clear and unambiguous distinction between editorial and advertorial contents. Journalists must also be responsible for the published content and restricting sponsorship, the process of digitization, and the free access to the information for both the journalists and the public. The role of media as the watchdog of democracy has been important for decades, and it is crucial to continue providing this function today when most people believe that they live in countries that abide by the rule of law. Therefore, to build and maintain a thriving democracy, special emphasis needs to be placed on investigative journalism, along with proper protection for media professionals who seek to expose the misconduct, scandals and corruption that unfortunately is still abundant in twenty-first century societies.

Furthermore, every media market ought to be prepared to deal with unaccustomed problems that constantly appear or ample unexpected crises, as we have experience in recent years—the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic with all the consequences it had on the media, language or communities globally; the ongoing war in Ukraine; and the complex issue of migration. The occurrence of new topics and concepts such as the phenomenon of political correctness and its influence on language, agendas, actions or conduct. There is also the arrogant endeavour of politicians and public figures to make use of media for their own sakes —be it for winning an election, getting better ratings, or spreading their ideas and views, or joining the unrestrained influx of fake news. The transparency and plurality of the media market is fundamental for a well-functioning

modern state, however, recently we have witnessed deep and probably irreversible changes – the gradual loss of ability to set the agenda, along with the decline of circulations and readership, the rise of publishing costs and the fall of advertising revenue in the case of the traditional print media, while social media, especially social networks gain more importance in providing information and news.

Print media as well as the traditional electronic media – radio and TV – face the challenge of maintaining their positions in the competitive media market. In most of the European countries, including Slovakia, there is a dual system with public-service media (PSM) and commercial TV and radio stations operating on the media market. The role of the public-service media is to acknowledge their viewers and listeners as citizens and consider all strata of society (audiences) and are expected to provide unbiased and impersonal newscasts. The PSM care for minorities, provide support to cultural or legal awareness, promote education, but also entertainment, while being funded by licences, advertising revenue and grants from the state. By contrast, commercial media consider their listeners and viewers as mass consumers (customers) and their main aim is to make profit, while being funded from selling advertising space. To meet their targets, they have to offer attractive programmes satisfying both consumers and media buyers, thus it is usually entertainment that prevails in their programme structures. New possibilities of disseminating radio and TV broadcasting while using new technologies have brought significant changes, turning information society into digital one. Digital broadcasting has enabled the growth in the number of the programmes offered, better quality of image and sound, new additional services, lower costs of transmission, or increased demand on external receivers. However, it has also led to the process of convergence, and concentration of media on a multinational level, and also the emergence of new concepts – multimedia, pay-per-view, video on demand, digital audio broadcasting, or streaming.

The Internet environment has its specifics and since its arrival, and exponential expansion and growing availability, it has modified not only existing media industries, but also the whole of society. From the overabundant dotcoms of Web 1.0, the emergence of Web 2.0 has brought expansion of social networks and the interference of the public into media contents mainly through sharing and posting own contributions. In the context of the Web 3.0, the struggle—to cope with the information oversaturation and personification of the content offered—started. Together with the lack of regulation, anonymity, and lack of taking responsibility for the posted texts, this has led to vulgarisation and growing aggression in cyberspace, the onset of alternative and disinformation media, dissemination of hoaxes, disinformation and misinformation. In this perspective, the issue of monopolisation and oligopolisation is highly topical in this field.

The reviewed scientific monograph is focused on the current position and functioning of three media sectors in Slovakia – the press, the electronic broadcast media (radio and TV) and the Internet. However, the monograph does not provide its readers with a complex analysis of these media branches. It aims to reflect the multidisciplinary character of the examination of this issue, which is based on paradigmatic frameworks of media and communication studies. As the authors of the publication state in its Introduction: "*We point out the most significant facts and aspects forming the current nature and character of these three media sectors.*"(page 8). The book was published with the help of a financial grant provided by the Scientific Grant Agency at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences to the project VEGA No. 1/0283/20 with the title "Synergy of media industry branches in the context of critical political media economy". One of the aims of the project was to provide a set of notions that within the context of multidisciplinary foundations lead to the definition and delimitation of synergies of individual branches in contemporary Slovak media industry.

The publication is divided into three main chapters: 1) The Slovak industry of publishing the periodical print press; 2) The radio and TV industry in Slovakia; and 3) The Internet industry in the context of media environment. Each chapter is elaborated by a lecturer at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication who is an expert in the chapter's field.

The first chapter is presented by Ján Višňovský. His scientific research deals with the issue of journalism in the perspective of the development of information and communication technologies, multiplatform journalism, profession of a journalist, journalism on social media and topical issues of the Slovak media industry, especially regarding the periodical press. This chapter consists of five subchapters focused on the following areas – Part I: Current legislation of publishing the periodical press in Slovakia. Part II: Ownership and ownership relations in the publishing sector in a historical perspective. Part III: The market in the periodical press in Slovakia and its peculiarities. Part IV: The largest players in the market in the periodical press in Slovakia – News and Media Holding, Petit Press, MAFRA Slovakia, FPD Media, OUR MEDIA and N Press. Part V: Conclusions.

The second chapter was elaborated by Juliána Mináriková. She is a specialist in the area of media systems and those of traditional electronic media, especially TV and radio broadcasting in the context of setting strategies of broadcasting in the conditions of new technological trends. Her chapter involves 4 main subchapters, as follows – Part I: Media system and its arrangement, restricting the media system. Part II: The core and funding of traditional electronic media, restricting the legal framework of electronic media broadcasting in Slovakia. Part III: Technological determinants of broadcasting. Part IV: The structure of media

market of electronic broadcasters in Slovakia; the media market in Slovakia, Survey of ratings, Radio stations and networks, TV stations and groups. Also, the state of the media market in Slovakia in terms of arrangement of broadcasters, globalisation and media concentration.

The third chapter was produced by Miroslav Kapec, who specializes in radio communication and production. Within his research, he is also interested in online and print journalism, social media and non-factual content in the online environment, but also the operation of mainstream and alternative media in the Slovak media environment. His chapter consists of five subchapters – Part I: Monopolisation and oligopolisation of the Internet industry. Part II: Social media. Part III: Review of key platforms. Part IV: Disinformation online media and Part V: Conclusions.

The scientific monograph offers much inspirational information not only to experts in the field, academics and researchers, but also students of mass media communication, journalism, marketing communication and other related branches. The lay public will also be interested in the current conditions and factors under which the Slovak media market has been operating. The elaborated topics, concepts and ideas that may be found in individual chapters and subchapters may serve as the scientific basis for both the theoretical and empirical follow-up research.

Despite the complexity of the investigated issue, the authors managed to produce a book of suitable length that offers a good read and provides readers with an insight into specific conditions, in which contemporary media market in Slovakia works. The findings published in the monograph may serve as the foundation for an institutional debate on the contemporary state, challenges, peculiarities and difficulties of media market in Slovakia, with special attention paid to building a healthy democratic system fit for its purpose for the public. It offers an amazing content to international readers, which could be enlarged if translated into English.

Magdaléna Ungerová
UNIVERSITY OF SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS IN TRNAVA, SLOVAKIA

PATRICK FERRUCCI & SCOTT A. ELDRIDGE (EDS.). (2022). *THE INSTITUTIONS CHANGING JOURNALISM: BARBARIANS INSIDE THE GATE.* ROUTLEDGE, 199 PP. ISBN: 978-0-367-69085-4 (HBK), ISBN: 978-0-367-69090-8 (PBK), ISBN: 978-1-003-14039-9 (EBK).

New technologies have changed our entire lives. They have also influenced the work of journalists. Today there are questions about the border of journalism. Who can be called a journalist? Moreover, there is the increasing suggestion that in the age of social media, in which everyone can be the sender of a message, and artificial intelligence can generate texts— journalists are no longer needed. That is why the question about the role of journalism in the modern world is justified.

Patrick Ferrucci, Scott A. Eldridge, and other authors in this volume try to answer this question. Their book is a collection of essays showing examples of changes that have occurred in journalism, such as those due to: the implementation of new technologies; the increase in the amount of information generated by non-journalists; and the financial problems of the media outlets. Authors of the chapters show the shifting not only of journalism's boundaries but also the actors and institutions that traditionally were affiliated to, or cooperated with, the media. As the editors write on page iii:

> Bringing together original contributions from a worldwide group of scholars, this book critically explores the changing role and influence of institutions in the production of news. Drawing from a diverse set of disciplinary and theoretical backgrounds, research paradigms and perspectives, and methodologies, each chapter explores different institutions currently impacting journalism, including government bodies, businesses, technological platforms, and civic organizations. Together they outline how cracks in the autonomy of the journalism industry have allowed for other types of organizations to exert influence over the manner in which journalism is produced, funded, experienced and even conceptualized.

The authors give an interesting look at new actors in journalism, showing the pros and cons of such a situation. However, the subtitle of 'Barbarians Inside the Gate' could suggest that the emphasis of the change is negative. The advantage of the book is that many examples allow a better understanding of the complex

social phenomena and processes. It is probably also due to the editors whose research focus on the topic. Patrick Ferrucci (PhD, University of Missouri) examines organization-level variables' impact on message construction and Scott A. Eldridge (PhD, University of Sheffield) researches digital journalism and how non-traditional actors challenge the boundaries of the journalistic field.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, entitled "The historical influencers", contains four essays. Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk and Tine Ustad Figenschou look at inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in the Norwegian press self-regulation system. They analyze cases of refusal to accept controversial right-wing alternative news sites *Document.no* and *Resett.no* to the Association of Editors and the Association of the Media Industries. The reason for this decision was, among others, the current practices (e.g., portals challenging to boycott other information media), publication of anti-system content, and violation of ethical principles enshrined in journalism's codes of conduct. A discussion about the limits of journalism which indicates that journalists could criticize the practices of other editors but not call for a boycott because this undermines the idea of the freedom of speech. In the second essay, You Li shows how advertising affects journalism by analyzing the example of native advertising. Li on page 31 emphasizes that:

> The tension between the transparency and deception of the news-advertising boundary illustrates the power asymmetries between the editorial side and the business side. The preservation of the editorial-business boundary depends on the execution of native advertising, whether the production, integration, and presentation of native advertising adhere to an ethical and clear disclosure.

Thus follows the dissipation of the editorial-business boundary, considering that many publishers have started producing ads through either their own design studios or editorial teams. Making native advertising similar to journalistic texts may expose recipients to manipulation and discourage using such messages. In the third essay, Jonathan Peters shows the tension between freedom of speech enshrined in the American First Amendment to the Constitution, the right to information and the right to privacy, and the protection of one's image and defamation. It is crucial in the era of digital media, spreading misinformation, and political and social polarization. In the fourth text, Alfred Hermida, Lisa Varano, and Mary Lynn Young write about the role and impact of academic circles on journalism, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, on the example of Canadian digital media platform *The Conversation*. At that time, the importance of *The Conversation's* journalism model, under which articles were written by academics and edited by professional journalists, was burgeoning. The model could irritate journalists from traditional media who were in a difficult financial

situation due to the pandemic. The Hermida, Varano, and Young summarize on page 68:

> The Conversation model has demonstrated one way that the higher education sector can intervene in the media and help counter the market failure of commercial news, capitalizing on the unique position of universities as trusted generators of expert information.

The second part is entitled "The new funds and organizers". In the first essay, Sandra Banjac indicates how digital technologies have changed the relationship between journalists and recipients. The latter has gained the opportunity to express their needs, preferences, and reluctance to publish messages or journalistic practices. In the next chapter, Magda Konieczna describes the foundations' impact on journalism (using the example of the USA), e.g., by financing journalistic schools. On the one hand, foundations have been beneficial for the development of journalism, financially supporting editors, partly making them independent of advertising. On the other hand, some of the foundations secretly pursue political goals. In another essay, Stefan Baack, David Cheruiyot, and Raul Ferrer-Conill research how non-journalistic actors perform practices central to data journalism and how journalism shapes peripheral actors. In the following text, Andreas Hepp and Wiebke Loosen describe the concept of pioneering journalism, which consists of the fact that journalists experimenting with new forms due to technology development are embedded in practice communities. They also act as trainers or consultants and manage and write blogs. In this way, the authors show journalism's re-figuration, which means an expansion of the constellation of actors; a transformation in the character of journalism's organizational figurations; and a change in work practices and processes (p. 129).

The third part is entitled "The technological institutions". In the first essay, Jacob L. Nelson and Andrea Wenzel present engaged journalism on the examples of *City Bureau*, *Resolve Philly*, and *Free*. They analyze the impact on journalism of actors outside the traditional journalistic field. Another essay by Valérie Bélair-Gagnon is the story of the role of web analytics (e.g., number of page views, unique users) in journalism and the dangers resulting from excessive management of indicators. As a consequence, it is the recipients themselves who decide what to publish by clicking, and journalists themselves become addicted to external actors. In the next essay, Frank M. Russell and Tim P. Vos describe the impact of social media platforms, i.e., Facebook, Google, Apple, and Twitter, for journalistic practice, analyzing available literature. The authors examined the interaction of journalism with Silicon Valley platforms from three scientific perspectives: new institutionalism, field theory, and assemblage theory. They state on page 75 that:

> All three theories see journalism's relationship with Silicon Valley platforms as a social relationship among agentic actors. Multiple articles showed journalists adopted social media values when they did not conflict with traditional journalistic values such as objectivity (…). However, audiences embraced Silicon Valley platforms to engage with news and other information, requiring news media to interact with platforms, regardless of whether journalists are willing participants.

These essays show how journalism changes and the ways many new institutions and actors become content producers. They are called peripheral actors—barbarians. After all, they are not professional journalists and they query journalistic standards, but still, they change journalism. The editors, in the introduction on page 2, compare journalism to a ship, which has undergone many changes, and ask whether we are still dealing with the same ship or another one:

> Through this analogy, we can approach journalism as a ship defined on the one hand by the historically imbued value and purpose it has long benefited from, and by the continuous transformations that it has endured on the other.

Thus, the limits of journalism are constantly negotiated, and the fear of the status of this profession is due, today, to changes taking place much faster than before. Journalism is not a state or an unchanging institution, but a process, as editors explain on page 9. That is the reason that studying journalism in many aspects is crucial as both an institution with clearly defined functions and principles and as a field constantly changing due to the impact of various external phenomena and processes. Getting to know and understand them will facilitate the assessment of this profession and make us not treat change as a threat but instead as a challenge. That is why it is worth reading this book.

Aleksandra Seklecka
NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ, POLAND

THE 73RD CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION, TORONTO, CANADA, MAY 25–29, 2023

The International Communication Association (ICA) Annual conference took place in the city centre of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Key conference theme "Reclaiming Authenticity in Communication" offered grounds for reexamining communications scholarship knowledge exchange, with the panel on media freedom and democracy by the Polish Communication Association.

The annual conferences of the International Communication Association are among the largest for media scholars worldwide. The ICA research sections offer various scholarly and methodological approaches as both media and society constantly evolve. Looking at the key themes from the ICA conferences of recent years, the overall goal has been to address the values of openness, inclusiveness, and social justice alongside the question of "One World? One Network" – as in the case of last year's ICA conference in Paris. This time, the organizers emphasized the authenticity of communication, further asking – above all: What are the key pillars of authentic communication? And what makes communication more or less authentic?

Photo 1. Participants of the panel of the Polish Communication Association during the 73rd conference of the ICA, Toronto, Canada, May 2023.

Author: Łukasz Szurmiński (University of Warsaw).

This year's opening session, entitled "Authenticity at the Heart of Communication (Scholarship)", featured Sarah Banet-Weiser (University of Southern California & University of Pennsylvania), Pablo Boczkowski (Northwestern University),

Rajiv Rimal (Johns Hopkins University) and Joseph B. Walther (University of California, Santa Barbara) – offering different research approaches and methodologies towards the authenticity. The critical conference theme echoed in the parallel sections' panels, including the thematic pre – and post-conferences. For instance, the leading themes in connection to authenticity in organizational studies have widely explored the challenge of human-to-machine automation and time-related tensions in news publishing vs news checking. In journalism studies, the emphasis concerning knowledge share has been on the challenge of going beyond perceived journalism values, with data from several journalism ethnographic research projects and data illustrating new forms of media communities (lean and agile forms, sustainable-driven communications, human rights in the data-driven age, etc.).

The panel of the Polish Communication Association in Toronto 2023 looked at authenticity in communication via the researchers' interests and their lenses towards media freedom and democracy in Europe. Overall, we argued that the umbrella term of authenticity is highly interwoven with the value of truth; something which has been challenged by the polarisation of the European media and multiple narratives on what democracy stands for. We invited the consortium members of the EU-funded project "Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape" (MEDIADELCOM, 2021–2024), to challenge the normative media and democracy foundations (theory and media regulation) with their local democratic checks and balances of implementation and effectiveness. Researchers from 14 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden) used the MEDIADELCOM methodology to share findings on journalism values, importance of journalism literacies and education, alongside the call for more inclusive and open dialogue between policymakers and media researchers in the national and European contexts.

Participants of the PCA panel received comments and feedback from session attendees and Daniel C. Hallin (San Diego University), who served as the respondent – and is a member of the Advisory Board of the MEDIADELCOM project. Findings from the ICA panel of the Polish Communication Association will be published in the Special Issue 2024 of the "Central European Journal of Communication".

Michał Głowacki
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

"MEDIA FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY: EUROPE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE" THE PANEL OF THE POLISH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

TORONTO, CANADA, MAY 29, 2023
RESPONDENT: DANIEL C. HALLIN, SAN DIEGO UNIVERSITY

PRESENTERS:

DEMOCRATIC AND CULTURAL U-TURNS? HUNGARY AND POLAND EXPLAINED

Gábor Polyák, Michał Głowacki, Petra Szávai, Jacek Mikucki, Łukasz Szurmiński, Katarzyna Gajlewicz Korab and Maria Łoszewska Ołowska

The quality of democracy in Hungary and Poland has raised attention under the ruling conservative right governments. While the European Union acknowledges non-democratic turns and free media erosion in both countries, Hungary's and Poland's governments build their success by opposing the Western voices, resulting in value clashes (formerly known as conservatives vs liberals). This paper uses critical cultural junctures and social, political and media lenses to investigate the origins of multiple narratives over today's democracy.

HOW QUALITY OF JOURNALISM INFLUENCES PRESS FREEDOM IN 14 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A FSQCA COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Zrinjka Peruško, Epp Lauk, Filip Trbojević, Iva Nenadić, Dina Vozab, Peter Berglez and Mart Ots

This paper investigates the relationship of the journalistic field with press freedom values in 14 Western and Eastern European countries. The study is based on case studies of media systems in the same 14 countries and the fsQCA (fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis) calibrations performed during the MEDIADELCOM project. The fsQCA analysis is expected to show, which combinations of contingent conditions in the countries related to higher or lower values on the press freedom index.

DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY: THE MEDIA-RELATED RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS THE INTERACTION OF AGENTS

Halliki Harro Loit, Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte, Lilia Raycheva, Bissera Zankova, Sergio Splendore, Martin Oller Alonso and John Matthews

This study approaches the media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication using the actor approach. We ask how the action and interaction of different agents (e.g., journalists, media users, politicians. experts, etc.)—who act and interact in specific societal contexts and with specific competence—influence the paths of risks and opportunities in 14 European countries. The study uses agent-oriented modelling as the point of departure.

JOURNALISM COMPETENCIES AND SELF-REGULATION: THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Lenka Waschková Císařová, Iveta Jansová, Jan Motal, Halliki Harro-Loit, Ioana Avădani

This paper focuses on self-regulation and its relation to journalism competencies in 14 European countries. The comparison considers historical evolution, political economy changes, and self-regulation development, with a special focus on journalistic (de) professionalisation. The study analyses media policy documents, self-regulation documents and organisations alongside expert interview data. The framework covers a wide range of European media systems; the data stems from the research of the participating teams of the MEDIADELCOM project.

RESEARCH WITH(OUT) VALUES: INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPACT OF MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY AS AN ACADEMIC FIELD

Tobias Eberwein, Marcus Kreutler and Susanne Fengler

Research on media accountability stresses the importance of free and responsible media for democratic societies. But how far can researchers themselves contribute to holding media accountable? The paper discusses the relevance of media accountability as an academic field and its impact on journalism practice. The analysis is based on a comparative evaluation of research infrastructures for media accountability in 14 European countries and a discussion of cases of the interplay between journalism and academia.

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS? OLD AND NEW BARRIERS TO SOCIAL COHESION IN ARTS, CULTURE AND MEDIA. WARSAW, POLAND, MAY 11, 2023

Artists and journalists warned audiences—attending a public event in Warsaw on 11 May—not to stay silent when freedom of speech and expression are under threat and encouraged them to be proactive in tackling polarization and divisions in society. The warnings came during the event, 'Breaking Down the Walls? Old and New Barriers to Social Cohesion in Arts, Culture and Media' organized by the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies at the University of Warsaw, in collaboration with the Media Diversity Institute Global and with the support of the Museum of Modern Art.

Photo 1. Event poster

Author: Media Diversity Institute Global

Hanna Azemsha, a TV journalist and reporter from Belarus, who is working in Poland for Belsat TV, made a powerful warning about being complacent. She said change in her country didn't happen overnight and people didn't take it seriously at first. As a result, freedoms have been lost and many of her fellow journalists as well as opposition figures and activists are in jail. Reporters Without Borders highlighted in its 2022 Round-up that Belarus is one of the world's top jailers of journalists with more than 30 behind bars. Azemsha encouraged

audience members to "take action every time you see freedom of expression being threatened. Don't close your eyes when you see something wrong".

It was a message repeated by other speakers at the event, part of the MEDIAdelcom project, exploring the role of the creative and media sectors in preserving freedom and promoting deliberation.

Well-documented problems facing the media and arts in Poland and the wider EU include censorship and financial and political pressure. Poland has slipped down the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in its *Liberties Media Freedom Report 2023* said that media freedom in the EU is in steady decline.

Photo 2. Discussion moderators and participants
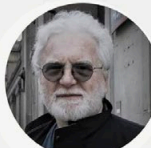
Author: Media Diversity Institute Global

There have also been warnings about the state of the creative sector in Poland. Artistic Freedom Initiative in partnership with UC Berkeley School of Law and Columbia University's Harriman Institute compiled the *Censorship and Suppression of the Arts in Poland* report. The report claims there have been attempts in recent years to align the country's arts and cultural landscape to more closely reflect the ruling party's socially conservative and nationalist ethos. It also reported that independent cultural institutions have been under pressure and often steer away from controversial programming.

Both the media and arts sectors are navigating the changing norms, pressures and restrictions of a new societal and data-driven media reality. The event explored the role of the arts and culture sectors in facilitating and promoting deliberation and enhancing social cohesion in an era of growing threats to democracy and rights. Artists as well as media practitioners shared their experiences and explored practical solutions.

Agata Szczęśniak, a journalist, sociologist, columnist and activist, who works for OKO.press, a fact-checking and investigative journalism outlet in Poland, said people need to fight any actions that lead towards authoritarianism. She said presenting the facts and informing people about issues is not enough.

"There is a presumption that when facts are presented to people they become enlightened. It is not true." Szczęśniak added that people read and absorbs facts in the framework of their own culture and beliefs, but she still believes the media plays an important role in presenting the facts and making them available to the public. She urged people to support the media, especially independent media, to ensure its survival and ability to present responsible reporting.

Speakers agreed common ground was needed for deliberation to succeed in tackling the problem of polarization, especially in Polish society.

Professor Andrzej Krakowski, film director, producer, teacher, writer and cartoonist who lives in the US, spoke about his experience being expelled from Poland during anti-Semitic purges in 1968. He called for people to listen to each other and enter into dialogue to exchange ideas. "We can't keep putting bandaids on wounds when we don't understand where the wounds come from." Krakowski said there is an overload of information and media options, and people don't know how to communicate.

Shady Lady, a Polish drag queen, artist and activist whose performances touch on the issues of the LGBTQ+ community, agreed it was important to listen and not just consume information. "For us in the LGBTQ+ community, we are open to discussion and to communicate and describe issues, but sometimes the other side doesn't want to listen." Shady Lady added that there was still a lack of respect for the LGBTQ+ community in the country.

In Poland, authorities in one-third of the country have adopted anti-LGBT resolutions since 2019, declaring themselves free of "LGBT ideology" which

includes so-called LGBT "free-zones". Some towns have since had their "zones" annulled by courts.

Shady Lady said polarization is the biggest issue facing society and the arts provide an avenue for connecting people.

Michał Janicki, painter, creative art director, and head of painters and animators in BreakThru Films in Poland, agreed art has a role to play in helping solve problems. He said artists can provide a space for people to meet and exchange ideas. "I think art can do a lot, we just need to be brave. Deliberation is possible if only we are willing to meet in the same room."

Krakowski also appealed to the audience to listen to each other and be more proactive in solving problems. "The most effective way is to do. Let's not push for change, let's make change."

Dr. William Tayeebwa, Senior Lecturer of Journalism and Communication at Makerere University in Uganda, sent a video message saying freedom of expression was also under pressure in many African nations, but artists have been speaking out on issues including governance, human rights and freedom of expression. He urged artists in Europe to do the same. "With the rise of right-wing politics in Europe, the work of artists and cultural figures is even more important to spread the message of love and empathy towards the other."

Audience members were impressed with the diversity of panelists and views and they took Hanna Azemsha's warning seriously. They said the panel discussion prompted them to think about the power of expression and individual responsibility.

The public event was held at the end of a two-day meeting in Warsaw for MEDIAdelcom project members, who were finalizing plans for the next stage of the project, which includes the publication of a book. MEDIAdelcom is a research project finding risks and opportunities for European media landscapes concerning deliberative communication and social cohesion. It will develop a diagnostic tool that will enable modelling and management of multiple scenarios and instruments for media-related risks prediction. The 14 EU countries project is financed by the EU's funding programme for research and innovation Horizon 2020.

The event also featured art by Warsaw University students including a digital photographic display, Freedom! Where are you? and a dance performance interpreting freedom.

Tanya Sakzewski
MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE GLOBAL

RESEARCH ON JOURNALISTS IN POLAND: PROBLEMS, DILEMMAS AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES, POZNAŃ, POLAND, FEBRUARY 9–10, 2023

The seminar "Research on journalists in Poland: problems, dilemmas and methodological challenges" was held at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (AMU) on February 9–10, 2023. It was organized by the Journalistic Role Performance research team (Poland), operating at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at AMU, in cooperation with the Department of Social Communication (also the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism AMU) and the Journalism Studies section of the Polish Communication Association.

The seminar addressed scholars who have an interest in Polish journalism and Polish journalists in the field of research, as well as those who are just starting their scientific work, including Ph.D. candidates. The participants of the event represented fifteen Polish research centers, including the University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, University of Wrocław, and University of Silesia in Katowice. The seminar was divided into two parts. On the first day, there were three panels during which participants made their presentations, followed by discussions. The next day, scholars had the opportunity to join workshops led by representatives from AMU. The event was held under the patronage of the Polish Communication Association.

DAY 1

The opening session of the event was started by Agnieszka Stępińska on behalf of the organizing committee who welcomed the guests of the seminar. Subsequently, Michał Głowacki, Katarzyna Gajlewicz-Korab and Maria Łoszewska-Ołowska (University of Warsaw) gave a presentation—"Research on Journalists in Poland – The Assessment of the Last Two Decades in the Light of Media and Democracy Studies in Europe". The project involved the presenters plus two other scholars— Jacek Mikucki and Łukasz Szurmiński.

During the first session, titled "What do we study, whom do we study?", participants drew attention to the subjects and areas of journalism studies. The session was opened by Wojciech Adamczyk from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, who provided an insightful examination of research areas in investigative journalism studies in the era of the evolving media landscape and changing working conditions for reporters. His presentation, titled "Who, what, where, when, how, why, with what effect: on the study of investigative journalism", set the tone for

the discussion. He was followed by Dominika Popielec from Kazimierz Wielki University, who presented an intriguing content analysis of investigative journalism, shedding light on the most commonly used reporter's techniques. Her presentation, titled "The behind-the-scenes of investigative journalists' work – selected examples", further explored the thread of investigative journalism. Next, Michał Chlebowski from SWPS University examined the inclusivity and exclusivity of media, with a particular focus on the journalist's role in shaping the discourse on gender. His presentation titled "Exclusive media – inclusive media. Journalist's role in shaping discourse on gender", offered valuable insights into this important aspect. The closing presentation was delivered by Iwona Grodź from Poznan University of Social Sciences, who discussed the changing landscape of arts journalism, particularly in the realm of film journalism. Her presentation titled "The future of art (film) journalism? Research methods", explored the captivating future of this field. Overall, the session provided an engaging platform for participants to delve into the various aspects of journalism studies and sparked meaningful discussions on the future of the profession.

Photo 1. Agnieszka Stępińska, the leader of the organizational team, welcoming participants to the seminar. The Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, February 9, 2023.

Photo by: Beata Użarowska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

The second session, titled "How do we conduct research?", focused on the challenges related to research methods and tools in journalism studies. The session began with a presentation by Lucyna Szot from the University of Wrocław, who captured participants' attention by introducing theoretical concepts and discussing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in journalism studies. Her presentation, titled "Journalism studies – research methods", provided valuable insights into the topic. Next, Agnieszka Węglińska from DSW University

of Lower Silesia presented thought-provoking results from in-depth interviews with journalists. Her presentation, titled "Qualitative methods in research on public television in Poland", shed light on the challenges faced by public television in Poland, including issues related to legislation, commercialization, media colonization, politicization, and tabloidization. Then, Małgorzata Adamik-Szysiak from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University shared interesting findings from qualitative media content analysis. Her presentation, titled "The journalist as a creator – analysis of information structure", illustrated how journalists from leading media outlets in Poland portrayed the audience in thematically similar events. Finally, Magdalena Ślawska from the University of Silesia in Katowice discussed the study of journalists' utterances in the context of research on metatexts. Her presentation, titled "Journalist's footsteps in the text – exploring qualitative research", provided insights into this specific area of study. Overall, the session provided a comprehensive exploration of research methods and their application in journalism studies.

Photo 2. Discussion between participants of the seminar during the first day of the event. The Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, February 9, 2023.

Photo by: Beata Użarowska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

The third session, titled "How do we conduct research?", brought the challenges posed by changes in the media landscape to the forefront. Kicking off the session, Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska from SWPS University piqued participants' curiosity by presenting the methodology of her IDI research on the Polish fact-checking community. Her presentation, titled "Studying the fact-checking community as a professional symbolic community (in the context of journalism)", shed light on this particular area of study. Afterward, Rafał Leśniczak from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw examined how the theory of topos can

be considered complementary to the theory of framing in the analysis of the media image of political and religious leaders. His presentation, titled "The concept of topos in media studies as a complementary tool to the theory of framing. Analysis of the media image of political and religious leaders", delved into this intriguing aspect of media research. Later on, Weronika Dopierała-Kalińska from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań pictured the methodological challenges that researchers may face when studying the sender-message-receiver relationship in the online media environment. Her presentation, titled "Methodological challenges in research on news websites", highlighted the complexities encountered in this area of research activities. Wrapping up the session, Paweł Łokić from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, in his presentation titled "Practices of the journalism profession in online media using sports journalism as an example", drew attention to the changing landscape of mass media and its implications for journalists, particularly those in sports journalism. Overall, the session provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by researchers in conducting research amid the dynamic media landscape. Following the session, all the participants were invited to a dinner, which was an opportunity to continue the discussion and exchange views in a more informal setting.

DAY 2

During the second day, participants had the opportunity to choose from three workshops led by scholars from Adam Mickiewicz University and enhance their skills in conducting research on journalism and journalists. The first workshop, titled "The codebook as a tool for research on journalists", was moderated by Agnieszka Stępińska and Bartłomiej Secler, who are members of the international research project titled "Journalistic Role Performance", coordinated by Claudia Mellado from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaiso in Chile. During this workshop, participants gained insights into the project's research design at the beginning, followed by a chance to test and work with the project's primary research tool, a qualitative codebook.

Subsequently, Jacek Wyszyński introduced the seminar participants to the Content Analysis System for Television (CAST). The research tool, developed at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism of AMU, is specifically designed for collecting research material from television media outlets. During the meeting, participants learned how the system operates and how to use it for future research purposes.

The third workshop, titled "Network analysis in research on the activity and position of journalists in social media", led by Kinga Adamczewska, focused on explaining the research method known as network analysis. Participants first delved into the theoretical background and then applied the theory in practice using the Gephi software. At the end of the workshop, participants received a copy

of Kinga Adamczewska's book titled "The Role of the Media in Contemporary Models of Political Information Flow'".

The seminar was a fantastic opportunity to exchange experience and challenges in research on journalism and journalists. Also, during the workshops, participants could gain new useful skills. At the end of the event, the organizational team thanked everyone for their participation and expressed the hope for more such valuable meetings.

Denis Halagiera and Daria Zadrożniak
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

METAVERSE AS A PROMISE OF A BRIGHT FUTURE?
SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN A WORLD OF ISOLATION, MARCH 12, 2022,
ONLINE WORKSHOP;
29TH IEEE CONFERENCE ON VIRTUAL REALITY + 3D USER INTERFACES

The vision of using the metaverse as a social area used to be at best a sci-fi concept. However, nowadays the metaverse has become a real alternative for online communication. It uses the achievements of modern technology such as virtual reality to create space for realistic dialogue and interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic proved that humanity must create an alternative for long-distance relations such as online meetings and video-calls. Self-isolation and lockdowns have increased the value of online relationships and virtual reality enabled us to create contacts on a new common ground.

On 12 March 2022, a workshop took place called "The metaverse as a promise of a bright future? – social interactions in a world of isolation" took place. The Laboratory of Media Studies (LMS) at the University of Warsaw, organized the workshop as part of the IEEE Conference on Virtual Reality + 3D User Interfaces. The organizer of the workshop was selected in the international competition hosted by the IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organization. It was a very popular part of the whole conference, because it was attended by 45 participants from dozens of academic centers from around the world. The workshop was divided in two parts: a panel discussion chaired by Professor Anna Mierzecka (Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, LMS UW) and an interactive game in VR Chat hosted by students from the University of Warsaw.

Prof. Mark Billinghurst (Empathic Computing Laboratory, University of South Australia) started his presentation *Empathic Computing, going beyond the metaverse* by explaining growing popularity of the metaverse, which is directly connected with developing products of Mark Zuckerberg's Meta. However, Billingshurst returned to the roots of the metaverse concept, which was first described in Neal Stephens's book "SnowCrash". He also admitted that the metaverse is the convergence of virtually enhanced physical reality and physically persistent virtual space. In his speech, Billingshurst underlined that there are three trends in modern communication, which also contribute to the metaverse development. At first, he focused on metamorphose in video-calls. Many of us are more interested in capturing the experience of being with somebody not just seeing each other faces on FaceTime or Messenger. This trend can be also visible in apps that allow

the users not only to share faces, but also share places – like on VR Chat, where we can share virtual space.

The second trend is natural collaboration between users, which is more effective due to high video streaming standards or sending photos to each other by online communicators. The third trend is the evolution of technological systems, which recognize the users behavior or emotions. All these trends combined led to emphatic computing. This idea is based on sharing the users' feeling, image and sound. To put these assumptions into practice, you need tools that use biometric measurements, such as eye tracking glasses or brain synchronized VR equipment. By using these devices, we can experience the empathic tele-existence, which allows us to move from the role of user to participant. In the summary of the paper presentation, Billinghurst concluded that we should go beyond the metaverse and focus on emphatic computing systems that can in future lead to the development of emphatic tele-existence technology.

Prof. Matthew Cotton's (SSSHL Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Teeside University, UK) presentation concerned the E*thical decision-making and virtual environments*. It is a very important topic in the discussion about social aspects of the metaverse because in this digital world the users can be influenced by the technology more than ever. Cotton focused on ethical challenges that the metaverse is going to face in the future. In his presentation he highlighted the most important aspects of ethical dilemmas; such as user privacy, data management and control, using NFT's or cypto-currency and possible changes in social interactions or lifestyle that can be caused by the metaverse. He also admitted that these problems are not new and have already appeared in technological industries. It's hard to disagree with this approach to the subject.

The answer for most of questions raised by the speaker is about the intentions of brands providing social VR experience. Prof. Cotton also stated that deepfakes and disinformation can be used more effectively in virtual worlds due to the difficulties of verifying the content. However, it is not about only about the disadvantages of the metaverse but of the whole modern media sphere and the lack of protection regulation.

In the summary of his speech, Cotton talked about the Collingridge dilemma, which is a choice between two attitudes towards technology. The first possibility is to allow technology to live develop without any human control. The other option is to control technology from the start and observe its development. Unfortunately, the solutions for ethical problems described in the paper are in my opinion unrealistic because creating new legal solutions for protect users' rights is very often ineffective. Besides, it is difficult to define the limits of virtual reality, which develops much faster than new legal or ethical codes.

The next presentation was dedicated to the impact of the metaverse on the education sector. Carlos J. Ochoa Fernández (CEO in ONE Digital Consulting.

President VR/AR Association Madrid Chapter, Global Co-Chair VR/ARA Education Committee), focused on the whole complex ecosystem of new technological solutions for humanity (presentation entitled *Impact of Metaverse in Education and Training in the Virtual Twin Society)*. He stated that we can't only talk about the metaverse without including other similar technologies that are involved in the whole process such as applications, augmented reality etc. A huge change in this area can be seen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowadays we have many platforms that can be used as learning spaces but these solutions are not as interactive as the metaverse.

Four factors will be crucial in using the metaverse in education are: i) the sense of being in virtual space; ii) using non-verbal communication; iii) networking with other users in real time, and iv) having a human connection and sensorial exploration of worlds. These characteristics can be beneficial for students and teachers. An example of implementing this solution can be found in the United Arab Emirates. Schools there are using 3D printers, virtual worlds and augmented reality as a part of Smart Education Lab Project.

Yongwoog 'Andy' Jeon (Department of Marketing, Northern Illinois University, College of Business) in his paper *Reading Social Media Marketing Messages as Simulated Self Within a Metaverse* discussed the phenomenon of the metaverse's popularity. He conducted research on the metaverse trend in social media. He stated that we should study the metaverse because it gives an opportunity of creating anything we wish in the digital form as well as giving a space of free expression for every user. The researcher gave the example of VR Chat as a friendly space for users in which everyone can pick an avatar for themselves. An interesting observation is that young users may differentiate their online identity from their real identity.

The main conclusion of the paper was that we must perceive the metaverse the same way as new marketing channels. Marketers consider the metaverse as a new channel for persuasion. However, there is a need for creating a new media consumption model through metaverse. In the future it is possible that in virtual worlds, advertisements will be present as in real world. Thus, research in this area must continue. Yongwoog 'Andy' Jeon prepared a concept of study using a VR application. He wants to find out if using social media in VR we experience this content as a virtual-self.

The last panel's speaker was Prof. Tomasz Gackowski (Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, LMS UW), who presented a paper about meta-dillemas in future research on the metaverse (*Metaresearch in Metaverse – meta-dillemas in future research)*. He mostly focused on new paths in social study research that must be included when exploring the metaverse. Gackowski began his speech by explaining that the word meta means beyond boundaries. Thus metauniverse means a new dimension of being in technology.

Gackowski clarified that since the COVID-19 pandemic we can observe a massive growth of virtual reality users. It can be also named as the industry "boom" because in 2020 global spending on VR and AR devices and services rose USD12 billion, which is up to 50 % growth from 2019. We also used VR technology for telemedicine, educating professionals about COVID-19 or even as an assistance in palliative care of COVID-19 patients. However, VR technology is not only a huge opportunity for medicine but also for the education sector.

Gackowski presented the results from a research project about VR in education which focused on the process of learning about the human body through both analog and the modern way of teaching. He admitted that teaching with VR technology is still a work-in-progress and the effects of it are not yet satisfactory because there are still many questions to be answered about the purpose of using metaverse as a learning space. At the end Gackowski concluded there are three most important areas that must be included when studying the metaverse: metaknowledge, metaperception-metaunderstanding and the character and layers of the metaverse.

The panel was closed by a discussion, which Prof. Gackowski moderated. The participants talked about ethical aspects of the metaverse and modern technology. One of the main topics was the empathy of social media. Prof. Cotton believed the most important factor is who actually controls social media. This question is even more essential after Elon Musk bought Twitter.

After the discussion participants were invited to take part in a game called Prohibition in VR Chat. Some of them were gamers and the others were observing the game usiing the Zoom platform. Before the game started Dr. Karolina Brylska presented a paper called *Exploring in the VR Chat – community and VR experience.* Her speech was about VR Chat as a space for social interactions. She talked about the study that is coordinated by her at the University of Warsaw. The aim of the study is to observe and analyze how users of VR Chat are establishing social interactions in the app as well as to measure their risky behaviors. Parts of the scientific work in this project is done by students of the Faculty: Ligia Berwid, Jakub Chudzik, Katarzyna Harabin, Zuzanna Jankowska, Patrycja Kępka, Izabela Kołakowska, Kamil Kusztal, Maria Lipińska, Ryszard Niziński, Julia Płocka, Katarzyna Prądzyńska, Joanna Sudejko, Weronika Syliwoniuk, Paulina Wągrodzka. The game in VR Chat was led by one of the students – Mr Ryszard Niziński, who explained all the rules to the players.

Karolina Brylska with her team observed some characteristic feature for the VR Chat users. Most of players are young men who chose female avatars such as anime characters or furry animals. Moreover, players focus on virtual world exploration, conducting interactions with strangers as well; they tend to play various games in VR Chat.

Participation in the game was also a subject of a summary discussion. Scientists debated on various game strategies and choice of avatars in VR Chat. They shared their observations about taking risks in virtual reality and facing difficulties that appeared during the project. *Metaverse as a promise of a bright future? – social interactions in a world of isolation* workshop was a great opportunity to share experiences between people who conduct research about virtual reality. Furthermore, during the panel, participants from all over the world presented different points of view on VR possibilities and dangers. Many areas of future research were highlighted during paper presentations. It is irrefutable that further expansion of this technology is just a matter of time. Thus, it is important to realize how VR can effect society in various dimensions – relationships, leisure, entertainment and education.

Maria Lipińska
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

CONTENDERS FOR THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY
KAROL JAKUBOWICZ AWARD 2023

Three publications focusing on democracy and media are contending for this year's edition of the Media and Democracy Karol Jakubowicz Award.
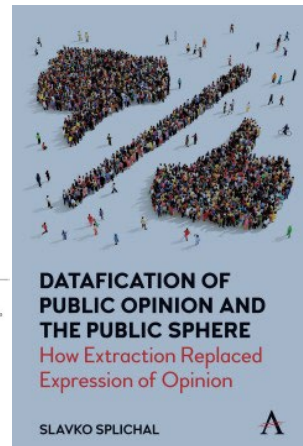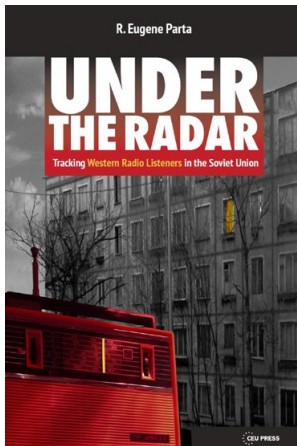
On April 12, 2023, the Selection Committee reviewed proposals submitted for the 6th edition of the Media and Democracy Karol Jakubowicz Award – a mark of acknowledgment and support of significant publications in media systems, policies, ethics, and public service media. Scholarly contributions from 2022 and 2023 were recommended by members of the Leadership Team of the International Association of Public Service Media Researchers (IAPMR), Editors and Associate Editors of "Central European Journal of Communication" (CEJC), alongside previous Award winners and the Committee.

Through evaluation of three highly interwoven criteria: 1) methodological correctness, 2) contribution to media knowledge and 3) impact on democratic society, the following scholarly works and authors have been nominated for the Award:

» **R. Eugene Parta (2022). Under the Radar. Tracking Western Radio Listeners in the Soviet Union. Budapest, Vienna, New York: Central European University Press.**
Nominated for a holistic approach to actions by Radio Liberty to reach their audience in the USSR during the Cold War, as well as for elaborating

on language manipulation and propaganda in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

» **Sara Bentivegna, Rossella Rega (2022). Searching for the Dimensions of Today's Political Incivility.** *Social Media + Society*, **8(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221114430.**
Nominated for describing the societal and individual foundations of public and political behavior alongside a scholarly explanation of the intent to delegitimise public debate – the value for ongoing and future political campaign research.

» **Slavko Splichal (2022). Datafication of Public Opinion and the Public Sphere: How Extraction Replaced Expression of Opinion. London, New York: Anthem Press.**
Nominated for the critical-normative assessment of public opinion, the cornerstone of a democratic society, alongside an innovative conceptualisation for public opinion and publicness in the age of algorithms and data.

For the first time in the six year history of the Award, a scholarly research paper is a nominee.

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THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY KAROL JAKUBOWICZ AWARD was established in 2018 by Małgorzata Semil-Jakubowicz and the Polish Communication Association. The Winner of the Award along with the justification are announced publicly on April 28th, the anniversary of the passing of Karol Jakubowicz. More information about the Award can be found on the PCA's website: https://www.ptks.pl/en/awards/the-media-and-democracy-karol-jakubowicz-award

Dagmara Sidyk-Furman and Michał Głowacki
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR MICHAŁ DROŻDŻ (1958–2023)

Professor Michał Drożdż—philosopher, theologian, media expert in media values, ethics and accountability research—passed away on June 15, 2023. A member of the Polish Communication Association (PCA) since 2009, who served on the Executive Board for four terms. Our friend and educator of several generations of social media scientists.

When speaking on behalf of the Polish Communication Association communities, during his funeral at St. Anne's Church in Kraków, I told the congregation:

„The essence of the life of Father Professor Michał Drożdż was to serve people and science. He was extremely vigilant and sensitive to matters clearly perceiving needs, dreams, and real solutions. He never imposed his opinion, contenting himself with the joy of co-creation and companionship."

"He embodied the highest ideals of ethics and morality, about which he wisely and expertly wrote in his scholarly articles and books. He was the authority for social science researchers. Above all, they could count on his support, understanding and kindness. Also, for students it was something beyond diploma thesis writing; it was about stimulating curiosity about the world and teaching tolerance. Good and cordial by nature, he showed with his life that it is worth enjoying your job and social meetings".

Professor Michał Drożdż was born on February 19, 1958, in Nowy Sącz, Poland. He was ordained a priest in 1983, in which he also graduated from the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Kraków (he was a student of Professor Michał Heller). He also graduated in Journalism and Social Communications at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich. He obtained a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, and in 2007 – a postdoctoral degree at the Catholic University of Ružomberok. In 2020, he was awarded the title of professor of social sciences. He devoted his entire

scientific life to the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, where he served among others, as the director of the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication (2008–2018), and from 2019 – as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Thanks to his involvement, the Kraków media studies center has grown in strength, gaining the reputation of a leading media ethics center. An example of this was the organization of the annual international media ethics conference, which was held at the Pontifical University of John Paul II since 2006.

Professor Michał Drozdż held many honorable functions. He was a member of the Council of Scientific Excellence, the Committee on Social Communication and Media Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences (in the first, historical composition), the Scientific Council of the Polish Episcopal Conference, the Council for Media of the Polish Episcopal Conference, and the chairman of the Supreme Court of Journalism in the Association of Polish Journalists. He was a co-founder and one of the deputy directors of *Radio Dobra Nowina Małopolska* and the head of the Program Council of this diocesan radio station. He was a director of Biblios Publishing House and deputy chairman of the Polish Association of Media and Journalism Education. In 2019, he became the Archdeacon of the Collegiate Chapter in Nowy Sącz. In 2020, he received the „Media" Phoenix Award for his significant contribution to the development of Catholic media. On the eve of the Father Professor's departure, the conference of the Polish Episcopate appointed him to the group of Consultors of the Council for Media and Social Communication. He was posthumously honored with the highest state decoration of the Republic of Poland – the Order of the White Eagle.

His scholarly academic legacy includes 15 authored and edited monographs as well as research articles in the philosophy of science, media philosophy, media theory, and media ethics. He is the author of the following books: "Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów" [Person and Media. The personalistic paradigm of media ethics], „Media. Teorie i fikcje" [Media. Theories and fictions], „Etyczne orientacje w mediosferze [Ethical orientations in the mediasphere], „Prawda w mediach – między ideałem a iluzją" [Truth in the media – between ideal and illusion], "Wolność w mediach – między poprawnością a odpowiedzialnością" [Freedom in the media – between correctness and responsibility], „Dobro w mediach – z cienia do światła" [Goodness in the media – from shadow to light]. His attitude as a scientist awakens respect.

The Father Professor was the initiator of the Axiology of Communication – one of the research sections at the Polish Communication Association. In Poland and among Central and Eastern European researchers, he was able to integrate a large group of specialists around media ethics, and more

importantly – students, adepts of the journalist profession. Research projects carried out in the section conveyed a clear message about the need for quality journalism. He was actively involved as a tutor to support the Forum of Young Researchers at the PCA.

He had very good relations with young people, as the director of the Academic Media Center to the Pontifical University of John Paul II. Many of his graduate students work in the media industries, and many continue scientific work at the doctorate level. He was also a great organizer. He was the founder of the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication and the hope for an autonomous Faculty of Journalism.

His successes would not have been possible without diligent work, responsibility and a sense of values and mission. And without the University authorities support and employees' faith in the sense of joint effort.

Father Michał was an understanding superior, open to arguments, eager to engage in discussions. Caring, friendly, tolerant, he created a team ready to take up the work he left behind.

Honor his memory.

Professor Iwona Hofman
PRESIDENT
THE POLISH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

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GUEST ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITOR

Marcus and Derettens, OÜ have, since 2006, been English language editing scholarly texts (n=963), mostly published as either research articles in peer review journals or chapters in edited books. All of the clients work at higher education institutions, in either media and communication studies or earth sciences. Clients are mostly located in Central and Eastern Europe. For more details and contact email see www.derettens-english-language-editing.co