



Media Literacy *and* Academic Research

Vol. 6 || No. 2 || December 2023

ÜcmFTK

Editorial Board

Editor-In-Chief

Norbert Vrabec (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Deputy Managing Editor

Monika Prostináková Hossová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Indexing Process

Lucia Furtáková (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Technical Editors and Distribution

Lubica Janáčková (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Vladimíra Hladíková (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Lukáš Pieš (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Lucia Furtáková (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Proofreading Team and English Editors

Michal Valek (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

František Rigo (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Photo Editor

Lucia Škripcová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Grafic Production Coordinator

Martin Graca (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Web Editor

Andrej Brník (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Editorial Team

Slavomír Gálik (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Sláva Gracová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Viera Kačinová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Martin Solík (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Oľga Škvareninová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Advisory Board

Piermarco Aroldi (*Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milano, Italy*)

Ludmila Čábyová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Jan Jiráček (*Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic*)

Mariana Kitsa (*Lviv Polytechnic, Lviv, Ukraine*)

Miguel Vicente Mariño (*University of Valladolid, Spain*)

Stefan Michael Newerkla (*University of Vienna, Austria*)

Shahreen Mat Nayan (*University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*)

Gabriel Paľa (*University of Prešov, Slovak Republic*)

Veronika Pelle (*Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary*)

Hana Pravdová (*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovak Republic*)

Charo Sádaba (*University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain*)

Anna Stolińska (*Pedagogical University of Kraków, Poland*)

Zbigniew Widera (*University of Economics in Katowice, Poland*)

Markéta Supa (*Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic*)

Yao Zheng (*Zhejiang University of Media and Communications, China*)

About the Journal

Media Literacy and Academic Research is a scientific journal focused on the academic reflection of media and information literacy issues, media education, critical thinking, digital media and new trends in related areas of media and communication studies. The journal is devoted to addressing contemporary issues and future developments related to the interdisciplinary academic discussion, the results of empirical research and the mutual interaction of expertise in media and information studies, media education as well as their sociological, psychological, political, linguistic and technological aspects.

Media Literacy and Academic Research is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal published twice a year (since April 2022 published only online). The journal is international and interdisciplinary, inviting contributions from across the globe and from various academic disciplines of social sciences. It focuses on theoretical and empirical studies, research results, as well as related to the new trends, practices and other academic research areas. Also encouraged are literature reviews, innovative initiatives, best practices in online teaching, institutional policies, standards and assessment. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. *Media Literacy and Academic Research* welcomes article submissions and does not charge a publication fee.

The journal is now indexed in these databases: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) – Web of Science Core Collection, ERIH Plus, Ulrich’s Periodical Directory, CEEOL, CEJSH and Index Copernicus. Moreover the journal is under the indexing process with Scopus, Cabell’s Directories and EBSCO.

The members of the journal’s Editorial Board and Advisory Board are members of the International Communication Association, International Association for Media Education, European Communication Research and Education Association, UNESCO-UNAOC UNITWIN Network for Media and Information Literacy, European Association for Viewers Interests, The Slovak EU KidsOnline Team and AlfaMed (Euro-American Inter-University Research Network on Media Literacy for Citizenship).

Contact and Distribution

Address

Media Literacy and Academic Research
Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius
Námestie Jozefa Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, SLOVAK REPUBLIC
E-mail: mlar@ucm.sk
E-ISSN: 2585-9188

Publisher

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Námestie Jozefa Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, SLOVAK REPUBLIC
www.ucm.sk
Journal info on the Publisher’s website: <https://www.ucm.sk/sk/profilny-casopisov/>
E-mail: info@ucm.sk

Distribution

The journal can be ordered for subscription (only by universities and libraries) and purchased on the address above or by sending an e-mail to: kniznica.fmk@ucm.sk



In this latest special issue, Media Literacy and Academic Research ventures into the innovative and expansive landscape of the Mediadelcom project. As part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 program, Mediadelcom is a testament to the collaborative spirit of the academic community, encompassing 17 teams from 14 EU countries. Spearheaded by the University of Tartu, Estonia, this project, commencing in March 2021 and culminating in March 2024, has embarked on an ambitious journey to enhance understanding and management of the evolving European media landscape.

At the core of Mediadelcom lies its primary objective: developing a diagnostic tool designed for various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, media critics, and journalists. This tool is not just an analytical instrument but a visionary approach to diagnosing and foreseeing the dynamic interplay of risks and opportunities in deliberative communication and social cohesion across Europe. Its unique capacity to generate multiple scenarios caters to a holistic assessment of the European media ecosystem, with a keen focus on the diachronic and synchronic transformations in 14 European countries, with particular emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

This special issue of the journal presents an intriguing focus: the empirical investigation of media users' competencies and patterns across generations, alongside theoretical and methodological innovations in this realm. Spanning a multitude of disciplines - from media and digital studies to sociology, psychology, and political science - this issue delves into the nuances of media and digital literacy in the EU. It unravels the intricate relationship between political actors, media industry trends, and the resultant shifts in media content production and distribution. Crucially, it sheds light on the implications of these shifts for media and information literacy policies at the EU level.

The studies featured in this issue reflect the collaborative approach of the Mediadelcom teams, with international co-authorships providing rich, diverse insights. The articles traverse various themes: the dynamics of media audiences in Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia; the evolving landscape of media literacy education and digital skills acquisition; explorations of deliberative communication in Slovak and Latvian families; a detailed study of media literacy in Bulgaria between 2021 and 2023; an examination of Estonia's prowess in monitoring media-related competencies; and the development of a comparative model for media and media culture in fragile democracies, especially in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe.

This special issue of Media Literacy and Academic Research is not just a collection of academic articles; it's a mosaic of insights, research, and collaborative efforts reflecting the current state and future possibilities for media literacy and its impact on society. We invite our readers to delve into these studies, which offer broad and nuanced perspectives on the media landscape, contributing significantly to our understanding and shaping of media literacy and policy in the modern world.


Pleasant reading,

Slavomír Gálik
Editorial Board Member

Contents

Studies

Capability of Monitoring Media Related Competences of the Public in Estonia	5
<i>Halliki Harro-Loit, Eleri Lõhmus, Urmas Loit</i>	
Family News Talks: Deliberative Communication in Families	22
<i>Ludmila Čábyová, Zora Hudíková, Anda Rozukalne, Ilva Skulte, Alnis Stakle</i>	
From Literacy to Skills Discussing Media Education and Its Goals.....	55
<i>Christian Oggolder, Christina Krakovsky</i>	
Media Literacy Web Challenges During Five Digital Parliamentary Campaigns in Bulgaria (2021–2023).....	64
<i>Lilia Raycheva, Lora Metanova, Neli Velinova, Mariyan Tomov</i>	
“Not See the Forest for the Trees.” The Significance of Context in Media Monitoring Capabilities from a Comparative Perspective	79
<i>Martín Oller Alonso</i>	
Media Literacy Policy for Unknown Media Audiences.....	101
<i>Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte, Ioana Avădani, Cristina Lupu, Christian Oggolder, Alnis Stakle, Slavomír Gálik, Norbert Vrabec, Lora Metanova, Neli Velinova</i>	
Journalism in Slovakia Five Years After the Murder of Ján Kuciak.....	126
<i>Bianka Francistyová, Ján Višňovský</i>	
The Clicking Economics of Media and Shifts in News Content: The Case of North Cyprus Online Media.....	139
<i>Özen Çatal, Emin Akkor</i>	
Educational Values in Digital Games	157
<i>Dinko Jukić</i>	
The Emotional Intelligence and Social Media Addiction in Communication Undergraduate Students in Turkey: The Impact of Emotional Intelligence, Demographic Variables and Social Media Use Habits on Social Media Addiction.....	177
<i>Emine Şahin, Habibe Akçay Bekiroğlu</i>	



Halliki Harro-Loit, Eleri Lõhmus, Urmas Loit

Capability of Monitoring Media Related Competences of the Public in Estonia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-01>

ABSTRACT

The study provides a systematic summary of the available knowledge concerning media related competences in Estonia. The goal was to focus on four information-related research questions: (i) What information about media competences is collected? (ii) How is this information analysed? (iii) What knowledge is created and published? (iv) Where are the main information and knowledge gaps? For this study, a four-dimensional model was created, which enabled us to get an overview of those aspects of media-related competences that gain either more or less attention (and money) in Estonia. Four types of information sources were used: academic articles, reports, the bibliographical database produced by the Mediadelcom project, and web pages (for EU and national policy documents). The results show that, in Estonia, political as well as academic attention is focused on digital competences, both theoretically and empirically. Estonia's research interest and knowledge production is biased towards children and young people; but parents, and parenting, the influence of home is also put in focus of the empirical research. EU-financed projects influence the research agenda. The EU has initiated reports on media literacy initiatives in Estonia and therefore descriptive knowledge on various activities and projects as well as the agents behind these projects is accessible.

KEY WORDS

Capability. Estonia. MEDIALDELCOM. Media Literacy. Media Related Competences. Monitoring.

1 Introduction

An official website of the European Union *Shaping Europe's Digital Future* declares: “Media literacy has never been as important as it is today. It enables citizens of all ages to navigate the modern news environment and take informed decisions. Media literacy concerns different media and distribution methods. It is a crucial skill for all citizens regardless of age, as it empowers them and raises their awareness. It also helps to counter the effects of disinformation campaigns and fake news spreading through digital media. The recently revised Audio Visual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) strengthens the role of media literacy. It requires Member States to promote measures that develop media literacy skills.”¹

In the introductory chapter of the *Media Literacy Reports* in the EU, the definition of media literacy “includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access, have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it”.²

Meeting such a political demand requires that a country has knowledge of the competences that should be developed for a particular group of the population, and whether and to what extent people are motivated to develop their digital, media, information and communication competences. These questions presuppose that the state has sufficient knowledge of which areas and groups already have the necessary competences and where the lack of competence is most critical from the standpoint of coping. However, assessing media skills of the population is a challenge for research methodology. In other words, researchers need to seek the best way to study media usage practices of all social groups and to measure the range of competences.

If there is sufficient (or minimum) knowledge about media related competences of various social groups, supporting media literacy requires knowing the kinds of intervention and training tools that are available, and the accessibility and efficiency of these tools. This set of questions also includes knowledge about the main agents and how different activities are financed.

All these questions can be summed up by asking – what is the state-of-art “capability of monitoring” concerning the media related competences in a certain country? The aim of this study is to answer this question in the context of Estonia.

We distinguish between “knowledge” and “information”, which is based on the “knowledge hierarchy”, also known as the DIKW model.³ We define “information” as current news on media related skills and brief reports on media-literacy promotion activities, etc., where information is fragmented, current, not systematic and little contextualized. Information is also data collected by various surveys, tests and other assessment methods, as opposed to “knowledge”, which is synthesized, compared, discussed, and conceptualized information. As knowledge demands synthesis of multiple sources over time, the sources usually comprise of systematic reports and academic research.⁴ A good monitoring capacity requires knowledge that is collected as systematically and consistently as possible.

In order to systematically investigate this issue, we designed a 4-dimensional monitoring model with the aim of distinguishing normative and conceptual knowledge, research and practical media literacy promotion and interventions.

¹ *Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/media-literacy>>.

² CAPPELLO, M.: Foreword. In CABRERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 1. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>>.

³ See: ROWLEY, J.: The Wisdom Hierarchy: Representations of the DIKW Hierarchy. In *Journal of Information Science*, 2007, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 163-180.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

2 Theoretical Background: The Family of “Media Literacies”

In order to find the answer to the question “What competences should be developed?”, it is important to point out that while “media literacy” is defined in various policy documents, in academic discourse, the “concept of media literacy” is extremely sprawling – both in essence and disciplinary terms. It has also changed since its early stage in the 1970s. Today, one can find variety of concepts that belong to the media literacy “family”, e.g. “critical media literacy”, “information literacy”, “communication literacy”, “visual literacy”, and more specifically, “news literacy”⁵, “infocommunicative literacy”⁶, “transmedia literacy”⁷, “advertising literacy”⁸ and “social media literacy”. In recent years, the *European Commission* has taken aim at more specific development of the concept of digital literacy, expected from all citizens (DigComp, 2017⁹; DigCompEdu, 2017¹⁰). Digital Competence was included as one of the eight essential skills in the *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*.

“Digital literacy” is the skills required to achieve digital competence, the “*confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society.*”¹¹ It is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

There are a number of authors who use the assembled terms “digital media literacy” or “digital information literacy”.¹²

Academic scholarship lacks any consensual definitions concerning these concepts, which can be explained in part by the diversity of disciplinary and theoretical backgrounds of the researchers who have developed them.¹³ Since 1974, “information literacy” has been an area of increasing interest to librarians and information professionals,¹⁴ and library science scholars also use the concept of “media and information literacy”. In 2007, UNESCO introduced an umbrella concept – media and information literacy – a composite of literacy fields. “Media literacy” originated from media studies and communications and draws from other humanities and social science disciplines. “Information literacy”, as Kozłowska-Barrios explains, emerged

⁵ See: LEE, L. et al.: Understanding New Media Literacy: The Development of a Measuring Instrument. In *Computers & Education*, 2015, Vol. 85, p. 84-93.

⁶ See: BORGES, J.: Infocommunicative Literacy: Conceptual Structure and Applications. In *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 2023, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 609-616.

⁷ See: SCOLARI, C. A. et al.: Transmedia Literacy in the New Media Ecology: Teens’ Transmedia Skills and Informal Learning Strategies. In *El Profesional de la Información*, 2018, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 801-812. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.jul.09>>.

⁸ See: KUNKEL, D. et al.: Psychological Issues in the Increasing Commercialization of Childhood. In WILCOX, B. L. et al. (eds.): *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association, 2004, p. 20-54. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1037/e539692009-001>>. See also: CASTONGUAY, J., MESSINA, N.: Age Differences in Moral Reasoning: An Investigation of Sponsored YouTube Videos. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 2022, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 227-237.

⁹ See: *DigComp Framework*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp/digcomp-framework_en>.

¹⁰ See: *Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu)*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en>.

¹¹ *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. Luxembourg : Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, p. 10. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/569540>>.

¹² See: MOORE, R. C., HANCOCK, J. T.: A Digital Media Literacy Intervention for Older Adults Improves Resilience to Fake News. In *Scientific Reports*, 2022, Vol. 12, No. 1. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-08437-0>>.

¹³ See: WUYCKENS, G. et al.: Untangling Media Literacy, Information Literacy, and Digital Literacy: A Systematic Meta-Review of Core Concepts in Media Education. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2022, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 168-182.

¹⁴ See: VIRKUS, S.: Information Literacy in Europe: A Literature Review. In *Information Research*, 2003, Vol. 8, No. 4. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<http://informationr.net/ir/8-4/paper159.html>>.

mainly from librarianship and computer sciences and points out that, according to some authors, “information literacy is more concerned with access, while media literacy is with understanding.”¹⁵

In the early 21st century, a new term – news literacy – was introduced.¹⁶ “News literacy” has long been understood as a sub-category of media literacy. Several authors propose a new version of news literacy based on journalism and mass communication theories, which would “combine knowledge of news production, distribution and consumption with skills that help audiences assert control over their relationship with news.”¹⁷

These examples briefly illustrate some overlapping concepts (e.g., the common aim is to empower citizens to cope with propaganda and fake news, cope with information overload and stop the decline of trust, etc.) and enable us to imagine that media, information, communication and digital literacies are like a tree with several distinct branches. As Apuke et. al point out, “[a] closer look at the literacy concepts used in past research suggests that there are four dimensions of literacy; news, media, digital and information.”¹⁸

All these concepts include the term “literacy” and refer to competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that are related to mediatized communication. Therefore, in this article, we prefer to use the term “media related competences”.

The key question remains: Which competences are most useful for empowering citizens? Each concept emphasizes its own set of competences:¹⁹ “Information literacy” focuses on mastering information search and processing (the skills that identify, find, evaluate, apply, and acknowledge assorted sources of information). “Communication literacy” focuses on the skills of listening to the other, understanding their point of view, providing reasoned arguments, the ability to negotiate – in person and via electronic devices. “General media literacy” often points out the need to develop critical thinking and an ability to evaluate the credibility of information online. “News media literacy” points out the critical ability to distinguish high-quality news and information from low-quality content and misinformation and to navigate news environment.²⁰

In conclusion, while policy documents prioritise the development of media-related skills for all groups of the population and link it to various problems of contemporary societies, academic research has created a very broad spectrum of assorted competences that the media-educated population should achieve. The packages of competences offered by each concept have varying degrees of generalization. For example, separating high-quality news from other news-like texts is a specific skill achieved through certain training, while knowledge of cybersecurity is complicated, has multiple degrees of difficulty and requires constant updating. A functional reading ability, which is one of the prerequisites for assessing media

¹⁵ KOZLOWSKA-BARRIOS, A.: Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Library Classrooms: Content Analysis of News Evaluative Criteria in Instructional Worksheets and Checklists. In *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 2023, Vol. 49, No. 3. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2023.102680>>.

¹⁶ See: MIHAILIDIS, P.: News Literacy in the Dawn of a Hypermedia Age. In MIHAILIDIS, P. (ed): *News Literacy: Global Perspectives for the Newsroom and the Classroom*. New York, NY : Peter Lang Publishing, 2012, p. 1-15. See also: MALIK, M. et al.: *The Challenges of Defining 'News Literacy'*. Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2013-20. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2342313>>; MORRIS, K., YEOMAN, F.: Teaching Future Journalists the News: The Role of Journalism Educators in the News Literacy Movement. In *Journalism Practice*, 2023, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 1573-1590.

¹⁷ See: TULLY, M. et al.: Defining and Conceptualizing News Literacy. In *Journalism*, 2022, Vol. 23, No. 8, p. 1589-1606.

¹⁸ APUKE, O. D. et al.: Literacy Concepts as an Intervention Strategy for Improving Fake News Knowledge, Detection Skills, and Curtailing the Tendency to Share Fake News in Nigeria. In *Child & Youth Services*, 2023, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 90.

¹⁹ See: TULLY, M. et al.: Defining and Conceptualizing News Literacy. In *Journalism*, 2022, Vol. 23, No. 8, p. 1589-1606.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1591, 1601.

content critically, is simultaneously a general skill. The competence concerning privacy includes subskills about understanding, valuing and negotiating own personal data.²¹

However, systematisation is of little use if it does not provide the necessary criteria and methodology for the assessment of those competences. For example, the skill to assess the reliability of information sources could be measured by using the checklist approach – people whose skills are being assessed must identify balanced, factual texts or parts of texts with verifiable sources.²² Haider and Sundin propose that awareness of the workings of algorithms can be considered equally important as the ability to assess individual information sources.²³ The examples illustrate the complexity of assessment of all sub-competences.

In addition, well-focused promotion of media literacy also requires knowledge of media usage habits and motives to identify the competences of various social groups. For example, the UK institution *Ofcom* publishes annual reports on media use of children and their parents as well as media use of children since 2006 and adults since 2011. *Ofcom* labels the reports as “media literacy research”. It should be noted that the research interest has been biased towards children and young people for over a decade in Europe. The research lead by Sonia Livingstone plays a significant role in the field, as she and the related research community have published many papers on the digital skills of young people and children.²⁴ Pedagogical discourse deals with learning and teaching media related competences. In addition, there is great interest across disciplines (including education, sociology, information and technology studies and psychology) for data-driven education, which is linked to digital skills.

Since the policy documents support media literacy promotion (as indicated by the quote at the beginning of this article), a wide range of programmes and training opportunities have been created, which require participating individuals to be aware of their existing competences and abilities to select the learning methods that are best suited to their needs. A focus on learning opportunities is ideal for a personal standpoint but not a societal perspective. Indeed, concentrating on learning opportunities to the detriment of measuring the competences of societal groups might raise the risk that some segments of the population will remain vulnerable – and that society will not have any knowledge of this structural weakness.

Therefore, we propose a four-domain monitoring concept that will help to detect instances of knowledge in the contexts – of sufficiency, inconsistency, absence or not being updated – for particular situations. For example, in Estonia, during the COVID pandemic, the government had to invite people for vaccinations and used the news media as the main channel. Only later, after the crisis had passed, did the government learn that some groups of the population did not trust or understand the messages from the media but did believe their doctors and neighbours.

3 Methodology: Four Domains of Monitoring

The four domains of media related competences monitoring concept (see Fig.1) could be useful for policy makers and society. In this study, the four domains enabled us to get an overview of which aspects of media related competencies attract either more or less attention (and thus money) in the context of Estonia.

²¹ See: STOILOVA, M.: Children’s Understanding of Personal Data and Privacy Online – A Systematic Evidence Mapping. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 557-575. See also: RÖMER, L.: We Have to Teach Children about Data Protection Earlier. An Interview with Sonia Livingstone. In *Media Studies/Mediální Studia*, 2019, No. 2, p. 172-177.

²² See: MEOLA, M.: Chucking the Checklist: A Contextual Approach to Teaching Undergraduates Website Evaluation. In *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 2004, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 331-344.

²³ See: HAIDER, J., SUNDIN, O.: Information Literacy Challenges in Digital Culture: Conflicting Engagements of Trust and Doubt. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2022, Vol. 25, No. 8, p. 1176-1191.

²⁴ See: LIVINGSTONE, S. et al.: The Outcomes of Gaining Digital Skills for Young People’s Lives and Wellbeing: A Systematic Evidence Review. In *New Media & Society*, 2023, Vol. 25, No. 5, p. 1176-1202.

Four domains of knowledge concerning media-related competencies

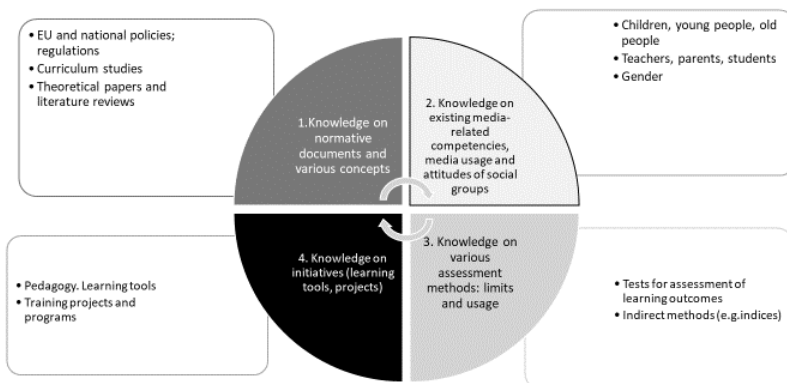


FIGURE 1: Four Domains of Knowledge Concerning Media-Related Competencies

Source: own processing, 2023

The first and fourth sectors (marked with white lettering) are related as the promotion demands various initiatives. The second and third sectors (marked with black lettering) are also related, because they both rely on academic research. Assessment methods are proposed as a separate domain to point out the methodological differences from the second domain. The latter often uses the sociological approach.

Various publications include all four domains, either wholly or partially. The first domain (sector) includes the normative basis concerning the media related competences: the EU and national policy papers, directives and laws providing general definitions. However, the lack of conceptual synthesis between academic approaches as well as the proliferation of sub-concepts causes “difficulties in translating concepts into indicators as well as developing assessment methods tailored to contexts in which observations are made”.²⁵ Therefore, good knowledge in this domain does not guarantee effective monitoring. However, the policy documents and regulations (the national curriculum included) provide directions and set the agenda of attention on certain topics. Therefore, the important aspect is to ask whether and how the financing system supports the agenda (e.g., Does the financing system support research or interventions?).

The second domain is the most complicated one. On the one hand, it covers research concerning age groups, roles and gender. On the other hand, the media related competences are tightly linked to media usage habits and motivations. The research methodology is demanding, as it is not easy to measure how people select and process media related information. The information gaps in this domain might be related to the sample (a bias towards some social groups), methodology and diachronic continuity of information collection and analysis. The grant-based research funding does not support longitudinal studies. The knowledge production in this domain provides input for further evidence-based policy.

The third domain (knowledge of various assessment methods) includes both tests that are created and used for formal education as well as indirect assessment methods that aim to evaluate the aspects of media related competences among citizens (e.g. parts of the PISA test could be used to assess reading abilities). Assessment is related to the concept that has got most attention in certain countries – if the concept is not clear (either in policy documents or in the national curriculum), creating indicators might complicate the issue. In addition, some literacy concepts include so many indicators that actual assessment is impossible.

²⁵ See: WUYCKENS, G. et al.: Untangling Media Literacy, Information Literacy, and Digital Literacy: A Systematic Meta-Review of Core Concepts in Media Education. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2022, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 168-182.

The fourth domain (knowledge on intervention) is focused on promotion and is mainly represented by various learning or training projects, websites, educational tools and games. There is available a range of overviews of such actions as well as small-scale studies on efficiency or perception of such tools.

Effective monitoring needs sufficient and related knowledge concerning all four domains. The research as well as the initiatives are developed by different agents: European Commission; national policy makers; academic researchers, librarians, formal education institutions and teachers; NGOs, different organizations, independent educators, media users, etc.

In this research, the empirical analysis was based on four types of sources:

1. Academic publications. In order to get an overview on Estonian knowledge concerning the four domains we used the Estonian research database *ETIS*. The database includes all publications of Estonian research. In Estonia's small population of 1.3 million people, there are just 30 academics who carry out media related research. Consequently, we analysed the publication lists of those academics we knew their research interest include media. The *ETIS* database also provides information about the grants, with which the researchers have been or are involved. The list of publications was transferred into the bibliographical database created by *MEDIADEL.COM*.
2. In order to compose the model of four domains, we searched databases of academic publications (such as *Google*, *Academic Search Complete*, *Communication and Mass Media Complete*, *e-Journals*, *ERIC*), which used the combinations of following keywords: media, digital, information and news literacy, skills, competence, tests, assessment, media usage, children, parents, teenagers, young people, adults, teachers, usage, report. As each search produced thousands of publications, we decided to select review papers and the latest publications and (as the aim was not to produce a literature review, but indicate the research approaches and conceptual differences) this selection was justified.
3. EU policy papers, national reports (webpages).
4. Database *DSpace* for the search of BA, MA and doctoral theses that have focused on media related competence (we used combinations of the same keywords as listed above).

4 Results: Estonian Case Study

The Estonian case study follows the above-mentioned four-dimensional analysis model. The basis of the first and second sub-chapters (and the term "knowledge") take into consideration the academic publications. The third sub-chapter focuses on the question of which assessment tools have been created and covered for measuring media competence in Estonia. The purpose of the fourth sub-chapter is to analyse whether and to what extent there is an overview of the different stakeholders who develop media-related competences, the relevant projects and learning tools in Estonia.

4.1 Available Knowledge on the State-of-the-Art Concerning Media Related Competences

The list of publications in 2000-2022 is available at the bibliographical database produced by *Mediadelcom* consortium. We found 23 articles focused on media related competencies. Topical differences and the time of publishing are presented in Figure 2.²⁶

²⁶ Authors' note: Overview of academic publications concerning media related competences in 2002-2022. The figure does not include 2023 – with 6 relevant publications. No publications were found in 2000 and 2001.

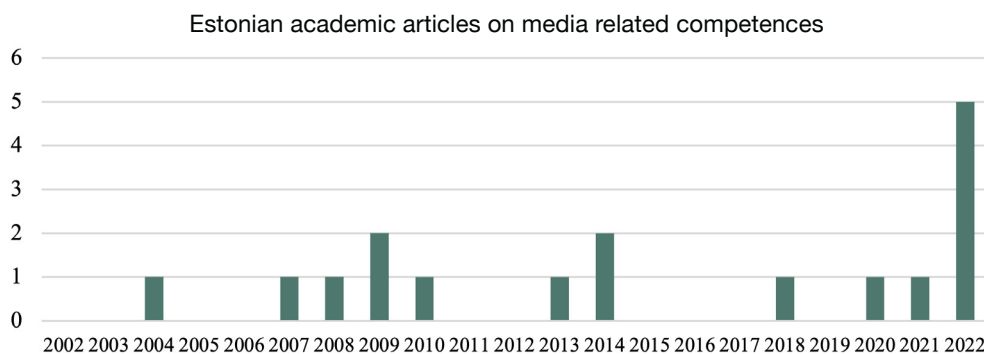


FIGURE 2: Estonian Academic Articles on Media Related Competences by Years

Source: own processing, 2023

Searches of this database enable us to indicate the number of publications, main researchers, language, how it is indexed, year of publication, and the period of data collection (if relevant). In this study, we do not focus on the aspects related to the quality of publications. In addition, we added the years 2021 – 2023. It should be noted that in some cases the line between the topic “media related competences concerning media usage” and other topics is hazy.

The first goals and concepts concerning media literacy were broadly set out in the *Concept of Estonian Information Policy* under the term info-politics published in 1998. On a normative level, there has been a strong conceptual bias towards digital competencies. Digital competences and education have received specific attention and special financial support from the state since 2014/2015. Various strategy and policy documents also reflect that digital competences are strongly related to security issues.

The *Education Strategy 2021-2035* declares the need for awareness of the possibilities and risks of the information society. The *Digital Agenda 2020* and Estonia’s *Digital Agenda 2030* focus on digital skills. But in 2013, approaching safety issues (empowerment to withstand misinformation, cybercrime, cyberbullying and other digital threats) were essential. The *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020* also focuses on improving the digital skills and literacy of the public, but this strategy was mostly focused on supporting access and creativity.

There are a few researchers who have carried out analyses on normative documents. Most of the knowledge is available via various national reports: *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*²⁷, *National Reports on the Application of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2020-2022: Media Literacy Report Estonia 2023*²⁸ and finally the report produced by the *Baltic Centre for Media Excellence*²⁹. While Andra Siibak conducted the first report, which is analytical and reveals not only the agents who are involved, but also the financing and the topics, Marge Varma, an expert at the Ministry of Education and Research, did the second. This report is a rather descriptive overview of various initiatives, but also provides a short overview of the development of media literacy topic in the national curricula.

In 2022, the *Baltic Centre for Media Excellence* (BCME) in cooperation with the *International Centre for Defence and Security* (Estonia) and individual experts from Latvia and Lithuania carried out a research project entitled *Media Literacy Sector Mapping in Estonia*

²⁷ See: CABRERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>>.

²⁸ See: VARMA, M.: *Report of Promoting Media Literacy in Estonia 2019-2023*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-reports-application-audiovisual-media-services-directive-2020-2022>>.

²⁹ DENISA-LIEPNIECE, S., KULLAMAA, K.: *Media Literacy Sector Mapping: Estonia Country Report*. Riga : Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, 2022. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/08/ML_Mapping_Estonia_2022.pdf>.

and Lithuania. The approach of the report focuses on actors, audiences and activities and uses combined data collection methods (desk research, semi-structured in-depth expert interviews and an online survey). This report is the best example of monitoring activity that is not an academic paper and provides a broad-scale and critical analysis of existing knowledge on normative documents as well as media-literacy related initiatives and funding. The report also provides Estonia's position in two of three indices (the *World Press Freedom Index*, the *Global Innovative Index* and *Global Peace Index*), but fails to include the third, the index produced by Open Society Institute in Sofia.

The *Estonian DigiEfekt* and the *Horizon 2020 CO:RE* projects are both conceptually influential. These two projects reconceptualise digital competence in 10 dimensions and focus on the issue of how multiple approaches to applying digital devices, environments and content in learning will have an effect on digital competence and several other cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes.³⁰

Media related competences (in normative documents – media literacy) have been incorporated into the national curricula via a cross-curricula approach in 2002. The applicability of this approach was analysed by Kadri Ugur.³¹ There has not been any curricula analysis since 2011. Nevertheless, in 2011 a mandatory course “Media and Manipulation” was integrated into the high school curriculum of the Estonian language. A brief analysis of learning outcomes enables researchers to draw the conclusion that the course resembles the concept we today label as “news media literacy”. From 2019, schools can also offer an optional course called “Human in a contemporary information environment”. In 2023, the updated national curriculum describe the media related competences as a cross-cutting theme under the label “Information Environment and Media Usage”.

4.2 Knowledge on Existing Media Related Competences, Media Usage and Attitudes of Different Social Groups

Research and development of media related competences in Estonia has been biased towards the younger generation from the outset, but there has been also strong research interest concerning parents and their awareness of children's media usage. The influence of individual researchers has been significant. Veronika Kalmus has led research focusing on media usage habits among the generations, while Andra Siibak's research focuses on Internet usage. Estonian knowledge concerning media related competences and media usage of certain social groups has been influenced by the grant money.

Knowledge on actual media related competencies has been mostly related to the EU Kids Online research project, CO:RE and Youth Skills (Veronika Kalmus leads the Estonian team). The most important projects about the media competences among the younger generation provide information about risks and opportunities with a perspective to the future.

- 2012-2015 – Teachers' digital competences and the influence on students' abilities were studied via the research grant led by Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt.

³⁰ PEDASTE, M. et al.: *How to Increase the Potential of Digital Learning in Achieving both Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Learning Outcomes? CO:RE Short Report Series on Key Topics*. Hamburg : Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung, Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI); CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence, 2022. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoa.79415>>.

³¹ See: UGUR, K., HARRO-LOIT, H.: Media Literacy in the Estonian National Curriculum. In ARNOLDS-GRANLUND S.-B., KOTILAINEN, S. (eds.): *Media Literacy Education Nordic Perspectives*. Copenhagen : Nordicom, 2010, p. 133-144. See also: UGUR, K.: *Implementation of the Concept of Media Education in the Estonian Formal Education System*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Tartu : Tartu University Press, 2010. 37 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/15899>>; UGUR, K.: Media Education as Cross-Curricular Theme in Estonian Schools: Reasons of a Failure. In *Postmodernism Problems*, 2011, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 308-319.

- 2020-2023 – H2020: Youth Skills (PI Veronika Kalmus) (University of Tartu).
- 2020-2022 – H2020: CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence. A knowledge base on children and youth in the digital world (principal investigator (PI) Veronika Kalmus) (University of Tartu).
- 2019-2022 – H2020: The impact of technological transformations on the digital generation (PI Merike Sisask) (University of Tallinn).
- 2019-2021 – What is news? News perceptions and practices among young adults in times of transition (PI Signe Opermann).
- 2014-2018 – The Digital Literacy and Multimodal Practices of Young Children (PI Sirje Virkus) (University of Tallinn).
- 2013-2018 – Conceptualisations and experiences with public and private in technologically saturated society (PI Andra Siibak) (University of Tartu).
- 2011-2015 – Generations and inter-generational relationships in the emerging information society (PI Veronika Kalmus) (University of Tartu).

The list of academic publications reflects strongly the aims of the grants (Figure 3).³²

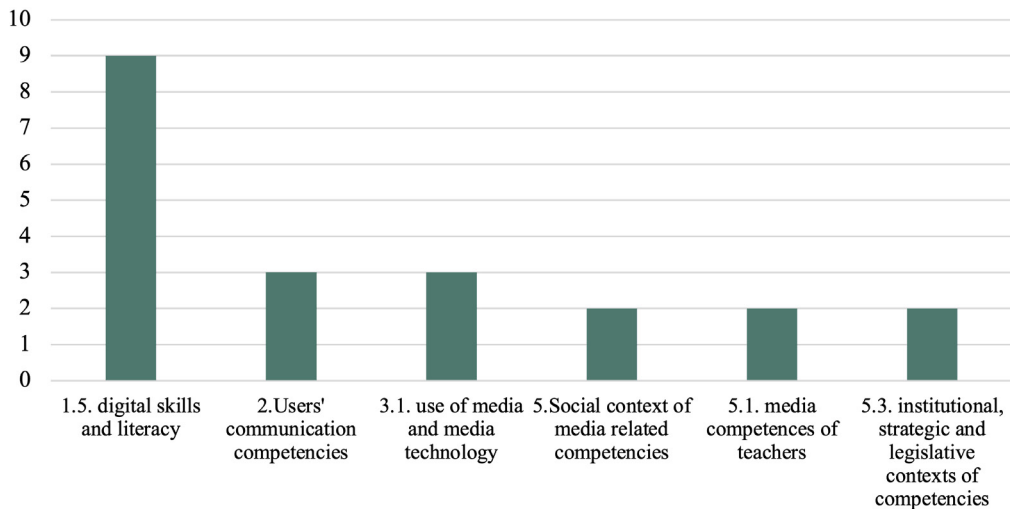


FIGURE 3: Number of Estonian Academic Articles on Media Related Competencies by Topics Defined by MEDIADELCOM. The Topics Partly Reflect the Aims of the Received Grants

Source: own processing, 2023

The articles were sorted according to the main focus and some articles cover several topics. However, the research interest is strongly biased towards digital competences.

4.3 Knowledge on Various Assessment Methods: Limits and Usage

In 2004, Epp Lauk published the first assessment study about media competences of Estonian schoolchildren. In 2019, Estonia's Digital Competence Test was conducted amongst the 9th grade pupils, which distinguished eight digital competence factors: (1) operational knowledge and skills, (2) content creation factor 1, (3) content creation factor 2, (4) attitudes towards technology, (5) self-assessment of digital skills factor 1, (6) self-assessment of digital

³² Authors' note: The research focuses according to the MEDIADELCOM bibliographical database 2002-2022. Majority of the articles use a sociological approach.

skills factor 2, (7) safety-related behaviour in the digital world, and (8) problem-solving related behaviour in the digital world.³³ From this list, it is clear that media and information literacy and digital competencies partly overlap. Moral awareness concerning media and communication is missing from both concepts, therefore there is no focus on assessing these competences. Research on teachers' media related competencies have been carried out via students' theses.³⁴

For Estonian state-of-the-art knowledge on the situation concerning media related competences, several indices are relevant, as they are annual and show some dynamics and provide a comparative insight for the Estonian situation. However, the aim, methodology and input data should be taken into consideration.

The Media Literacy Index, compiled by the *Open Society Institute* in Sofia, calculates the media literacy score for Estonia as well. Whereas Estonia has been ranked among the top five for several years (2017, 2019, 2021, 2022), the index is rather an estimation about the resilience to disinformation. It is an aggregate indicator characterizing the media environment and is less about the actual skills of citizens.

The *Digital Economy and Society Index* (DESI) compares digital skills of citizens in the EU, distinguishing the skills as low, basic and above basic. The index is composed of the data from PIAAC studies, and thus mainly interpret internet usage skills. Currently, there is no knowledge about the actual "levels" of media-related competences of either middle-aged or elderly populations.

4.4 Knowledge on Initiatives: Pedagogy, Training Tools, Training Projects and Other Initiatives

During the first decade of the 21st century, Kadri Ugur was the leading (and only) researcher who developed critical analysis on didactics of general media literacy. Her didactical material for teachers was based on her MA thesis and was also published as a separate book. Later, some small-scale studies on learning/teaching methodologies on the practical implementation of curricula concerning media-related competences have also been carried out by BA and MA students (e.g., Hindrikson,³⁵ Vinter,³⁶ Nõmm,³⁷). However, the low degree of research interest is understandable as there are many international studies available.

Since the 2010s, research has focused on various training programmes and learning materials – promotion of media literacy. In our model, we label such actions as "initiatives". All these initiatives and actions could be rather difficult to find, so the role of an EU initiated report is important.

In 2017, the European Commission initiated the mapping of the most significant actions carried out since 2010. The Estonian submission was provided by Andra Siibak, Professor of Media Studies, University of Tartu. By 2017, she listed 20 projects that were related to media

³³ See: PEDASTE, M. et al.: Dimensions of Digital Competence and Its Assessment in Basic School. In *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri/Journal of Education Sciences of Estonia*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 212-243.

³⁴ See: KURM, T.: *Eesti üldhariduskoolide õpetajate valmidus meedia õpetamiseks läbiva teemana*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2004. 176 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/1234>>. See also: RAUDVASSAR, L.: *Õpetajate võimalused õpilaste meediapädevuse arendamiseks läbiva teema kaudu*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2013. 112 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/31071>>.

³⁵ See: HINDRIKSON, A.: *35-tunnine gümnaasiumi meediaõpetuse kursus ja selle tagasiside analüüs Lähte Ühisgümnaasiumi näitel*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2007. 155 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/15688>>.

³⁶ See: VINTER, K.: *Esimesed sammud väikeste laste meediakasvatuses Eestis: Uurimistulemusi ja soovitusi õpetajakoolituse arendamiseks*. Tartu : Atlex, 2011.

³⁷ See: NÕMM, T.: *Riiklikku õppekava täiendavad õpitegevused meediaõpetuse arendamiseks Tartu maakonna koolide näitel*. [Bachelor's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2018. 63 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/60933>>.

literacy, of which 13 were labelled as “End-user engagement” type of actions. The report also provided an overview of the main agents, of which 10 were labelled as “cross-sector collaborators”.

In 2023, the European Commission published national reports on the application of the *AudioVisual Media Service Directive 2019-2023*. The Estonian report was produced by Marge Varma and it points out: “As of March 2023, there is no comprehensive overview of how much money has been allocated from different institutions’ budgets to promote media literacy in the country. The funding has been project-based. [...] In the future, a plan for promoting media literacy will be developed, including showing the sources of funding.”³⁸

The report provides an overview on two learning objects, and various training programmes offered by three Estonian universities and a list of projects provided by NGOs, Estonian National Library and media companies (mostly related to fact-checking). In 2022, Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (BECID) started operating at the University of Tartu.

The Estonian Country report for 2022 initiated by the *Baltic Centre for Media Excellence* points out that: “Looking at funding, the results indicate that the main funders in promoting media literacy are state institutions, EU projects/funds, or various foreign countries through embassies or focused institutions or fund”.³⁹ The report also points out that there is a lack of coordination and systematic approaches.

In summary, there are a lot of initiatives and a great many different actors who are engaged in media literacy promotion. The three reports provided an overview on the existing initiatives, but they are only partially linked to media-related research. Still, researchers in three national universities are active in media literacy promotion projects.

4 Discussion

Media-related competencies became a noteworthy issue in Estonia during the 2000s. Since the 2010s, the focus on digital competencies has been growing. Now, since the start of the 2020s, concern has been increasing about manipulation and cybersecurity threats, therefore digital competences have become politically even more important (in the context of security).

The existing knowledge in the four domains enables us to draw five conclusions on the monitoring situation in Estonia:

1. The number of projects targeted at research is lower in comparison to various interventions (promotion projects). Hence the Estonian knowledge production is biased towards initiatives (promotion) – according to the EU policy. There are also more agents representing the fourth domain than the second. The agenda of the second domain is mainly set by EU research projects.
2. Estonian media-related competence concept is biased towards digital skills. Although digital competences include information and communication skills, normative documents can and do define some knowledge gaps, for example, there is not a problem concerning communication competences (e.g., public communication ethics). The curriculum partly focuses on news literacy, but there is no information on how teachers interpret the curriculum.

³⁸ See: VARMA, M.: *Report of Promoting Media Literacy in Estonia 2019-2023*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-reports-application-audiovisual-media-services-directive-2020-2022>>.

³⁹ DENISA-LIEPNIECE, S., KULLAMAA, K.: *Media Literacy Sector Mapping: Estonia Country Report*. Riga : Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, 2022, p. 12. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/08/ML_Mapping_Estonia_2022.pdf>.

3. While most research is focused on media usage and competencies of children, young people and their parents, the knowledge on other age groups is under-represented. In the second domain, the data collected primarily in the context of the needs of individual research projects might pose a problem. There is no knowledge of diachronic changes, and there is no funding system for follow-up studies. The related knowledge on media usage provide little background information for research on media related competences: e.g., the state-initiated data collection about the media usage provided by the Estonian Statistical Office is sporadic. The media usage data is currently the interest of assorted media planning and advertising agencies which can afford to buy the data. Estonia does not participate in the *Reuters' Digital News Reports* that is currently the most comprehensive and up to date comparative research about the media usage trends in Europe.
4. In the third domain, the important input is the Digital Competence Test created and tested by Estonian researchers. While the authors suggested that the test can be also used for the systematic description, development and monitoring of digital competence in schools, there is no information about that kind of wide-spread usage of this test. Although this test is focused on digital competences, we can conclude that methodological knowledge is available, still, this test is not used for widespread information collection.
5. The three reports mentioned in this article provide overviews of various activities concerning media literacy promotion and relevant policy documents. The dissemination of research results is mostly directed from the aim of the pertinent research grants and policy makers do not collect and analyse information on this subject. Hence, access to the information concerning the first and the fourth domains is easier than access to the knowledge that belongs to the second and third domains.

Although the knowledge production on media related competencies is sufficient - in the context that politically the focus is mainly on digital competencies - the capability of monitoring is less developed and mostly is initiated by EU.

5 Conclusions

The main claim of this article was to point out the need to distinguish empirical findings concerning media-related competences and normative principles, the latter often expressed in different policy papers. We believe that on the societal level this distinction enables the actual achievement of various more effective competences. As the media and their usage are in constant change, so the basic focus of shaping people's media wisdom is constantly changing (e.g., once the essential digital competences were important, now the threat of propaganda and fake news is on the agenda). In this context, it is important to understand where exactly the resources should be directed in order to achieve politically declared aims – to raise the media related competences of all citizens regardless of age. Supporting the media related competences of the entire population is a complex and resource-intensive process, a blind promotion campaign could be inefficient. The Estonian case study did not provide any documented evidence that planning of media literacy initiatives and training activities are based on the specific and evidence-based needs of the target groups. In the case of this study, it is also important to note that although Figure 3 shows that studies have been carried out in Estonia on a variety of topics, there are no longitudinal studies on media-related competences and the sample is usually limited.

It is also important for policy makers to use existing knowledge on media competences. As in the case of Estonia, the media literacy research agenda is mostly created by the European Union, which has financed most media-literacy related projects; it is unlikely that the Estonian policy makers would start to show their initiative on media-related competence improvement strategies.

Acknowledgement: The Mediadelcom project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101004811. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Literature and Sources:

APUKE, O. D. et al.: Literacy Concepts as an Intervention Strategy for Improving Fake News Knowledge, Detection Skills, and Curtailing the Tendency to Share Fake News in Nigeria. In *Child & Youth Services*, 2023, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 88-103. ISSN 0145-935X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2021.2024758>>.

BORGES, J.: Infocommunicative Literacy: Conceptual Structure and Applications. In *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 2023, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 609-616. ISSN 0961-0006. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221093792>>.

CABRERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>>.

CAPPELLO, M.: Foreword. In CABRERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 1-2. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>>.

CASTONGUAY, J., MESSINA, N.: Age Differences in Moral Reasoning: An Investigation of Sponsored YouTube Videos. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 2022, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 227-237. ISSN 2373-6992. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2022.2142125>>.

DENISA-LIEPNIECE, S., KULLAMAA, K.: *Media Literacy Sector Mapping: Estonia Country Report*. Riga : Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, 2022. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/08/ML_Mapping_Estonia_2022.pdf>. *DigComp Framework*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp/digcomp-framework_en>.

Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu). [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en>.

HAIDER, J., SUNDIN, O.: Information Literacy Challenges in Digital Culture: Conflicting Engagements of Trust and Doubt. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2022, Vol. 25, No. 8, p. 1176-1191. ISSN 1369-118X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1851389>>.

HINDRIKSON, A.: *35-tunnine gümnaasiumi meediaõpetuse kursus ja selle tagasiside analüüs Lääne Ühisgümnaasiumi näitel*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2007. 155 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/15688>>.

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Luxembourg : Publications Office of the European Union, 2019. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/569540>>.

KOZLOWSKA-BARRIOS, A.: Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Library Classrooms: Content Analysis of News Evaluative Criteria in Instructional Worksheets and Checklists. In *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 2023, Vol. 49, No. 3. ISSN 0099-1333. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2023.102680>>.

KUNKEL, D. et al.: Psychological Issues in the Increasing Commercialization of Childhood. In WILCOX, B. L. et al. (eds.): *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association, 2004, p. 20-54. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1037/e539692009-001>>.

KURM, T.: *Eesti üldhariduskoolide õpetajate valmidus meedia õpetamiseks läbiva teemana*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2004. 176 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/1234>>.

- LEE, L. et al.: Understanding New Media Literacy: The Development of a Measuring Instrument. In *Computers & Education*, 2015, Vol. 85, p. 84-93. ISSN 0360-1315. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.02.006>>.
- LIVINGSTONE, S. et al.: The Outcomes of Gaining Digital Skills for Young People's Lives and Wellbeing: A Systematic Evidence Review. In *New Media & Society*, 2023, Vol. 25, No. 5, p. 1176-1202. ISSN 1461-4448. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211043189>>.
- MALIK, M. et al.: *The Challenges of Defining 'News Literacy'*. Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2013-20. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2342313>>.
- Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/media-literacy>>.
- MEOLA, M.: Chucking the Checklist: A Contextual Approach to Teaching Undergraduates Website Evaluation. In *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 2004, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 331-344. ISSN 1530-7131. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2004.0055>>.
- MIHAILIDIS, P.: News Literacy in the Dawn of a Hypermedia Age. In MIHAILIDIS, P. ed.: *News Literacy: Global Perspectives for the Newsroom and the Classroom*. New York, NY : Peter Lang Publishing, 2012, p. 1-15.
- MOORE, R. C., HANCOCK, J. T.: A Digital Media Literacy Intervention for Older Adults Improves Resilience to Fake News. In *Scientific Reports*, 2022, Vol. 12, No. 1. ISSN 2045-2322. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-08437-0>>.
- MORRIS, K., YEOMAN, F.: Teaching Future Journalists the News: The Role of Journalism Educators in the News Literacy Movement. In *Journalism Practice*, 2023, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 1573-1590. ISSN 1751-2786. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1992599>>.
- NÕMM, T.: *Riiklikku õppekava täiendavad õpitegevused meediaõpetuse arendamiseks Tartu maakonna koolide näitel*. [Bachelor's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2018. 63 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/60933>>.
- PEDASTE, M. et al.: Dimensions of Digital Competence and Its Assessment in Basic School. In *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri/Journal of Education Sciences of Estonia*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 212-243. ISSN 2346-562X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.12697/eha.2021.9.2.09>>.
- PEDASTE, M. et al.: *How to Increase the Potential of Digital Learning in Achieving both Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Learning Outcomes? CO:RE Short Report Series on Key Topics*. Hamburg : Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung, Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI); CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence, 2022. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.79415>>.
- RAUDVASSAR, L.: *Õpetajate võimalused õpilaste meediapädevuse arendamiseks läbiva teema kaudu*. [Master's Thesis]. Tartu : University of Tartu, 2013. 112 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/31071>>.
- RÖMER, L.: We Have to Teach Children about Data Protection Earlier. An Interview with Sonia Livingstone. In *Media Studies/Mediální Studia*, 2019, No. 2, p. 172-177. ISSN 2464-4846.
- ROWLEY, J.: The Wisdom Hierarchy: Representations of the DIKW Hierarchy. In *Journal of Information Science*, 2007, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 163-180. ISSN 0165-5515. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551506070706>>.
- SCOLARI, C. A. et al.: Transmedia Literacy in the New Media Ecology: Teens' Transmedia Skills and Informal Learning Strategies. In *El Profesional de la Información*, 2018, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 801-812. ISSN 1699-2407. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.jul.09>>.
- STOILOVA, M.: Children's Understanding of Personal Data and Privacy Online – A Systematic Evidence Mapping. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 557-575. ISSN 1369-118X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1657164>>.
- TULLY, M. et al.: Defining and Conceptualizing News Literacy. In *Journalism*, 2022, Vol. 23, No. 8, p. 1589-1606. ISSN 1464-8849. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211005888>>.

UGUR, K., HARRO-LOIT, H.: Media Literacy in the Estonian National Curriculum. In ARNOLDS-GRANLUND S.-B., KOTILAINEN, S. (eds.): *Media Literacy Education Nordic Perspectives*. Copenhagen : Nordicom, 2010, p. 133-144.

UGUR, K.: *Implementation of the Concept of Media Education in the Estonian Formal Education System*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Tartu : Tartu University Press, 2010. 44 p. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/15899>>.

UGUR, K.: Media Education as Cross-Curricular Theme in Estonian Schools: Reasons of a Failure. In *Postmodernism Problems*, 2011, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 308-319. ISSN 1314-3700.

VARMA, M.: *Report of Promoting Media Literacy in Estonia 2019-2023*. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-reports-application-audiovisual-media-services-directive-2020-2022>>.

VINTER, K.: *Esimesed sammud väikeste laste meediakasvatuses Eestis: Uurimistulemusi ja soovitusi õpetajakoolituse arendamiseks*. Tartu : Atlex, 2011.

VIRKUS, S.: Information Literacy in Europe: A Literature Review. In *Information Research*, 2003, Vol. 8, No. 4. [online]. [2023-11-09]. Available at: <<http://informationr.net/ir/8-4/paper159.html>>.

WUYCKENS, G. et al.: Untangling Media Literacy, Information Literacy, and Digital Literacy: A Systematic Meta-Review of Core Concepts in Media Education. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2022, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 168-182. ISSN 2167-8715. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2022-14-1-12>>.

Authors



Prof. Halliki Harro-Loit, PhD.

University of Tartu
Institute of Social Studies
Lossi 36
Tartu
ESTONIA
halliki.harro@ut.ee
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7375-5063>

Halliki Harro-Loit is a professor of journalism at the University of Tartu (PhD. at Oslo University in 2001). Her research interests include journalism studies, interpersonal communication, media policy, media and journalism and ethics, history. Currently, she is the coordinator of the Horizon 2020 Medielcom project.

Eleri Lõhmus, MA

University of Tartu
Institute of Social Studies
Lossi 36
Tartu
ESTONIA
eleri.lohmus@ut.ee



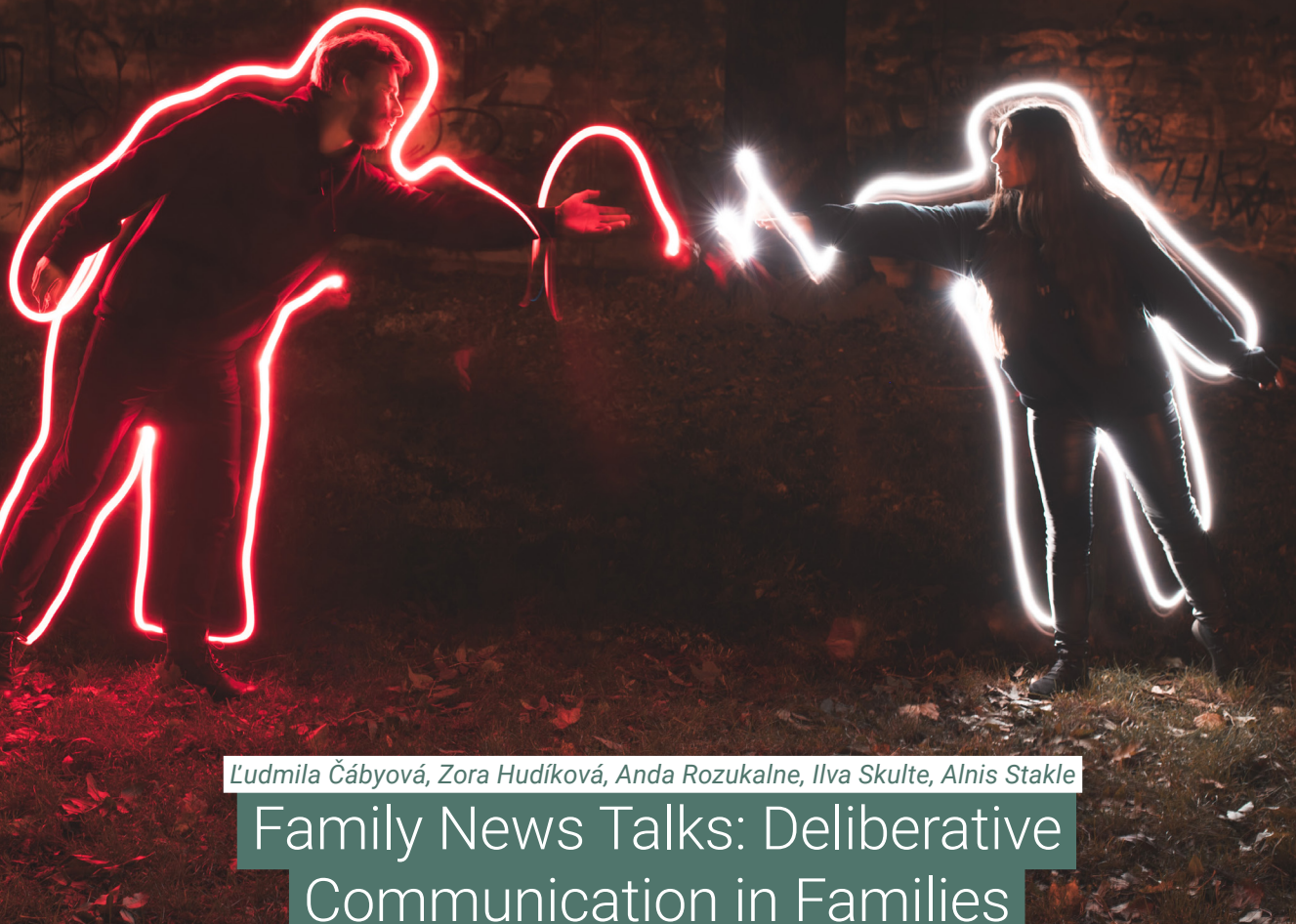
Eleri Lõhmus is a teacher at the University of Tartu. Her research interests include media literacy, audiovisual media and didactics in higher education.



Urmas Loit, PhD.

University of Tartu
Institute of Computer Science
Narva mnt 18
Tartu
ESTONIA
urmas.loit@ut.ee

Urmas Loit is a journalist with a university degree (University of Tartu, diploma in 1992), holding also a PhD. degree in journalism (University of Jyväskylä, Finland in 2018), researching media policies. He has been working as a journalist at the national public radio of Estonia. He has held office at the Association of Estonian Broadcasters as a managing director and taught radio journalism at the University of Tartu. He currently works as the communications officer for the Medielcom project.



Ludmila Čábyová, Zora Hudíková, Anda Rozukalne, Ilva Skulte, Alnis Stakle

Family News Talks: Deliberative Communication in Families

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-02>

ABSTRACT

The authors of the research study investigated and compared the use of media among young adults (aged 19-24) in Slovakian and Latvian families, along with its potential for fostering deliberative communication both within and outside these family units. The study highlights the very limited interest among young people in actively seeking out quality news sources, with only a small fraction of them consistently visiting reliable news websites, actively searching for high-quality information, and comparing news from various sources. News in the media continues to spark discussions among family members; however, there are still many families who consciously avoid these discussions. Media news continues to incite deliberative discourse within family units, yet a considerable number of families deliberately abstain from engaging in such dialogues. This study discusses the influence of the media environment on content in Latvia and Slovakia. It emphasizes the importance deliberative communication and promoting media and information literacy.

KEY WORDS

Deliberative Communication. Family Talks. Latvia. Slovakia. Use of News.

1 Introduction

In the global *Liberal Democracy Index of the Democracy Report 2023* published by the Varieties of Democracy Institute of the University of Gothenburg, Slovakia ranks as 15th, Latvia as 18th.¹ However, in one of the components of this comparative research, an essential part of contemporary democracy, both countries are lagging behind. The *Deliberative Component Index* (DCI) is ranking Latvia as 46th, but Slovakia as 92nd. Deliberation refers to the quality of political communication including rational and argumentative exchange, mutual respect of participants and civil character of discussions.² It is an important democracy variable that can be developed³ taking in account variations of the type of deliberation depending on the history and culture of respective societies⁴. The role of deliberative communication in democratic policy practices is discussed in theory as connected to usage of media, in particular, news.⁵ There are several studies suggesting the importance of cultivating deliberative practices in young audiences both at school and in families that envision the option of young people initiating discussions on political issues.⁶ In this paper based on the idea that media usage is the core element of opinion making and deliberation, we examine and compare uses of media as described in Slovakian and Latvian families and its potential for the development of deliberative communication both in families and outside them. Teams from both countries are members of the *MEDIADELCOM* consortium.⁷ Slovakia and Latvia have some similarities in their histories. Although they have different geographical and cultural characteristics, their location predisposes them to be influenced by each other's neighbours and historical events in the region. After the Second World War, both countries came under the influence of the communist regime within the Soviet Union. This influenced their social, economic and political development for many decades. Both countries gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This transition brought new challenges and opportunities as both countries sought to build democratic institutions and economies. Slovakia and Latvia became members of the European Union in 2004.⁸ Their integration into the EU brought the opportunity to work with other members and benefit from a common European space. Both countries have public and private institutions in their media system. Public media in Latvia are funded by the state budget and by licence fees. In Slovakia, licence fees were abolished in 2023.⁹

¹ PAPADA, E. et al.: *Democracy Report 2023. Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*. Göteborg : University of Gothenburg, Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), 2023, p. 15.

² WESSLER, H.: Deliberativeness in Political Communication. In DONSBACH, W. (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2008. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecd011>>.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ See: RYFE, D. M.: Does Deliberative Democracy Work? In *Annual Revue of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 8, p. 49-71. See also: SASS, J., DRYZEK, J. S.: Deliberative Cultures. In *Political Theory*, 2014, Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 3-25.

⁵ See: KIM, J., WYATT, R. O., KATZ, E.: News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 361-385.

⁶ See: MCDEVITT, M., CHAFFEE, S.: From Top-Down to Trickle-Up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions About the Family in Political Socialization. In *Political Communication*, 2002, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 281-301. See also: MCDEVITT, M., KIOUSIS, S.: Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education. In *Communication Education*, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 247-264.

⁷ Authors' note: For more information see: www.mediadelcom.eu.

⁸ *Member States of European Union*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2014/03/europeanunion.htm>>.

⁹ *Zrušenie úhrady – koncesionárskych poplatkov*. [Cancellation of Payment – Concession Fees]. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://uhrady.rtvsk/zruseniekoncesii>>.

The Slovak Republic, with an area of 49,035 km², has a population of 5,427,917 inhabitants.¹⁰ The number of young people (respondents of the media diary research) aged 19–24 is 321,633, which represents 5.92% of the total population. Of this number, Slovaks make up 80.7%, with Hungarians being the most numerous national minority (8.5%), followed by Roma (2.0%) and Czechs (0.6%).¹¹ Public service radio and television are obliged to broadcast part of their broadcasts in the language of national minorities.¹² Slovakia has had a dual system since 1991, which is based on the coexistence of private broadcasters and public broadcasters. Currently, there is one public service broadcaster in the Slovak media market – *Radio and Television of Slovakia* (1991).¹³ The main full-screen broadcasters are *Televízia Markíza* (since 1996), *Televízia JOJ* (since 2002) and the special news television channel *TA3* (since 2001). The major full-screen broadcasters are *Fun Rádio* (since 1990), *Rádio Expres* (since 2020) *Rádio Vlna* (since 2015), *Rádio Melody* (since 2006) and *Rádio Europa 2* (since 2009 – popular with young people). The Slovak media system is characterised by a high degree of commercialisation. The most watched station is the private television station *Markíza*, the most popular radio station has long been the private *Rádio Expres*, followed by the public broadcaster *Rádio Slovensko*, and the top three are rounded off by the commercial *Fun Rádio*. Major print media with nationwide coverage includes *Denník Sme*, *Denník N*, *Pravda*, *Hospodárske noviny* and the tabloid newspapers *Nový Čas* (the most read daily) and *Plus 1 deň*. Among purely online newsrooms, *aktuality.sk*, *refresher.sk*, *startup.sk* and *dnes24.sk* are popular.¹⁴

According to Urbaniková, the concentration of news media in Slovakia in 2021 showed a high-risk score (79%).¹⁵ Based on a *Eurobarometer* survey, the primary source for watching news among Slovaks is television (73%, 75% EU), followed by radio (44%, 39% EU), online news portals (37%, 43% EU) and platforms and blogs (25%, 26% EU).¹⁶ As indicated by the *Digital News Report 2022*, print media were the least popular means of accessing news (13%, 21%).¹⁷ Among social media, *Facebook* is the most used (71%), followed by *YouTube* (63%), *FB Messenger* (49%) and *Instagram* (32%), *Facebook* is used for news gathering by 48% of respondents, followed by *YouTube* (25%), *Messenger* (15%) and *Instagram* (11%). Trust in the media had a declining level in 2022 (only 26%),¹⁸ this is four percentage points lower than in 2021. Slovakia fell to last place in trust in the media together with the United States among the

¹⁰ Statistical Office: *Population and Migration*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/vbd_dem/om7102rr/v_om7102rr_00_00_00_sk>.

¹¹ Statistical Office: *Population*. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://www.scitanie.sk/>>.

¹² *Act on Media Services and on Amendments to Certain Acts No. 264/2022 Coll.*, from 1st August 2022. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20220801.html>>.

¹³ *Act on Radio and Television of Slovakia and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts No. 532/2010 Coll.*, from 15th December 2010. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2010/532/20230701>>.

¹⁴ *MML-TGI národný prieskum spotreby, médií a životného štýlu: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Základné výsledky za 1. kvartál a 2. kvartál 2023. [MML-TGI National Consumer, Media & Lifestyle Survey: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Underlying Results for Q1 and Q2 2023]*. [online]. [2023-08-26]. Available at: <<https://www.median.sk/pdf/2023/ZS232SR.pdf>>.

¹⁵ URBANÍKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2022. Country Report: Slovakia*. Fiesole : European University Institute, 2022, p. 18. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/75737?show=full>>.

¹⁶ *Media & News Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.

¹⁷ NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

46 countries analysed.¹⁹ The impact of online disinformation is assessed as high in Slovakia. 36% of Slovaks say they have been exposed to disinformation very often or often, but 70% are confident that they can recognise disinformation.²⁰ In the *Media Literacy Index 2023*, Slovakia was ranked 23rd with 48 points (the ranking is done on a scale of 1 to 41, highest to lowest and the scores are 0-100 points, lowest to highest score).²¹ The results of the *Eset Foundation Study* reveal that the young generation tolerates misleading information from conspiracy websites. Up to 86% think that based on freedom of speech and expression such sites can exist and are an alternative to traditional media (73%). Only 55% of respondents agree that conspiracy sites spread misinformation, half-truths, anti-social sentiment and distrust of traditional media.²²

In Latvia, which covers an area of 64.6 thousand square metres, in 2022, the number of inhabitants is gradually decreasing, making 1,875,757 people.²³ Young people belonging to the so-called Generation Z and who are in the focus of the media diaries research, thus between the ages of 19 and 24, make up one hundred thousand five hundred people (100,549 people) or 5% of population.²⁴ The country is ethnically and culturally heterogeneous. Most of the Latvian population in 2022 are Latvians (62.9%), 24.2% Russians, 3% Belarusians, 2.2% Ukrainians, 1.9% Poles, 1.1% Lithuanians, 5.4% representatives of other ethnic groups.²⁵ Public service media regulation provides conditions and a budget for the creation of media content for minorities.

Latvia's media audience is linguistically divided, moreover, until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in March 2022, after which many Russian TV channels were closed, their influence on Latvian media users and the Latvian media system was relatively high.

The Latvian media system is characterised by a high degree of commercialization and diversity. The PSM's are the leaders of the audio-visual media market, but the largest commercial news media (*TV3*, *delfi.lv*, *Tvnet.lv*), as well as the national news agency *LETA*, are owned by foreign media corporations, thus, recent media ownership transformation trends show a process of shrinking the share of national owners in the Latvian media environment. The sustainability of the media market is threatened by a gradual decrease in the population, a stagnant advertising market influenced by the activities of global platforms,²⁶ high inflation,

¹⁹ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Dôvera obyvateľov Slovenska v médiá klesla, v prieskume Reuters skončili spolu s USA na poslednom mieste*. [Slovakia's Trust in the Media Has Fallen, Ranking Last Along with the US in a Reuters Poll]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2894684/dovera-slovakov-v-media-klesla-v-prieskume-reuters-skoncili-spolu-s-usa-na-poslednom-mieste/>>.

²⁰ *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2021*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <[https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/74712/MPM2022-EN-N.pdf?sequence=](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/74712/MPM2022-EN-N.pdf?sequence=1)>.

²¹ LESSENSKI, M.: *The Media Literacy Index 2023. Report*. Sofia : Open Society Institute, 2023, p. 7. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>>.

²² VELŠIČ, M.: *Mladí ľudia v kyberpriestore*. [Young People in Cyberspace]. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2016, p. 3. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/Mladi_v_kyberpriestore.pdf>.

²³ *Dažādu tautību iedzīvotāju skaits Latvijā 2022.gada sākumā*. [Number of Inhabitants of Various Nationalities in Latvia in the Beginning of 2022]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://stor1.leta.lv/za-feb3f20/ig/c/8/6/c869ffe0-f097-4bf7-afed-4292e55cb8e0/index.62974f18f33b4.html>>.

²⁴ *Iedzīvotāji pēc dzimuma un vecuma reģionos un republikas pilsētās gada sākumā 1971-2022*. [Population by Gender and Age in Regions and Cities of the Republic at the Beginning of the Year 1971-2022]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__POP__IR__IRD/IRD040/table/tableViewLayout1/>.

²⁵ *Dažādu tautību iedzīvotāju skaits Latvijā 2022.gada sākumā*. [Number of Inhabitants of Various Nationalities in Latvia in the Beginning of 2022]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://stor1.leta.lv/za-feb3f20/ig/c/8/6/c869ffe0-f097-4bf7-afed-4292e55cb8e0/index.62974f18f33b4.html>>.

²⁶ *Latvijas mediju reklāmas tirgus apjoms 2022. Gadā – 84.4 miljoni eiro*. [Latvia's Media Advertising Market Volume in 2022 – 84.4 Million Euros]. [online]. [2023-02-23]. Available at: <<https://www.lra.lv/lv/zinas/latvijas-mediju-reklamas-tirgus-apjoms-2022-gada-84-4-miljoni-eiro>>.

which mostly increases risks for the existence of local and regional media. Journalists' self-assessment of opportunities to work independently is high, as per *Worlds of Journalism Study* data.²⁷ Latvia has a stable media support system. However, the local and regional media do not receive support for investments to improve their capacity and technology. When evaluating the accountability of journalism, three different journalistic cultures were observed,²⁸ which are characterised by high professionalism, post-Soviet journalism patterns, and an instrumental approach, when media and journalism are not free from the influence of persons representing political and economic power.

The importance of digital media and social networking sites is growing in the **daily information consumption** of Latvian inhabitants. According to media usage survey data (N=1949, 16 – 75, 2022) 88% of Latvian residents use Internet news portals (59% daily) and 84% use social media (66% daily). The use of television (74%) and radio (76%) decreased slightly. The use of the press is decreasing, and 62% of the population reads it. Video streaming services are used by 37%, audio streaming services by 35%. Most of the population (84%) use media in Latvian (young people aged 16-30 – 91%, representatives of minorities – 58%); 60% of the population use media in Russian (38% – young people; 95% – representatives of minorities), media in English are used by 34% (62% of young people; 22% of minority populations), 4% of the population use media in other languages. The most popular social networking site in Latvia is *Facebook (META)*, which is used by 82% of the population (65% every day), *YouTube* is used by 78% (41% every day), and 82% of Latvian residents use the messaging website *WhatsApp*. Among the professional media, the most used are PSMs (*Latvian Television*, 68%; *Latvian Radio*, 63%; *PSM news site, lsm.lv*, 39%) and commercial media news portals (*Delfi* 64%, *Tvnet* 48%).²⁹ The interest of the Latvian population in media literacy (MIL) is relatively low, less than 50% of the surveyed admit that they are interested in MIL.³⁰ In 2022 the majority (57%; -4% compared to 2021) of Latvian citizens surveyed claimed that they are usually able to recognize which information in the media is reliable and which is misleading, biased or fabricated.³¹ Traditionally, younger respondents, with a higher level of education and income and employed people have a higher self-assessment of the ability to recognize reliable information. These results lead to the conclusion that the higher self-assessment of young people's media literacy is related to the survey methodology and reflects the higher confidence of young people, and vice versa lower confidence of older generation representatives in their digital skills, because an experimental study in which media content should be evaluated in the context of disinformation does not indicate a higher level of media literacy among young people.³²

²⁷ KURCALTE, O. et al.: *Sabiedrisko mediju prioritāro mērķauditoriju izpēte. Kvalitatīvais pētījums. [Research on Priority Audiences for Public Service Media. Qualitative Research]*. Rīga : Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.seplp.lv/lv/media/789/download?attachment>>.

²⁸ See: DIMANTS, A.: Latvia: Different Journalistic Cultures and Different Accountability within One Media System. In EBERWEIN, T., FENGLER, S., KARMASIN, M. (eds.): *The European Handbook of Media Accountability*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2018, p. 143-149.

²⁹ *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem. [Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population]*. Rīga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>>.

³⁰ See: ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy Policy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2022, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229.

³¹ *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem. [Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population]*. Rīga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>>.

³² See: ROŽUKALNE, A.: Perception of Media and Information Literacy among Representatives of Mid-Age and Older Generations: The Case of Latvia. In *ESSACHESS – Journal for Communication Studies*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 2(26), p. 207-232.

The description of media usage, especially for information and news, media literacy and trust in media in both countries reveals there are indications of risks based on the higher level of usage of and trust in the on-line media including blogs and podcasts (compared to average in EU), relatively high level of self-confidence as media users (especially typical for younger users) and relatively low level of ability to recognize conspirative and disinformation in the practice on-line. However, survey methods don't explain the reasons and contexts of decisions people make based upon the media, everyday rituals of news consumption and methods of development of deliberative communication. This is why it is important to understand the dynamics of family contexts supporting patterns of media use, access to news and models of deliberation as they are or are not developed in Slovak and Latvian families.

2 Theoretical Part

2.1 Deliberative Communication and Uses of News

In their seminal article connecting news media use and deliberative democracy Kim, Wyatt and Katz conclude that the news-media use is an important factor in developing political conversation on different types of questions in a person's everyday life and, thus, news-media use contributes to the willingness to argue with people of different opinion, to the readiness to involve in participatory activities and to the quality of opinions made (in terms of argument quality, consideredness, opinionation etc.).³³ The very idea of deliberative democracy elaborated and advocated in the 20th century in writings of such philosophers as John Dewey or Jurgen Habermass lays on principles of popular sovereignty, inclusiveness, equality and collective decision making.³⁴ Deliberativeness itself can be understood as a specific variable quality of political communication that is based on arguments expressed with respect to others and civil manners.³⁵ From such a point of view, everyday family settings with their priorities and rituals of media use are one of the first contexts for the exercise of participatory democracy, for the development of deliberative practices and competences needed. Family itself can be viewed as a specific model of a small group where deliberative communication exercise can happen for a young person, e.g. news topics and information cues from media are discussed in the manner that include features of deliberation such as equal, autonomous expression, rational argumentation etc. Young people can be the ones who initiate the change in family media usage and communication patterns, if educational efforts are made to cultivate deliberative attitudes at school.³⁶ Still many authors doubt if the vector connecting deliberation and participation is obvious. Wojcieszak and her co-authors agree that deliberative discussions in the family as well as in other groups may influence readiness of political participation, however, different factors including media usage and communication patterns in the family must be studied in depth, in an individualised way.³⁷ In general, Ryfe suggests that deliberation is difficult to achieve because people are only involved in discussions and make

³³ See: KIM, J., WYATT, R. O., KATZ, E.: News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 361-385.

³⁴ GUTMANN, A., THOMPSON, D. F.: *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 9.

³⁵ See: WESSLER, H.: Deliberativeness in Political Communication. In DONSBACH, W. (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2008. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecd011>>.

³⁶ See: MCDEVITT, M., CHAFFEE, S.: From Top-Down to Trickle-Up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions About the Family in Political Socialization. In *Political Communication*, 2002, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 281-301. See also: MCDEVITT, M., KIOUSIS, S.: Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education. In *Communication Education*, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 247-264.

³⁷ See: WOJCIESZAK, M. E. et al.: Deliberative and Participatory Democracy? Ideological Strength and the Processes Leading from Deliberation to Political Engagement. In *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2010, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 154-180.

qualitative arguments when additional factors are in play and because it represents a certain shift in their everyday routines, writing: “*Deliberation represents a disturbance of everyday reasoning habits. People prefer to rely on routine scripts to navigate through their social world. Being jolted out of these scripts is, generally speaking, a disconcerting experience.*”³⁸ Those scripts both in smaller groups and mass audiences are gained from mass media content including news, discussions, comments, but also non-fiction and fictional stories.

In recent decades deliberation has been broadly studied in connection with on-line communication in different fora and comments where discussions are often directly prompted by news (or fake news that underlines the importance of deliberation in the development of media literacy and vice versa).³⁹ However, in their statement article many authors developing the concept of deliberative democracy today critically describe the result of broad audience access to various means of expression as “quantity over quality” and the difficulty “to detect the signal amid the noise”⁴⁰ and push forward the idea of deliberative decision making in smaller representative groups.

Being informed to create and express rational arguments to come to rational decisions always was a part of deliberation elements because public discussions are vulnerable to manipulations.⁴¹ Discussion on who and how, by what motivation engage in gaining information and facts needed for in depth deliberation about particular issues, and what scale of width and depth of discussion still holds necessary democratic standards brought to the table the discussion of (more informed, representative) mini-groups.⁴² Still, dependence on news sources and interdependence in social media as well as questions of manipulation and disinformation vs. motivated searches for information, motivation to become involved in deliberation and create qualitative arguments makes the importance of understanding the user’s perspective and their choices in the media environment central. Given the risk of decline of trust in news media and tendencies described as “news fatigue” or “news avoidance”, special attention must be paid to young citizens entering the public sphere.

2.2 Generation Z and How It Changed Media Usage Patterns

Generation Z (also known as i-Generation, net generation, digital nomads) is the first generation to have grown up their entire lives in the digital era and in the world of the internet.⁴³

They have never experienced a world without them, and their approach to technology differs significantly from that of earlier generations – Generation Z is completely aligned with technology. For this reason, the generation is often referred to as digital nomads. The Gen Z cohort includes the population born between 1997 and 2010.⁴⁴

³⁸ RYFE, D. M.: Does Deliberative Democracy Work? In *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 8, p. 56.

³⁹ See: SEMAAN, B. C. et. al.: Social Media Supporting Political Deliberation across Multiple Public Spheres: Towards Depolarization. In FUSSEL, S., LUTTERS, W. (eds.): *CSCW'14: Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*. New York, NY : Association for Computing Machinery, p. 1409-1421. See also: JENNINGS, F. J. et al.: Social Media and Democracy: Fostering Political Deliberation and Participation. In *Western Journal of Communication*, 2021, Vol. 85, No. 2, p. 147-167.

⁴⁰ See: DRYZEK, J. S. et al.: The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation. In *Science*, 2019, Vol. 363, No. 6432, p. 1144-1146.

⁴¹ FISHKIN, J.: *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 125.

⁴² See: PARKINSON, J., MANSBRIDGE, J.: *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2012.

⁴³ See: FRANCIS, T., HOEFEL, F.: *‘True Gen’: Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies*. New York, NY : McKinsey & Company, 2018.

⁴⁴ See: TURNER, A.: Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest. In *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 2015, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 103-114. See also: PRIPORAS, C.-V., STYLOS, N., FOTIADIS, A. K.: Generation Z Consumers’ Expectations of Interactions in Smart Retailing: A Future Agenda. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 374-381.

Compared to sociology, in which generational studies developed in the 20th century, when trying to explain social changes, or social anthropology analysing intergenerational relationships via kinship, in media studies the concept of ‘generation’ has received much less attention than age groups or age cohorts.⁴⁵ Given that media use is age separated, Mannheim’s (1929/1952) generation theory⁴⁶ is important. It spans both age and life courses, bringing together people born at the same time and location with their shared experiences creating unique consciousnesses that define a generation in the historical process. Although the separation of age groups is becoming increasingly blurred, media behaviour is determined by life cycle, but media products and media events that shape the generations’ collective memory and common mediated experience are important for defining the unique characteristics of a generation.⁴⁷ A generation is characterised by a special sense of belonging. In Mannheim’s theory of generational succession, it is the shared experiences gained during formative years that determine the structure of a generation in relation to social and historical changes. This idea is close to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus⁴⁸ which describes a stable system in which individual desires are internalised through family parenting and education, which is understood in relation to the surrounding society.⁴⁹ A multidimensional understanding of generations is offered by the cultural approach,⁵⁰ which links the characteristics of a generation to the social and cultural transformations of a specific period, defining a generation in relation to its common values and life scenarios, which are also influenced by the media system and the development of media technologies.⁵¹

Generation Z demonstrates a pragmatic and rational worldview, marked by optimism and a pursuit of personal ambitions while acknowledging the influence of external forces. Proficient in efficient internet navigation and adept at online shopping, they exhibit a strong work ethic, leveraging life’s opportunities, all while maintaining assertive communication.⁵² It is the most technologically advanced of all the generations, as mentioned earlier. Mobile technology is their dominant and most popular technology.⁵³

According to information by Howarth published in January 2023, up to 64% of members of Generation Z use *Instagram* at least once a day. They further state that *Instagram* is still the most popular platform among social media for Generation Z worldwide. *Whatsapp* came in second place, with 59% of Generation Z members using it daily. *Facebook* is in 3rd place, with 45% of Generation Z members logging on to this platform daily.⁵⁴ According Williamson, Gen Z

⁴⁵ See: BOLIN, G., SKOGERBØ, E.: Age, Generation and the Media. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3-14.

⁴⁶ See: MANNHEIM, K.: The Problem of Generations. In KECSKEMETI, P. (ed.): *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-320.

⁴⁷ See: SÛNA, L.: ‘Senior Pop Music?’ The Role of Folk-Like Schlager Music for Elderly People. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 91-108.

⁴⁸ See: BOURDIEU, P.: *In Other Words. Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1990.

⁴⁹ See: BOLIN, G.: Media Generations: Objective and Subjective Media Landscapes and Nostalgia among Generations of Media Users. In *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 2014, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 108-131.

⁵⁰ See: AROLDI, P., COLOMBO, F.: Questioning “Digital Global Generations”. A Critical Approach. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 175-190.

⁵¹ See: OPERMANN, S.: Understanding Changing News Media Use: Generations and Their Media Vocabulary. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 123-146.

⁵² See: MCCRINDLE, M., FELL, A.: *Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation*. Norwest : McCrindle Research, 2019.

⁵³ *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>>; HOAI, T. L.: *Yes, the Internet Is Redefining Gen Z’s TV Habits*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <<https://www.decisionlab.co/blog/yes-the-internet-is-redefining-gen-zs-tv-habits>>.

⁵⁴ HOWARTH, J.: *25+ New Generation Z Statistics*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <<https://explodingtopics.com/blog/gen-z-stats>>.

will use different platforms in different ways to fulfil all of their needs.⁵⁵ Members of Generation Z use social networking especially when these platforms increase their good mood and decrease their stress levels. Equally important for them are social interactions and the feeling that posting keeps them in their reference communities.⁵⁶

As the dominant medium for Generation Z is the mobile phone, which they live with all day, changes have also occurred in the use of traditional media. Generation Z prefers to follow their social media pages over traditional media. If they are even watching traditional media, they pay the most attention to television. America's Generation Z spends less time watching traditional television than any other generation. They are the only generation that spends less than an hour a day watching (0:58 min); the average for all generations is 2:43 hrs.⁵⁷ At the same time, they are characterized by simultaneous other activities in addition to watching TV, most often browsing the Internet and communicating on social networks.⁵⁸

A very interesting fact is that Gen Z can only hold their attention for a very short time – 8 seconds, 4 seconds less than Generation Y. If something doesn't engage them in a short time, they look for new stimuli. As a result, ten-second or shorter video ads are popular with them.⁵⁹ The research company *Altitud* has found that this 8-second concentration of Gen Z acts as a highly evolved "eight-second filter" to evaluate vast amounts of information. On the internet, they rely heavily on trending sites within apps to aggregate the most popular latest content. They also turn to trusted influencers to find the most relevant information and entertainment. When something proves worthy of their attention, they are intensely engaged and focused on it.⁶⁰ Also based on the above, instead of lengthy TV programs, they prefer short videos presented on social media, which they spend most of their media time watching.⁶¹

Robert-Agell et al. set out to explore the relationship between Generation Z and radio. It was the most comprehensive study on the topic in Spain. They found that Gen Z is interested in exclusive digital content as well as that designed and created by Gen Z for Gen Z, building a community around media content and media brands, and a mix of paid and free access. They stress that the level of media literacy is also an important factor.⁶² It is absolutely characteristic of Gen Z that they get all their information, even news from home and the world, online, almost never in print. They seek entertainment on a variety of platforms, but rarely on television.⁶³

⁵⁵ LEBOW, S.: *How Gen Z Consumes Media in 5 Charts*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>>.

⁵⁶ CHATZOGLU, P. D. et al.: Generation Z: Factors Affecting the Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). In MYLONAS, P. (ed.): *Proceedings of the 15th International Workshop on Semantic and Social Media Adaptation & Personalization (SMAP 2020)*. Zakynthos : IEEE, 2020, p. 1-6.

⁵⁷ LEBOW, S.: *How Gen Z Consumes Media in 5 Charts*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>>.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>>.

⁶⁰ FINCH, J.: *What Is Generation Z, and What Does It Want?* [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://www.fastcompany.com/3045317/what-is-generation-z-and-what-does-it-want>>.

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² See: ROBERT-AGELL, F. et al.: No Habit, No Listening. Radio and Generation Z: Snapshot of the Audience Data and the Business Strategy to Connect with It. In *Profesional de la información*, 2022, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. e310515.

⁶³ *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>>.

2.3 The Family Talks about the News

Young people are showing less and less interest in news coverage from traditional media such as television, radio and print, which provide traditional news formats.⁶⁴ According to Belfrage these formats do not fit into young people's lifestyles, for practical, time, and geographical reasons, so they are using them less and less, if at all.⁶⁵ The declining interest in news is confirmed by the annual *Digital News Report*. Their reports regularly document the declining interest of young people in traditional sources of news such as television, radio and print and, conversely, the increasing interest in news from social media.⁶⁶

Diddi and LaRose also focused their study on the younger generation (college students) and found that those who discuss news more frequently in their families tend to be more active consumers of news and have a better awareness of world events.⁶⁷ Shehata states that a major influence on Generation Z's news consumption is their family background, socioeconomic status and their family's use of traditional media during their childhood.⁶⁸ However, with the advent of the digital age and the increased use of digital (especially social) media, the influence of family and upbringing may weaken.

According to Bengtsson and Johansson, social media is gaining popularity and often serves as a source of information even for traditional media. News portals on social media increasingly use a combination of personal posts, shared content, photos, videos, advertisements and are often defined as "news". This leads to a problematic distinction between 'news media' and 'social media'.⁶⁹

In the literature, we often encounter research on the influence of families' communication styles on individual members' media use, on media regulation, and on the interpretation of media content (add sources). We can hypothesise that different communication styles and dynamics within families may influence whether individual members prefer newspapers, television, the Internet, or social media. Family communication also influences how media content is controlled and managed in families, and whether individuals learn to critically perceive and analyze media information.

McLeod and Chaffee authored a model of communication patterns in families that relates to family communication style and its influence on media use. Research has identified two types of communication styles in families: social orientation (avoiding controversial topics) and conceptual orientation (emphasising openness to differing views).⁷⁰ Families with a social orientation were less likely to openly discuss controversial topics or ask critical questions about media and news content. This approach can lead to selective consumption of information and confirmation of existing beliefs. Conversely, families with a more conceptually oriented approach tend to evaluate the media more critically, have discussions, and also ask questions

⁶⁴ See: THURMAN, N. et al.: My Friends, Editors, Algorithms, and I: Examining Audience Attitudes to News Selection. In *Digital Journalism*, 2019, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 447-469.

⁶⁵ See: BELFRAGE, M. J.: Young People Do Consume News in Social Media. In ANDERSSON, I., DALQUIST, U., OHLSSON, J. (eds.): *Youth and News in a Digital Media Environment: Nordic-Baltic Perspectives*. Göteborg : Nordicom, 2018, p. 105-113.

⁶⁶ NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

⁶⁷ See: DIDI, A., LAROSE, R.: Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits among College Students in an Internet Environment. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 193-210.

⁶⁸ See: SHEHATA, A.: News Habits among Adolescents: The Influence of Family Communication on Adolescents' News Media Use – Evidence from a Three-Wave Panel Study. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 6, p. 758-781.

⁶⁹ See: BENGTSSON, S., JOHANSSON, S.: A Phenomenology of News: Understanding News in Digital Culture. In *Journalism – Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 2021, Vol. 22, No. 11, p. 2873-2889.

⁷⁰ See: MCLEOD, J. M., CHAFFEE, S.: Interpersonal Approaches to Communication Research. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1973, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 469-499.

about media and news content.⁷¹ Based on the above, it can be concluded that these families are more likely to follow different media sources and try to understand different perspectives. They tend to critically evaluate media and news content and discuss it with different viewpoints in the family. This approach encourages the creation of more informed and open discussions.

Earlier studies have shown that parents who talk to their children about the news in traditional media have children who are more likely to watch television news later in life.⁷² According to Atkinson, younger children learn about news and media through observing and imitating the behaviour of parents and older relatives.⁷³ Parents can be the role models that their children follow in forming their media preferences and attitudes towards news. The family can play a key role in the development of critical thinking in young people.

Also, teenagers who are avid newspaper readers are likely to come from households that actively encourage such behaviour.⁷⁴ However, similar imitation behaviour can also be observed with online media. Vaala and Bleakley found that parents' reading of online news predicted that their children would also pay attention to online news.⁷⁵

Interestingly, in the results of research conducted in the UK on a sample of 1,000 parents and children, almost 40% of parents reported that they never listen to or watch the news media with their children. 21% of parents never talk to their children about the content of news in the media. Those who do talk do so most often while watching TV, at dinner, and while riding in the car. Younger parents reported that they talk more often about news from online media than from traditional media.⁷⁶

This suggests that parents can significantly influence children's attitudes towards news through the transmission of family values and beliefs. For example, a family that considers media independence and credibility important is likely to encourage children to choose responsible and reliable media.

With increasing age, the opposite trend can be observed, with older children teaching their parents. This is mainly about digital skills in relation to the use of new media, but also about the topic of choosing trustworthy media in an attempt to alert parents to the misinformation content of some news websites. According to Tutiasri and Kusuma parents tend to overlook the source of information and often do not verify content on social media.⁷⁷ The lack of checking information received has several causes: parents do not know how to check the information because they do not know how to control technology as well as their children. Another reason is too much trust in the sender from whom they receive the information. It is in such cases that children take the initiative to explain to their parents not only how to work with new technologies, but also to focus their attention on safe and trustworthy sources from which to obtain and share information.⁷⁸

⁷¹ See: AUSTIN, E. W., PINKLETON, B. E., FUJIOKA, Y.: The Role of Interpretation Processes and Parental Discussion in the Media's Effects on Adolescents' Use of Alcohol. In *Pediatrics*, 2000, Vol. 105, No. 2, p. 343-349.

⁷² See: ATKIN, C. K., GANTZ, W.: Television News and Political Socialization. In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1978, Vol. 42, No. 2, p. 183-194.

⁷³ See: ATKINSON, D.: A Critical Approach to Critical Thinking in TESOL. In *TESOL Quarterly*, 1997, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 71-94.

⁷⁴ See: COBB, C. J.: Patterns of Newspaper Readership among Teenagers. In *Communication Research*, 1986, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 299-326.

⁷⁵ See: VAALA, S. E., BLEAKLEY, A.: Monitoring, Mediating, and Modeling: Parental Influence on Adolescent Computer and Internet Use on the United States. In *Journal of Children and Media*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 40-57.

⁷⁶ PICTON, I.: *Family News Literacy. How Parents and Children Engage with the News: Findings from a Survey of 1,000 UK Parents*. London : A National Literacy Trust, 2019, p. 11. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://cdn-literacytrust-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Family_news_literacy_report.pdf>.

⁷⁷ See: TUTIASRI, R. P., KUSUMA, A.: Millennial Generation and Family Literacy within the Dissemination of Hoax. In *Informasi*, 2020, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 153-164.

⁷⁸ See: PAVELEKOVÁ, J., ČÁBYOVÁ, L., HRUŠKOVÁ, A.: Reading Behaviour in the Digital Age: Impact of Covid-19 on Consumer Behaviour. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 25-41.

3 Methodology

The idea to investigate the media diaries of students of Mass Media Studies and Journalism was conceived as a spin-off activity of the international H2020 *MEDIADELCOM* project, an EU-funded project involving 17 teams representing 14 EU countries.⁷⁹ The aim of the research is to investigate the stereotypes of media use in the selected target group (first year students at colleges focusing on media studies in Slovakia and Lithuania) and in their families.

A qualitative approach was chosen to investigate their personal and familial media stereotypes, with the oral history method being utilized. As Hendl and Remr state, the oral history method is used by researchers to collect individuals' personal accounts of certain events, their causes and consequences.⁸⁰ Unlike the life history method, it focuses on predefined themes rather than the individual's story itself. Researchers seek to find connections between individuals' life experiences and broader social and cultural contexts.⁸¹

In this context, a specific method – the media diary – has been chosen. According to Hyers, media diaries provide a subjective contextual understanding of users' habits, behaviours, experiences and engagement with digital media in order to understand social and personal changes in young people's lives. A central feature of the diary is that it makes the personal visible alongside the social and allows a focus on users' time and time periods.⁸² Our choice of method supports the arguments of researchers such as Lev-On, Lowenstein-Barkai, who state that media diaries belong to a narrative form of qualitative data collection (they can be written, visual, audio or multimodal digital form, for example via mobile phones or on paper),⁸³ or Berg, who highlights that narratives such as the media diary make connections to users' everyday practices with digital media in research that typically uses several methods and is mostly used in a mixed methods context. Yet they can also be used as a single method in ethnographic research.⁸⁴ Students were tasked with writing an essay that chronicles their daily media interactions and includes insights on journalism quality, information perception, and interviews with family members from different generations regarding media stereotypes. The essay format was selected to address any potential omission of specific Generation Z media habits in the questionnaire construction.

According to Hasebrik and Hepp, studies that use qualitative media diaries, for example, are interested in how different media and media content relate to each other (often based on the concept of media repertoires),⁸⁵ how media communication interactions are integrated into larger structures of (mobile) worlds,⁸⁶ or how certain topics and/or media contents affect and are

⁷⁹ Authors' note: The aim of the project is to develop a diagnostic tool (multi-scenario model) to provide a holistic assessment of the risks and opportunities related to deliberative communication and consequently social cohesion in Europe. Source: *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

⁸⁰ HENDL, J. A., REMR, J.: *Metody výzkumu a evaluace*. [Research and Evaluation Methods]. Praha : Portál, 2017, p. 86-87.

⁸¹ See: GAVORA, P. et al.: *Elektronická učebnica pedagogického výskumu*. [Electronic Textbook of Educational Research]. Bratislava : Univerzita Komenského, 2010. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<http://www.emetodologia.fedu.uniba.sk/>>.

⁸² HYERS, L. L.: *Diary Methods*. London : Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 15-20.

⁸³ LEV-ON, A., LOWENSTEIN-BARKAI, H.: Viewing Diaries in an Age of New Media: An Exploratory Analysis of Mobile Phone App Diaries versus Paper Diaries. In *Methodological Innovations*, 2019, Vol. 12, No. 1. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799119844442>>.

⁸⁴ See: BERG, M., DÜVEL, C.: Qualitative Media Diaries: An Instrument for Doing Research from a Mobile Media Ethnographic Perspective. In *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 71-89.

⁸⁵ See: HASEBRINK, U., HEPP, A.: How to Research Cross-Media Practices? Investigating Media Repertoires and Media Ensembles. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 362-377.

⁸⁶ See: HEPP, A., BERG, M., ROITSCH, C.: A Processual Concept of Media Generation: The Media-Generational Positioning of Elderly People. In *Nordicom Review*, 2017, Vol. 38, No. S1, p. 109-122.

reflected upon in their everyday lives.⁸⁷ Qualitative media diaries may also differ in openness. They can be implemented as fully open-ended tools, but also use standardized elements in combination with open-ended questions.⁸⁸ For the evaluation, *MAXQDA* was used,⁸⁹ a program that offers tools for organizing and analyzing qualitative data from text, audio, image, audiovisual, and bibliographic files.

This article has taken advantage of the diary-based methodology used in the research of the *MEDIADELCOM* project. Discoveries of the diaries are assessed and compared to answer following research questions:

RQ₁: What are the main patterns of media usage in Latvian and Slovakian families in the intergenerational context?

RQ₂: How (if at all) is the media usage and news consumption by younger members of families (so called Generation Z) different from their parents' media usage and news consumption?

RQ₃: Are the family everyday practices in news consumption leading to a supportive environment for the development of deliberative communication practices and skills and are young people able to change it, i.e. do families talk about news, and, if yes, are students those who initiate conversations and discussions?

In the Slovak part of the research 113 essays from students of the bachelor's degree program concentrating on media and communication studies were analysed. Among this cohort, 28 individuals identified as male, while 85 individuals identified as female in the age group 19-23. Research data were collected in April 2022. In the Latvian part of the research 132 essays were analyzed from undergraduate journalism, communication and media studies students. The total number of students was 132 in the age group of 19-24. In total, there were 16 male and 116 female essays. Research data were collected in April of 2022 and 2023.

4 Results

The media diaries were primarily analyzed from the perspective of Generation Z. The adoption of this methodology was driven by the main objective of elucidating and comprehending the behavioural patterns and communication dynamics exhibited by young individuals in relation to news media consumption and news dissemination activities.

4.1 Results of the Research in Slovakia

Practices of News Use

The research data shows that participants are in contact with the media almost all day. The device through which they predominantly consume most forms of media is the mobile phone. This was confirmed by all of respondents. The preference for using a mobile device as the main technological device through which information is obtained in general has been confirmed

⁸⁷ See: KOCH, C. et al.: "Space Means Science, Unless It's about Star Wars": A Qualitative Assessment of Science Communication Audience Segments. In *Public Understanding of Science*, 2019, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 157-175.

⁸⁸ See: YTRE-ARNE, B.: Media Use in Changing Everyday Life: How Biographical Disruption Could Destabilize Media Repertoires and Public Connection. In *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 34, No. 5, p. 488-502.

⁸⁹ Authors' note: It also includes some tools for analyzing quantitative data (e.g., mixed methods tools) and therefore allows for interpretations from the evaluation of a combination of methods and statistical evaluations. Source: *Software MAXQDA*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://www.maxqda.com/>>.

by the last 3 years by *Digital News Report* research.⁹⁰ Via mobile, respondents contact their friends, follow current stories and news on their favourite sites or influencers' sites, listen to music and podcasts, watch entertaining videos, and some follow traditional or online media sites. "My mobile device accompanies me in some way throughout the day, either actively or passively. The reason for this is that I want to be on the phone immediately if anything happens, or text with friends and a friend I don't have nearby. It also serves as a tool for me at work and in a way I can't imagine life without this device anymore." (Female, SK105).

Drawing from an examination of the media diaries, it is evident that their daily media consumption patterns bear a striking resemblance to one another. Eighty percent of the surveyed students indicated that they reach for their mobile phones immediately upon awakening. While still in bed, they peruse updates from friends, followed by global news, and some proceed to check school or work-related information. If time permits, they also browse entertainment websites.

Most often they use *Instagram*, *Messenger* and also *WhatsApp*. Merely five percent of respondents indicate that they deliberately refrain from media exposure in the morning, opting instead to engage actively with their mobile phones during breakfast or during their commute to school or work. During their morning routine, they typically listen to *Spotify* or have *YouTube* videos playing while performing personal hygiene tasks. Subsequently, as they commute, a majority of individuals choose to listen to music or podcasts via *Spotify*, with a portion of them opting to watch entertaining videos on platforms such as *YouTube* or *TikTok*.

The predominant activity during driving involves listening to the radio. A minority of participants activate it with the intention of enhancing their morning disposition or utilizing it as ambient audio while taking notes in the afternoon. Among the younger demographic, *Rádio Express*, *Fun rádio*, and *Rádio Europa 2* emerge as the favoured radio stations.

"I travel to school by car so I use the *Spotify* audio platform on my mobile phone. If I don't have the mood and time to connect *Bluetooth* I'm also happy for radio. My favourite radios are *Fun rádio*, *Rádio Europa 2* and *Rádio Express*" (Female, SK18). During school they mainly follow social networks, during break they watch entertaining videos from *YouTube* or *TikTok*. After school or work duties are over, they relax again with fun videos from *YouTube*, *TikTok*, or listen to various educational podcasts. In the evening, they spend time watching movies from *Netflix*. Before falling asleep, they still pay attention to entertaining videos or social networks.

Traditionally, a common practice involved communal media consumption, where family members would gather in the evening to view the scheduled linear TV program. The choice of content was determined through consensus or the influence of the dominant family member. In our research, approximately two-fifths of the students said that they watched movies, series or documentaries with family, partners or friends in the evening, with agreement being the predominant mode of choice. An interesting finding is that almost equal proportions are media content from television production and from the streaming platform *Netflix*, one-fifth each. However, more than half of the students did not comment on this fact.

Family Talks about the News

Family talks about the news in the media is a topic that touches on communication and interaction between family members regarding current events, topics and news. This form of family communication provides an opportunity to share information, opinions and impressions about social, political and cultural issues that affect the world around them. By discussing the news, family members can enrich each other with new knowledge and perspectives, which can foster mutual understanding and togetherness. More than three quarters of respondents talk

⁹⁰ See: NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

to their families about the news in the media. Themes such as politics and political situations, misinformation and hoaxes, Covid, war or other current events at home and abroad are the most frequently mentioned words in respondents' answers on this topic.

This aspect of family cohabitation may have several causes and influences. Among the most common ones we can mention include: discussions of current events in the media which can help to educate and inform family members; parents can use these opportunities to teach children critical thinking and understanding of the world around them. Diddi a LaRose state that those who have more frequent news discussions in their families tend to be more active consumers of news and have a better awareness of world events.⁹¹ For this group, we observed an interesting trend. We found that older children have an impact on the education of their parents and grandparents. Although these are now adult children, we observed a common phenomenon where parents took the initiative in educating their children and explaining news information. This trend may be rooted in two main factors. First, we found that children show less interest in watching news in traditional media (television, radio, print periodicals). Second, we can conclude that they prefer to get their information from superficial sources on social media, where information is often presented in a very short and fast-changing format, e.g., they consider news on *Refresher* to be very popular and trustworthy. On the topic of the quality of news coverage, the news website *Refresher* was mentioned by almost half of respondents, in most cases in a positive sense. *Refresher* is one of the most visited web sites for young people. This corroborates the results of research by Boczkowski et al., which found that young people encounter news casually, rather than actively seeking it out, as part of their constant connectivity through social media.⁹² This approach does not differentiate news from other types of information, such as posts from friends and family on social media. It is also associated with low levels of attention to information: young users click on news stories sporadically, if at all, and mostly interact with them in a superficial way.

From the individual statements, we can select those that point to the importance of explaining to younger generations the context and issues related to news in the media. *"Whatever topic we are really talking about, my mother is the person thanks to whom a lot of information, events and so the overall functionality of the world gives me a whole new dimension"* (Male, SK53). *"My dad is the type of person who has at least some insight in almost every field, so he can often give me advice"* (Male, SK111).

When families talk about news and important topics, it can foster a sense of belonging and support within the family. Family members may feel that they have common interests and share values, which can strengthen family bonds. *"I mostly talk to my parents about political and world affairs, but of course also about the information we have come across throughout the day. I always come to them if something interests or offends me"* (Female, SK34). Overall, discussions about the news in the media have beneficial effects in the family, contributing to a better and more informed family life. These conversations can create awareness of the world around us and strengthen family relationships at the same time.

Different events and news in the media can be emotionally charged and can cover sensitive topics such as political events, military conflicts, environmental, social or economic issues or health crises. Family discussions can provide a space for expressing emotions (both positive and negative), coping with stress and sharing feelings of safety and support. In our research, we identified repeated accounts that suggest that shared family discussion, particularly between elderly parents and their offspring, can be disrupted by disagreements on certain topics, such

⁹¹ See: DIDI, A., LAROSE, R.: Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits among College Students in an Internet Environment. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 193-210.

⁹² See: BOCZKOWSKI, P. et al.: Incidental News: How Young People Consume News on Social Media. In BUI, T. X., SPRAGUE, R. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS 2017)*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2017, p. 1785-1792.

as the war in Ukraine, religious beliefs, or the Covid-19 pandemic. Children often express the view that grandparents are prone to misinformation, which contributes to negative perceptions of these discussions. *“I can most often argue with my grandparents, especially on topics related to corona, vaccinations, abortion, religious topics and the conflict in Ukraine”* (Female, SK26). *“My family and I sometimes have a difference of opinion, but that is normal as there is a difference in age”* (Male, SK108). *“Sometimes it ends up in a more acrimonious exchange of views, but we almost always agree on at least some things”* (Male, SK111).

Family conversations about the news can provide opportunities to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills. In general, parents can teach children how to verify sources of information, recognize manipulative techniques, and understand different perspectives. As children get older, their ability to participate in their relatives' education and promote critical thinking increases.⁹³ When children are able to think critically, they can act as teachers to their relatives, leading to mutually beneficial interactions within the family. Parents and older relatives can learn new knowledge, digital skills, and current trends from children, especially in the online environment. Such family learning also boosts children's confidence in their own abilities and the feeling that their voice and opinions matter. In the statements of our respondents, we often encountered opinions about the need to discuss and educate their relatives, especially grandparents. *“With the elderly it is already more difficult when it comes to discerning true information. My grandmother is no exception and often unfortunately considers not entirely true information from her friends to be true. That's why when we visit her, which we repeat every weekend, we always have discussions about the media and the content that reaches her”* (Female, SK37).

Family Does Not Talk about News

In the evaluation, we also examined the responses of those who said they do not talk to their family about news in the media. We found this exact statement from only 6.5% of respondents; a third of respondents did not comment on this topic at all. A family that does not talk about news in the media may have different reasons and motivations behind this choice. This situation can be interesting and brings with it a number of aspects worth considering. News in the media often brings negative events and tragedies that can negatively affect the mood and mental health of individuals. Some families agree not to unnecessarily expose themselves to negative topics and instead focus on the positive and personal aspects of life. *“As for news in the media and politics, I don't like to talk about this topic either because I know that everyone has a different opinion on it, as it is with everything, but also many times it ends up in an argument”* (Female, SK107). *“We talk about news or current affairs sporadically at home, as we have different opinions and the debate leads to an argument 90% of the time. In case my parents open such a discussion, I usually do not react because I like them and I do not want to argue”* (Female, SK122).

There is a lot of debate at the moment about the credibility of the media and its propensity to manipulate information. As a result, some families choose not to rely on media reports and prefer to seek information elsewhere, such as through verified sources or direct experience.

Initiator of Discussions on News

The vast majority of students do not mention the initiators of the news interviews. We found only five essays that mention them. Conversations are initiated either by parents or by the students themselves. *“The members of my household do not follow the news and are not interested in it; the vast majority of information is brought into the household by me and then discussed by them. I am also the most active one in the family as I initiate these conversations”* (Male, SK64).

⁹³ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Developing Social Media Literacy: How Children Learn to Interpret Risky Opportunities on Social Network Sites. In *Communications. The European Journal of Communication Research*, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 283-303.

The dearth of mentions regarding news interview initiators among generation Z is indicative of the complexity of their engagement with current affairs. While some students take it upon themselves to initiate these discussions within their families, others rely on friends or peers who are passionate about staying informed. These distinct approaches emphasize the multifaceted nature of news engagement among students and highlight the crucial roles played by individuals in their immediate social circles.

Media Use

The most used social network for them is *Instagram*. Nine out of ten students ranked it as the network they use most often. *"I follow not only celebrities, influencers and friends on Instagram, but also various information profiles such as Startitup, Interezska, Dennik N or zomriofficial"* (Female, SK1). Other social networking sites through which they communicate with friends and family are *WhatsApp*, *Messenger*, with some stating that they only have *Facebook* because of *Messenger* so that they can communicate with the older generation. Even one-twentieth of students stated that they refuse to use *Facebook*. *"I probably wouldn't include Facebook among the apps I use every day anymore, because I've gotten tired of it lately and I spend very little time on it"* (Female, SK1). A small number of students also mention using *Twitter* in their essays. These findings of ours are similar to the results from *Trilia* and *Orogina's* research, who highlight that up to 90% of Generation Z consume content via social media, with only 29% also consuming it via traditional television.⁹⁴

Most media content is received by students via mobile devices or computers (especially at school and in the evening). The computer often replaces the TV screen, or vice versa – the TV screen serves as a large monitor through which they watch films and series. *"The medium I don't watch at all is TV, I replace it with Netflix because there are no ads, I can watch the news on the internet, then radio because nowadays I can listen to music on Spotify without ads, and finally paper newspapers and magazines because subscriptions are cheaper on the internet and it saves paper"* (Female, SK14).

The students' statements about which media they do not follow are interesting, although about a third of the respondents did not comment on this topic. Half of the students, representatives of Generation Z, said that they do not watch television. Critical statements about television were that there are a lot of advertisements on television, that television is not attractive to them, and that they can find and watch films and series via the internet or the streaming platform *Netflix*. *"There has been no TV in our household for many years, I am very grateful that we have been able to replace this medium with other media. We are not so 'forced' to watch and listen to something that someone else is just serving us"* (Female, SK53). If they watch TV, a very common reason is that they watch it with their parents or grandparents, or they put it on in the background but don't pay attention to it, or they turn it on if they want to watch an interesting film. *"I only watch TV news when I am visiting my grandparents or when we have the TV on at home and I forget to turn it off"* (Female, SK12).

The second medium most rejected by respondents was newspapers and magazines. It was by two-fifths of the respondents. Similar findings are reported by *Watson*, who states that the preferred news source for Generation Z is social media.⁹⁵ The main reason given for rejecting printed newspapers in most of our respondents' statements was that they can find everything they need online and much more quickly than in print. *"I don't use print media like magazines and newspapers at all, for the reason that it is more expensive and time consuming as I have to go to the shop and buy them, but I also find it outdated and so useless as nowadays I can find*

⁹⁴ *Meet Gen Z: The Social Generation. Part 2.* Boston, MA : Trilia/Origin, 2019, p. 5. [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <<https://brand-news.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Gen-Z-Report.pdf>>.

⁹⁵ WATSON, A.: *Gen Z News Consumption in the United States – Statistics & Facts.* [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/topics/9902/gen-z-news-consumption-in-the-us/#topicOverview>>.

everything I need on the internet” (Female, SK36). Exceptionally, some said they buy lifestyle magazines *Eva* and *Emma* or that they read print newspapers and magazines at home when their parents or grandparents buy them.

One-third of our respondents said that they consciously refuse radio broadcasting. The main reason they gave for not listening to linear broadcasts was that it was important for them to listen only to music or shows/podcasts of their choice and not to have broadcasts interrupted by commercials. “Radio is no longer one of the media I use on a daily basis because it has been replaced by my phone, specifically the Spotify platform where I can choose and play what I’m in the mood for” (Female, SK83).

Respondents of our research get information about events at home and in the world from the portals *refresher.sk*, *Startitup.sk*, *Interez.sk* or *zomriofficial* and through social media networks *Denník SME*, *Denník N* or *Aktuality.sk*. Some of them also follow linear news programmes from TV stations – *Televízia TA3*, *TV Markíza* or *RTVS*. Occasionally, our respondents reported that they also watch foreign media, for example *CNN* or *BBC News*. “I also watch these networks during the day because I follow various websites such as *Aktuality.sk*, *Interezska* or *Denník Sme*, where news from home and from different parts of the Earth are published. On *Aktuality.sk* and *Denník Sme* I mainly follow political events in Slovakia and currently also the situation in Ukraine, which I usually check in the afternoon. I like to follow the *Interezska* profile the most, because it publishes various facts, interesting facts and events from different areas, and sometimes also various quizzes” (Female, 22 years old, SK80).

Instead of linear TV, they prefer streaming platforms, especially *Netflix*, but also pay-TV services such as *HBO* or *HBO MAX*. Among auditory platforms, they seek entertainment on *Apple Podcasts* (especially music) and on *Spotify* (various types of podcasts).

4.2 Results of the Research in Latvia

Practices of News Use

The majority (two-thirds) of families evaluated in the study consume news (and other types of content) individually. It is especially true for members of Generation Z. Since the use of various gadgets, media, apps and information sources is an essential part of everyday life, most students do not separate the use of news from entertainment and solving practical issues in the digital environment (study work, planning public transport use, organising entertainment, making notes during lectures etc.) and communication with other people (e.g., checking *WhatsApp* messages, communication with fellow students, work colleagues, relatives).

For most, news is the smallest part of the daily information that appears in front of their eyes on smartphones or computer screens. Other types of information, mostly entertainment of various genres (*TikTok* videos, music, movies, TV series) are much more important than media news. These students’ attitudes toward news can be characterised by the “people’s theory”,⁹⁶ which is identified by the belief that “the news will find me” or “if something important happens, I will know about it”. These students are more likely to state that the news causes stress, increases the amount of negative information, causes fatigue, and encourages news avoidance.⁹⁷ Therefore, part of the students analysed in the study deliberately avoid regularly following the daily news. However, there is a small group of students who have developed a habit of regularly consuming professional media news via large digital media sites. “Usually, I read the news on *lsm.lv* (Public service media site), but from my father, who always reads news

⁹⁶ See: NIELSEN, R. K.: Folk Theories of Journalism: The Many Faces of a Local Newspaper. In *Journalism Studies*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 840-848.

⁹⁷ See: KARLSEN, R., BEYER, A., STEEN-JOHNSON, K.: Do High-Choice Media Environments Facilitate News Avoidance? A Longitudinal Study 1997-2016. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2020, Vol. 64, No. 5, p. 794-814.

on delfi.lv on weekdays, I have also been influenced to look for news on delfi.lv (largest digitally born media in Latvia)” (Female, LV58399).

In fact, students who purposefully and regularly search for news on professional media websites both use information from other media (including following the news on TV if it is turned on at home, read books etc.) and their media composition is more diverse, which means that they do not only use social networking sites, but the information is obtained from different sources. This indicates greater activity in the process of media use.

A third of the students explain in their essays the situation of collective news usage, which is mostly related to the physical presence of the family in the same room and joint activities, such as eating dinner. Situations of collective media use have been recorded in essays both by students who actively use various media and by students who do not find regular following of the professional news essential. The joint consumption of news is random, depends on the rhythm of the day and is related to the media choice of other family members.

Collective news usage frames daily activities, it happens both in the morning and in the evening, when the whole family meets at home, and when driving a car, if several family members, including a student, go to university or work in the same car.

For the most part, shared news consumption in students’ essays is described as inactive, the TV or radio is turned on in the background of other activities, because “*I unconsciously watch the evening Panorama*” (Female, LV58399), parents choose the content. “*Usually, our media day starts early in the morning. Since my whole family is characterised by collective media use, we use the kitchen TV for this purpose*” (Female, LV63526).

It is important to clarify that news is not the only and not the main content collectively used in the family. Many students note that they watch their favourite movies, series, popular music concerts and sports broadcasts together with their families. The media is thus a part of the family’s time spent together, besides, the possibilities of smart TVs to watch content from *YouTube* or *Netflix* or other video streaming platforms together are increasingly important.

News consumption is characterised by three interrelated trends. Most students learn the news using social networking platforms. These students admit that their level of awareness is superficial, they know events only at the level of headlines.⁹⁸ Some students follow the accounts of professional news media on social media. The third group, which is small, purposefully goes to news sites to regularly get acquainted with current information. These students more often discuss the news with family members and are the initiators of these discussions, sometimes focusing on evaluating the credibility of the news and discussing cases of misinformation. This means that professional media and other information are clearly identified and separated by more active and news-interested students.

Family Is Talking about the News

More than two thirds of researched students mentioned that news or media in general are sometimes discussed by their family members even if media are used separately: “*Although the family consumes media mostly individually, we often share interesting content with each other and sometimes discuss it in the evenings or weekends when we are together*” (Female, LV71027). However, in most of the families it is not a regular practice.

Conversations about the news in student families describe not only the most current events (the course of the pandemic, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, state security issues), but also common interests of family members, for example, pets and gardening. Local news is important for those students who study in the capital Riga, but on weekends, when travelling to their hometowns to meet with their parents, family members discuss local events

⁹⁸ KURCALTE, O. et al.: *Sabiedrisko mediju prioritāro mērķauditoriju izpēte. Kvalitatīvais pētījums. [Research on Priority Audiences for Public Service Media. Qualitative Research]*. Riga : Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.seplp.lv/lv/media/789/download?attachment>>.

and people. This indirectly strengthens students' identity related to their place of birth. It is interesting that conversations on news with family members are sometimes moving on-line or are at least partly supported by social media, since family members share interesting news between themselves to discuss: *"Each family member shares what she/he has read, seen on news portals, as well as private publications based on verified content on personal social media accounts. Until the beginning of the war (Russia's invasion in Ukraine – auth.), the family often talked about educational and cultural news. Other types of media content are also discussed in the family, for example, the statements of some persons, current topics"* (Female, LV63138).

A wide spectrum of news is discussed, from global events to local politics or the private lives of entertainment personalities. In conversations, family members form their opinion on the current situation, they help to compare the perspectives and values in the family and parents try to form their children's ethical code and propose sets of good/bad practices. But also young people sometimes promote specific topics to develop their family's media literacy or interest in news. In this context, usage of media itself is discussed.

However, some students point out that discussions are limited by differences of opinion, such as on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and, in such cases, students avoid topics that could cause controversy or even conflict during family time together. *"In our family, only Yuriy (mother's husband – auth.) talks about the news. We don't discuss anything with him, because we have different opinions and therefore a conflict can arise"* (Female, LV71326).

Conversations about the news and the ability to exchange opinions characterises the family relationship, the level of empathy and tolerance. Thus, for students the family is not always a place where it is possible to freely, with no risk, exchange thoughts on controversial issues when discussing current news.

Regularly talking about news or media content provides an opportunity to find out not only shared views, but also different views in families regarding the use of media and news. Some students believe that *"the use of serious news does not correspond to my age"*, others are simply not interested in socio-political issues, because *"the media is mostly used for entertainment"*. The use of news and its discussion with parents can be associated with part of the growing up process, becoming mature. It characterises the life and range of interests of an adult from the students' point of view. *"Conversations in the house are regular and usually discuss information on any topic that has been heard or seen in the media, however they are divided by age groups. My cousins talked to me about current videos and pictures taken from social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, but adults tend to talk more about politics, economics, and advertisements that have been seen on TV channels. The only aspect that both age groups have in common in creating a conversation related to the media is movies and series"* (Female, LV71233). *"Mostly we discuss topics of economy, politics, and world news. The brother rarely engages in discussions, which is due to his young age"* (Male, LV70102).

The availability of different media, the fragmentation and the hybridity of the media environment also affect whether families talk about the news. *"The news is rarely a topic of conversation in the family, sometimes the biggest topics that are happening in the world are discussed - the war in Ukraine, the elections, the work and decisions of the Parliament, etc. Other media content is discussed only when it comes to common friends and their published content on social media, other topics are not discussed because each participant has too different filter bubbles"* (Male, LV71076).

These conversations about current events suggest whether media and news conversations are one of the platforms where a pluralistic environment of opinion is still possible or not. At the same time, it is not always clear whether what is common to a family is defined by media technologies and devices, or the content consumed together, or interest, or ideas about what is characteristic of a person in the media context at a particular stage of their life.

Initiator of Discussion on News

In the essay, every tenth student identified a person who encourages conversations about the news in the family. In most cases, it is a parent or grandparent who initiates the discussion: *“Dad is using the computer next door in his office with the door open. At such moments, you can occasionally hear dad asking mom something he overheard from the TV or informing mom about some new news from the news media”* (Male, LV62146). *“Mom often likes to tell what she has heard on the radio, and it leads to discussions about current events, as well as what she sees on Facebook, often it leads to conversations about a mutual acquaintance (news)”* (Female, LV50637).

Sometimes students mention themselves leading conversations about the news, justifying it with the information obtained during their studies and the desire to discuss it with their parents: *“Becoming a journalist I am teaching my family members...”* (Female, LV63334).

Family Does Not Talk about the News

In very rare cases, explicit information appears in student essays that families do not discuss news. Individual students have mentioned this, explaining that the family is interested in other issues, personal events, and relationships. *“Dad mostly does not choose what he has seen or heard in the media as topics of conversation. Mom and my sister discuss topics that are well known to both, such as the events of the day, personal feelings and the like”* (Male, LV70081).

Differences in interests determined by socio-demographic characteristics and the hyper-individualism of media use are mentioned when explaining why it is not customary to talk about the news in the family. *“News in the media do not particularly serve as a topic of conversation for family members, because age and gender differences are visible”* (Female, LV63580).

These explanations identify a situation where sharing in the digital environment has become one of the most important processes of media use,⁹⁹ some young people do not transfer it to the family environment. *“Obviously we all have our own interests, so often, even when we’re around, we don’t share the information we get from our favourite media unless it’s important news”* (Female, LV71087).

Media Use

Students who have evaluated their repertoire of media use in detail are very self-critical about the impact and time expenditure of media, they are concerned that media use is related to time killing, often it is just during a fun *TikTok* when time passes unnoticed. The use of media by students who work in parallel with their studies differs. They have much less time for social networking platforms and entertaining content.

Constant checking of information on at least two social networking platforms, direct communication on messaging sites shows ritualised media use¹⁰⁰ both in the group of students who mostly use media individually and those who use media together with parents or roommates. Even when watching TV in the living room of their family home or listening to the radio in their parents’ car, students use their smartphones in parallel. Instrumentalized and active media use, when purposefully searching for information for studies or work, stimulating conversations about news in the family, is characteristic of a small part of researched students.

Respondents state that both younger and older media users check news and communicate on *Whatsapp*, *Snapchat* or *Instagram*, and use an e-mail platform to communicate both for work and personal life matters. In some cases it is part of the conditions of a job or studies.

⁹⁹ See: STIEGLITZ, S., DANG-XUAN, L.: Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media – Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior. In *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 2013, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 217-248.

¹⁰⁰ See: MCQUAIL, D.: *McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory*. 6th Edition. London : Sage Publications, 2010. See also: MCQUAIL, D., DEUZE, M.: *McQuail’s Media and Mass Communication Theory*. London : Sage Publication, 2020.

Sometimes affiliation to certain applications is entangled in a deeply mediatized lifestyle as a form of interveillance.¹⁰¹ The usage is even perceived by the user as “required”: “[.] during the day *BeReal* was used, because it was required by the application itself by asking to publish next everyday picture” (Male, LV63581).

Some of the students, comparing their and their parents’ use of media, are surprised that parents and especially grandparents use the media to the same extent, spend a lot of time on social networking sites and are skilled at using various news sources. They admire their grandparents when they overcome difficulties and learn the possibilities of digital technologies and now freely integrate them into their daily lives. As the students conclude, the media is used to the same extent, but the topics of interests and applications are different.

In only a few cases, arrogance is expressed that representatives of the older generations are less skilled in the use of digital media and devices. A positive surprise about their closest family members media use is much more often expressed, and students admit that they did not know this before and that they had stereotypes about their parents and grandparents’ media consumption habits.

Media use in families is determined by available media technologies and the interests of each family member. The pandemic may have increased individualised news and media use, when professional and educational activities were moved to family residences in a short period of time, because “*We don’t use media together, mom occupies the living room, I use them in my room – on my computer and phone*” (Female, LV55143).

Describing the media usage environment at home, many students advise that every room and every member of the family has a TV set, a computer, a tablet and, of course, a smart phone. These options determine both the time of media use and the selected content. This situation brings to mind Deuze’s metaphor of “silent disco” discussing the commonalities and differences of media usage process when each partygoer listens to different music, but everyone dances together.¹⁰²

5 Discussion

The use of media by younger audiences is very important from the perspective of the media normative approach and deliberative democracy theory. The interest of young media users in current events, the ability to use professional media information affects both the possibilities of civic participation and the development of journalism in a hybrid media environment.¹⁰³ The daily practices of using news are also characterised by essential media literacy skills, which are especially important in the media ecosystem where misinformation, fake news, and propaganda are constantly present.

It must be admitted that media literacy issues are not popular in family conversations about the news, issues such as security (in connection with the war in Ukraine), locality (if the news touches on known places) and personalities (if the news mentions well-known people) are more important in these conversations. However, few students admit that professional media are used to get access to trustable information and few of them have been discussing deception and fake news issues with their parents, emphasising the importance of quality news sources.

¹⁰¹ See: JANSSON, A.: Perceptions of Surveillance: Reflexivity and Trust in a Mediatized World (the Case of Sweden). In *European Journal of Communication*, 2012, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 410-427.

¹⁰² KLIMKIEWICZ, B.: *Pluralism in a Hybrid Media Environment from the User Perspective*. Fiesole : European University Institute, 2019, p. 4. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/65604/CMPF_2019_02.pdf?sequence=4>.

¹⁰³ Ibidem.

When looking at data on media literacy, we can observe media consumption determined by technological discourse, i.e. the availability of different technologies, content diversity and social media algorithms create a media consumption environment that directs and develops students as media audiences' approaches to media consumption. There are a number of threats to this type of media consumption. There are reasonable grounds for concern about students' indiscriminate or uninterested access to a variety of significant media messages whose fragmented or distorted consumption is closely linked to the understanding of geopolitical topics, personal digital security, the risks of democratisation and issues of media addiction.

Fragmented and superficial media consumption also abounds with cases where students demonstrate the typical practice of using multiple smart devices, both individually and collectively, at the same time, thereby combining news content with entertainment or communication on social media. We can often see that media consumption is also determined by a number of external factors such as, for instance, regular usage of public or private transport, or cases when media consumption has become a nightly ritual, which, of course, is seen as a contemporary trend in media consumption. If a student is living with their parents, their media usage and news consumption patterns continue to have an impact on the student's everyday life in terms of morning infotainment programs on TV, evening TV news or preferred radio stations. However, the diaries do not demonstrate any presence of individual or collective reflection that would follow media consumption, which, in the context of media literacy, rather highlights the passivity of the audience and to some extent echoes the findings of the *Latvian Facts* study, which showed that young people in Latvia have a high confidence in social media content (49%) and practise uncritical sharing of unverified information (40%).¹⁰⁴ The situation is similar in Slovakia, where researchers found that up to 41% of young people believed misinformation.¹⁰⁵

One of the most important aspects of media literacy is the self-regulation ability with a view to finding a balance in quality media consumption for awareness, education, communication and entertainment. Although the students do not refer to specific tactics for organising their media consumption, some diaries display efforts to construct a personal media consumption ecology, seeking a balance between the time devoted to journalism content, educational needs, entertainment and communication. Most diaries show a strong reliance on media consumption as a random flow of coincidences, and there is confidence in the content shared by friends. This passive approach to media consumption expressed in the diaries is rather consistent with the study by *Latvian Facts*, where 58% of young people believe that media literacy and a decrease in the spread of false information could be facilitated by tighter controls and harsher penalties for dissemination of fake news.¹⁰⁶ This coincides with the interpretation of media literacy within the paradigm of a protectionist approach, where media literacy is based on regulatory constraints and repressive mechanisms that treat media audiences as passive, threatened and in need of protection.

At the same time Generation Z prefers to enjoy more choice, variation and autonomy in selecting content types and channels of communication. They claim to choose *Spotify* over radio and *Netflix* over TV because it gives the user an illusion of more control. This motivation, however, plays out in the mostly entertainment content used and foregrounds the individual, not the society as a collective.

¹⁰⁴ See: *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem*. [Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>>.

¹⁰⁵ GREŠKOVIČOVÁ, K. et al.: Superlatives, Clickbaits, Appeals to Authority, Poor Grammar, or Boldface: Is Editorial Style Related to the Credibility of Online Health Messages. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940903>>.

¹⁰⁶ See: *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem*. [Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>>.

The analysis of the data from our research suggests that digital technologies break down the boundaries between generations,¹⁰⁷ however, we see that the process of media use creates new gaps, because the media use is characterised by different content and functions, which contribute to the individualisation, alienation and loneliness of members of the same family. According to media consumption trends, family members who each use their own smartphone, computer, tablet, and TV set rarely talk about media content that is important to all.

To understand the generations in our study in the context of media use, it is important to identify the historical events that determine the personality formation of students and their parents. The formative years (age from 17 to 25 years)¹⁰⁸ of students' parents are characterised by the dramatic socio-economic transformation, when Latvia and Slovakia regained their independence and re-created their national identity; the development of the free media system played an important role in this process. Therefore, Manheim's defined generation characteristics factors "location" and "actuality"¹⁰⁹ are important because the mediated experience of people born at the same time in Slovakia and Latvia can be seen through the lens of significant historical events and development of media technologies that shaped culture. The nature of the relationship between students and their families in the process of media use is consistent with Bolin's idea that the structure of emotions, perceptions and reactions shared by generations reflects dramatic events experienced in a specific geographical location and society.¹¹⁰ Moreover, current events such as the recent pandemic and the ongoing war caused by Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, firstly, inevitably mark the students' formative years, and secondly, they form a common emotional structure that binds the individual to society; thirdly, they connect generations because the emotions and experiences of the immediate and everyday mediated reality of war reveal much more than individuals' media repertoires or media diets.

6 Conclusion

The analysis of diaries about family media usage showed that in most families there is the intergenerational gap in media usage patterns, and with technological advancements the family members use their media mostly separately, so there is less and less opportunity and motivation for collective use and discussion on media. This shows the risk which can result in individualisation, alienation and loneliness of family members and generations. Gen Z uses media clearly different from older generations. Even if their parents and even grandparents developed patterns of using computers, tablets, social media and smartphones there is a difference in both – what and how it is used. Younger people in both countries prefer *Instagram*, *WhatsApp* and also *Snapchat* and *Messenger*, sometimes *Facebook* and *Youtube*, and play music and films on *Spotify* and *Netflix*. Only part of them search for quality news and only rare persons read printed press, mostly niche media. Older generations use *Youtube*, *Facebook*, *Messenger*, *draugiem.lv*, have habits to use TV and radio (mostly as a background medium), but quickly adopt media like *Netflix* or *Spotify*, use *Youtube* and other sites that can replace traditional media in the function TV and radio served. Family has a certain impact on the content priorities of young people, however, the main influence in terms of media, devices, and content formats

¹⁰⁷ See: OPERMANN, S.: Understanding Changing News Media Use: Generations and Their Media Vocabulary. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 123-146.

¹⁰⁸ See: BOLIN, G.: Generational "We-Sense", "They-Sense" and Narrative: An Epistemological Approach to Media and Social Change. In *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de las Ciencias Sociales*, 2019, Vol. 42, p. 21-36.

¹⁰⁹ See: MANNHEIM, K.: The Problem of Generations. In KECSKEMETI, P. (ed.): *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-320.

¹¹⁰ BOLIN, G., SKOGERBØ, E.: Age, Generation and the Media. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3-14.

comes supposedly from the peer environment or, in the form of new technology-based habits and lifestyles, – form the media itself. In addition most of the young use media much more and in more diverse ways.

For this research it is significant that only a small part of all young people have habits like visiting quality news sites on purpose or regularly, searching for quality news, and comparing news from different sources. Even if there is a part of students in both countries who clearly indicate it and are very conscious of the importance of this, most of the Gen Z representatives encounter news casually through social media, rather than actively seeking it out, as part of their constant connectivity through social media. The flexible shifting between channels and media on smart phones and internet connected computers and the integration of the media consumption directly into the experience of living space and time are deepening the gap between older and younger generations and the risk for the young of losing the significance of news as a source of credible information needed for deliberation, opinion making and participation in the democratic processes.

The perceived importance of the news and risks for the consumer are still causing discussions among family members even if they are not regular. This attitude in Slovakia is observed slightly more often than in Latvia. In those conversations, family members who are more motivated to use news and/or are more inclined to socially active roles are initiators, and they are aware of the informational and educational aspects of those conversations. It must be said that also students in some families become the initiators. However, some of the families consciously avoid such a conversation because of disagreement within family or fear, emotional suffering, stress and other mental damages the news content can bring. So the question on family practices leading to a supportive environment for the development of deliberative communication practices and skills can only be partially answered positively. There are families where it is so (and the young person is the initiator) and families that avoid news and conversations about news, whereas the majority of Gen Z people consume news occasionally, and the majority of families only occasionally talk about news. Because this situation can be interpreted as the reaction on past traumas (in the case of parents and grandparents) and fears and stresses of the unstable socioeconomic and geopolitical situation (in the experience of Gen Z in Latvia and Slovakia), deliberation and discussion for democratic participation and political action must be a matter of particular purposeful education in the context of media literacy.

The results of this research also make us think about the influence of the media environment on the media and its content in both countries. In both Latvia and Slovakia there is a significant dependence of the media sector on advertising. This dependence leads to a preference for topics or approaches that gain more advertising space, which could influence the choice of certain topics in the media.

In addition, there are concerns about political control of the media and its independence. In both countries there are attempts to influence the content of the media, which could affect the objectivity and quality of journalistic work. These concerns about media independence are a key factor in the context of democracy and media freedom and one of the reasons why Generation Z avoids the news media.

The ethnic structure of both countries is another factor that influences media content. Latvia has a significant Latvian majority and a Russian minority, which is reflected in the media and its content. This ethnic diversity can lead to different perspectives and interests in media coverage, not only on political issues but also on cultural and social topics.

Both countries face challenges related to disinformation campaigns on social networks and online media. These platforms have a huge reach and allow the rapid dissemination of unverified information, which can have serious consequences for public opinion and political discourse. Disinformation activities can come from a variety of sources, including foreign actors such as the Russian government and its allies. These activities may be aimed at influencing public opinion and fuelling polarisation within the country.

Disinformation and low trust in the institutions of the European Union and NATO can be found in the media of both countries, negatively impacting foreign policy and citizens' perception of these organizations. Therefore, it is important for both the media and the public to be capable of recognizing and exposing disinformation activities and actors and to actively work towards maintaining a healthy media environment and promoting information literacy.

Acknowledgement: The study was elaborated within the international research project supported by the European Union's research programme HORIZON 2020, entitled 'Research and Innovation Framework Programme: Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape' (MEDIADELCOM).

Literature and Sources:

Act on Media Services and on Amendments to Certain Acts No. 264/2022 Coll., from 1st August 2022. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20220801.html>>.

Act on Radio and Television of Slovakia and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts No. 532/2010 Coll., from 15th December 2010. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2010/532/20230701>>.

AROLDI, P., COLOMBO, F.: Questioning "Digital Global Generations". A Critical Approach. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 175-190. ISSN 1601-829X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.175_1>.

ATKIN, C. K., GANTZ, W.: Television News and Political Socialization. In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1978, Vol. 42, No. 2, p. 183-194. ISSN 0033-362X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1086/268442>>.

ATKINSON, D.: A Critical Approach to Critical Thinking in TESOL. In *TESOL Quarterly*, 1997, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 71-94. ISSN 0039-8322. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3587975>>.

AUSTIN, E. W., PINKLETON, B. E., FUJIOKA, Y.: The Role of Interpretation Processes and Parental Discussion in the Media's Effects on Adolescents' Use of Alcohol. In *Pediatrics*, 2000, Vol. 105, No. 2, p. 343-349. ISSN 1098-4275. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.105.2.343>>.

BELFRAGE, M. J.: Young People Do Consume News in Social Media. In ANDERSSON, I., DALQUIST, U., OHLSSON, J. (eds.): *Youth and News in a Digital Media Environment: Nordic-Baltic Perspectives*. Göteborg : Nordicom, 2018, p. 105-113.

BENGTSSON, S., JOHANSSON, S.: A Phenomenology of News: Understanding News in Digital Culture. In *Journalism – Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 2021, Vol. 22, No. 11, p. 2873-2889. ISSN 1464-8849. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919901194>>.

BERG, M., DÜVEL, C.: Qualitative Media Diaries: An Instrument for Doing Research from a Mobile Media Ethnographic Perspective. In *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 71-89. ISSN 1757-2681. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.3.1.71_1>.

BOCZKOWSKI, P. et al.: Incidental News: How Young People Consume News on Social Media. In BUI, T. X., SPRAGUE, R. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS 2017)*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2017, p. 1785-1792. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.24251/HICSS.2017.217>>.

BOLIN, G., SKOGERBØ, E.: Age, Generation and the Media. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3-14. ISSN 1601829X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.3_2>.

BOLIN, G.: Generational "We-Sense", "They-Sense" and Narrative: An Epistemological Approach to Media and Social Change. In *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de las Ciencias Sociales*, 2019, Vol. 42, p. 21-36. ISSN 2174-0682. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5944/empiria.42.2019.23249>>.

BOLIN, G.: Media Generations: Objective and Subjective Media Landscapes and Nostalgia among Generations of Media Users. In *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 2014, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 108-131. ISSN 1749-8716.

BOURDIEU, P.: *In Other Words. Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1990.

CHATZOGLU, P. D. et al.: Generation Z: Factors Affecting the Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). In MYLONAS, P. (ed.): *Proceedings of the 15th International Workshop on Semantic and Social Media Adaptation & Personalization (SMAP 2020)*. Zakynthos : IEEE, 2020, p. 1-6. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1109/smap49528.2020.9248473>>.

COBB, C. J.: Patterns of Newspaper Readership among Teenagers. In *Communication Research*, 1986, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 299-326. ISSN 0093-6502. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009365086013002008>>.

Dažādu tautību iedzīvotāju skaits Latvijā 2022.gada sākumā. [Number of Inhabitants of Various Nationalities in Latvia in the Beginning of 2022]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://stor1.leta.lv/za-feb3f20/ig/c/8/6/c869ffe0-f097-4bf7-afed-4292e55cb8e0/index.62974f18f33b4.html>>.

DIDDI, A., LAROSE, R.: Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits among College Students in an Internet Environment. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 193-210. ISSN 0883-8151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem5002_2>.

DIMANTS, A.: Latvia: Different Journalistic Cultures and Different Accountability within One Media System. In EBERWEIN, T., FENGLER, S., KARMAVIN, M. (eds.): *The European Handbook of Media Accountability*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2018, p.143-149.

DRYZEK, J. S. et al.: The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation. In *Science*, 2019, Vol. 363, No. 6432, p. 1144-1146. ISSN 0036-8075. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw2694>>.

FINCH, J.: *What Is Generation Z, and What Does It Want?* [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://www.fastcompany.com/3045317/what-is-generation-z-and-what-does-it-want>>.

Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

FISHKIN, J.: *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199604432.001.0001>>.

FRANCIS, T., HOEFEL, F.: *'True Gen': Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies*. New York, NY : McKinsey & Company, 2018.

GAVORA, P. et al.: *Elektronická učebnica pedagogického výskumu. [Electronic Textbook of Educational Research]*. Bratislava : Univerzita Komenského, 2010. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<http://www.e-metodologia.fedu.uniba.sk/>>.

GREŠKOVIČOVÁ, K. et al.: Superlatives, Clickbaits, Appeals to Authority, Poor Grammar, or Boldface: Is Editorial Style Related to the Credibility of Online Health Messages. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13. ISSN 1664-1078. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940903>>.

GUTMANN, A., THOMPSON, D. F.: *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2004.

HASEBRINK, U., HEPP, A.: How to Research Cross-Media Practices? Investigating Media Repertoires and Media Ensembles. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 362-377. ISSN 1354-8565. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517700384>>.

HENDL, J. A., REMR, J.: *Metody výzkumu a evaluace. [Research and Evaluation Methods]*. Praha : Portál, 2017.

- HEPP, A., BERG, M., ROITSCH, C.: A Processual Concept of Media Generation: The Media-Generational Positioning of Elderly People. In *Nordicom Review*, 2017, Vol. 38, No. S1, p. 109-122. ISSN 2001-5119. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0395>>.
- HOAI, T. L.: *Yes, the Internet Is Redefining Gen Z's TV Habits*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <<https://www.decisionlab.co/blog/yes-the-internet-is-redefining-gen-zs-tv-habits>>.
- HOWARTH, J.: *25+ New Generation Z Statistics*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <<https://explodingtopics.com/blog/gen-z-stats>>.
- HYERS, L. L.: *Diary Methods*. London : Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Iedzīvotāji pēc dzimuma un vecuma reģionos un republikas pilsētās gada sākumā 1971-2022. [Population by Gender and Age in Regions and Cities of the Republic at the Beginning of the Year 1971-2022]*. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__POP__IR__IRD/IRD040/table/tableViewLayout1/>.
- JANSSON, A.: Perceptions of Surveillance: Reflexivity and Trust in a Mediatized World (the Case of Sweden). In *European Journal of Communication*, 2012, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 410-427. ISSN 0267-3231. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323112463306>>.
- JENNINGS, F. J. et al.: Social Media and Democracy: Fostering Political Deliberation and Participation. In *Western Journal of Communication*, 2021, Vol. 85, No. 2, p. 147-167. ISSN 1057-0314. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2020.1728369>>.
- KARLSEN, R., BEYER, A., STEEN-JOHNSEN, K.: Do High-Choice Media Environments Facilitate News Avoidance? A Longitudinal Study 1997-2016. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2020, Vol. 64, No. 5, p. 794-814. ISSN 0883-8151. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2020.1835428>>.
- KIM, J., WYATT, R. O., KATZ, E.: News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 361-385. ISSN 1058-4609. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/105846099198541>>.
- KLIMKIEWICZ, B.: *Pluralism in a Hybrid Media Environment from the User Perspective*. Fiesole : European University Institute, 2019. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/65604/CMPF_2019_02.pdf?sequence=4>.
- KOCH, C. et al.: "Space Means Science, Unless It's about Star Wars": A Qualitative Assessment of Science Communication Audience Segments. In *Public Understanding of Science*, 2019, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 157-175. ISSN 0963-6625. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662519881938>>.
- KURCALTE, O. et al.: *Sabiedrisko mediju prioritāro mērķauditoriju izpēte. Kvalitatīvais pētījums. [Research on Priority Audiences for Public Service Media. Qualitative Research]*. Riga : Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.seplp.lv/lv/media/789/download?attachment>>.
- Latvijas mediju reklāmas tirgus apjoms 2022. Gadā – 84.4 miljoni eiro. [Latvia's Media Advertising Market Volume in 2022 – 84.4 Million Euros]*. [online]. [2023-02-23]. Available at: <<https://www.lra.lv/lv/zinas/latvijas-mediju-reklamas-tirgus-apjoms-2022-gada-84-4-miljoni-eiro>>.
- LEBOW, S.: *How Gen Z Consumes Media in 5 Charts*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>>.
- LESSENSKI, M.: *The Media Literacy Index 2023. Report*. Sofia : Open Society Institute, 2023. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>>.
- LEV-ON, A., LOWENSTEIN-BARKAI, H.: Viewing Diaries in an Age of New Media: An Exploratory Analysis of Mobile Phone App Diaries versus Paper Diaries. In *Methodological Innovations*, 2019, Vol. 12, No. 1. ISSN 2059-7991. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799119844442>>.
- LIVINGSTONE, S.: Developing Social Media Literacy: How Children Learn to Interpret Risky Opportunities on Social Network Sites. In *Communications. The European Journal of Communication Research*, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 283-303. ISSN 1613-4087. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2014-0113>>.

- MANNHEIM, K.: The Problem of Generations. In KECSKEMETI, P. (ed.): *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-320.
- MCCRINDLE, M., FELL, A.: *Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation*. Norwest : McCrindle Research, 2019.
- MCDEVITT, M., CHAFFEE, S.: From Top-Down to Trickle-Up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions about the Family in Political Socialization. In *Political Communication*, 2002, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 281-301. ISSN 1058-4609. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01957470290055501>>.
- MCDEVITT, M., KIOUSIS, S.: Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education. In *Communication Education*, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 247-264. ISSN 0363-4523. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520600748557>>.
- MCLEOD, J. M., CHAFFEE, S.: Interpersonal Approaches to Communication Research. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1973, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 469-499. ISSN 0002-7642. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/000276427301600402>>.
- MCQUAIL, D., DEUZE, M.: *McQuail's Media and Mass Communication Theory*. London : Sage Publication, 2020. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2021-0094>>.
- MCQUAIL, D.: *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6th Edition. London : Sage Publications, 2010.
- Media & News Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.
- Meet Gen Z: The Social Generation. Part 2*. Boston, MA : Trilia/Origin, 2019. [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <<https://brand-news.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Gen-Z-Report.pdf>>.
- Member States of European Union*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2014/03/europeanunion.htm>>.
- MML-TGI národný prieskum spotreby, médií a životného štýlu: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Základné výsledky za 1. kvartál a 2. kvartál 2023*. [MML-TGI National Consumer, Media & Lifestyle Survey: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Underlying Results for Q1 and Q2 2023]. [online]. [2023-08-26]. Available at: <<https://www.median.sk/pdf/2023/ZS232SR.pdf>>.
- Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2021*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/74712/MPM2022-EN-N.pdf?sequence>>.
- NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.
- NIELSEN, R. K.: Folk Theories of Journalism: The Many Faces of a Local Newspaper. In *Journalism Studies*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 840-848. ISSN 1461-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2016.1165140>>.
- OPERMANN, S.: Understanding Changing News Media Use: Generations and Their Media Vocabulary. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 123-146. ISSN 1601-829X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.123_1>.
- PAPADA, E. et al.: *Democracy Report 2023. Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*. Göteborg : University of Gothenburg, Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), 2023.
- PARKINSON, J., MANSBRIDGE, J.: *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- PAVELEKOVÁ, J., ČÁBYOVÁ, L., HRUŠKOVÁ, A.: Reading Behaviour in the Digital Age: Impact of Covid-19 on Consumer Behaviour. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 25-41. ISSN 2585-9188.
- Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem*. [Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>>.

PICTON, I.: *Family News Literacy. How Parents and Children Engage with the News: Findings from a Survey of 1,000 UK Parents*. London : A National Literacy Trust, 2019. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://cdn-literacytrust-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Family_news_literacy_report.pdf>.

PRIPORAS, C.-V., STYLOS, N., FOTIADIS, A. K.: Generation Z Consumers' Expectations of Interactions in Smart Retailing: A Future Agenda. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 374-381. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.058>>.

ROBERT-AGELL, F. et al.: No Habit, No Listening. Radio and Generation Z: Snapshot of the Audience Data and the Business Strategy to Connect with It. In *Profesional de la información*, 2022, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. e310515. ISSN 1699-2407. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.sep.15>>.

ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy Policy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2022, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229. ISSN 1899-5101. DOI: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2\(26\).4](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2(26).4)>.

ROŽUKALNE, A.: Perception of Media and Information Literacy among Representatives of Mid-Age and Older Generations: The Case of Latvia. In *ESSACHESS – Journal for Communication Studies*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 2(26), p. 207-232. ISSN 1775-352X.

RYFE, D. M.: Does Deliberative Democracy Work? In *Annual Revue of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 8, p. 49-71. ISSN 1094-2939. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.032904.154633>>.

SASS, J., DRYZEK, J. S.: Deliberative Cultures. In *Political Theory*, 2014, Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 3-25. ISSN 0090-5917. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591713507933>>.

SEMAAN, B. C. et. al.: Social Media Supporting Political Deliberation across Multiple Public Spheres: Towards Depolarization. In FUSSEL, S., LUTTERS, W. (eds.): *CSCW'14: Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*. New York, NY : Association for Computing Machinery, p. 1409-1421. ISSN 0090-5917. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1145/2531602.2531605>>.

SHEHATA, A.: News Habits among Adolescents: The Influence of Family Communication on Adolescents' News Media Use – Evidence from a Three-Wave Panel Study. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 6, p. 758-781. ISSN 1520-5436. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1199705>>.

Software MAXQDA. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://www.maxqda.com/>>.

Statistical Office: Population and Migration. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://datacube.statistics.sk/#/view/sk/vbd_dem/om7102rr/v_om7102rr_00_00_00_sk>.

Statistical Office: Population. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://www.scitanie.sk/>>.

STIEGLITZ, S., DANG-XUAN, L.: Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media – Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior. In *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 2013, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 217-248. ISSN 0742-1222. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.2753/mis0742-1222290408>>.

STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Dôvera obyvateľov Slovenska v médiá klesla, v prieskume Reuters skončili spolu s USA na poslednom mieste*. [Slovakia's Trust in the Media Has Fallen, Ranking Last Along with the US in a Reuters Poll]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2894684/dovera-slovakov-v-media-klesla-v-prieskume-reuters-skoncili-spolu-s-usa-na-poslednom-mieste/>>.

SŮNA, L.: 'Senior Pop Music?' The Role of Folk-Like Schlager Music for Elderly People. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 91-108. ISSN 1601-829X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.91_1>.

The Everything Guide to Generation Z. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>>.

THURMAN, N. et al.: My Friends, Editors, Algorithms, and I: Examining Audience Attitudes to News Selection. In *Digital Journalism*, 2019, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 447-469. ISSN 2167-0811. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1493936>>.

TURNER, A.: Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest. In *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 2015, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 103-114. ISSN 2332-0583. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jip.2015.0021>>.

TUTIASRI, R. P., KUSUMA, A.: Millennial Generation and Family Literacy within the Dissemination of Hoax. In *Informasi*, 2020, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 153-164. ISSN 2502-3837. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v50i2.28463>>.

URBANÍKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2022. Country Report: Slovakia*. Fiesole : European University Institute, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <<https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/75737?show=full>>.

VAALA, S. E., BLEAKLEY, A.: Monitoring, Mediating, and Modeling: Parental Influence on Adolescent Computer and Internet Use on the United States. In *Journal of Children and Media*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 40-57. ISSN 1748-2798. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2015.997103>>.

VELŠIC, M.: *Mladí ľudia v kyberpriestore*. [Young People in Cyberspace]. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2016. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/Mladi_v_kyberpriestore.pdf>.

WATSON, A.: *Gen Z News Consumption in the United States – Statistics & Facts*. [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/topics/9902/gen-z-news-consumption-in-the-us/#topicOverview>>.

WESSLER, H.: Deliberativeness in Political Communication. In DONSBACH, W. (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2008. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecd011>>.

WOJCIESZAK, M. E. et al.: Deliberative and Participatory Democracy? Ideological Strength and the Processes Leading from Deliberation to Political Engagement. In *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2010, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 154-180. ISSN 0954-2892. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edp050>>.

YTRE-ARNE, B.: Media Use in Changing Everyday Life: How Biographical Disruption Could Destabilize Media Repertoires and Public Connection. In *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 34, No. 5, p. 488-502. ISSN 0267-3231. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119869112>>. *Zrušenie úhrady – koncesionárskych poplatkov*. [Cancellation of Payment – Concession Fees]. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://uhrady.rtvsk/zruseniekoncesii>>.

Authors



Dr. Prof. Anda Rožukalne

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
Dzirciema str. 16,
Riga, LV 1007
LATVIA
anda.rozukalne@rsu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5474-4222>

Anda Rožukalne is a member of Academia Europea and a professor at the Faculty of Communication of Rīga Stradiņš University in Latvia. Rožukalne holds a doctoral degree in media sociology, and a master's degree in law. Her research interests include the journalism values, media systems, service media, media regulation and self-regulation, and media audience studies. Rožukalne represents Latvia in the EC Media Pluralism Monitor and in the global Worlds of Journalism Study.

Dr., Assoc. Prof. Ilva Skulte

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
Dzirciema str. 16,
Riga, LV 1007
LATVIA
ilva.skulte@rsu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4589-6600>



Ilva Skulte is associated professor at Riga Stradins University. She defended her doctoral thesis in history of language in 1999 and started her work in the Department of Communication studies in 2001, in the same time writing for different media. Her research interests include analysis of media and political discourse, analysis of (literary) text and media as well as media literacy and children.



Dr., Assist. Prof. Alnis Stakle

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
Dzirciema str. 16,
Riga, LV 1007
LATVIA
alnis.stakle@rsu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0962-0076>

Alnis Stakle works as Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the Riga Stradiņš University and as Director of the BA programs “Multimedia Communication” and “Photography”. He teaches photography, visual content analysis and visual literacy. He is the author of a number of academic and peer-reviewed articles. His current research interests include visual culture, photojournalism, media literacy and visual arts.



Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Zora Hudíková, PhD.

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

Faculty of Mass Media Communication

Nám. J. Herdu 2,

917 01 Trnava

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

zora.hudikova@ucm.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8288-7439>

Zora Hudíková is an associate professor at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the UCM in Trnava and the head of the Department of Artistic Communication. She specializes in media psychology and media and communication studies. Her research and teaching activities include topics such as media psychology, the personality of the creator and the personality of the percipient, cognitive processing of media content, creativity in media and artistic production, the effects of media production, management of creative teams, radio and television journalism, sociocultural aspects of the market environment and media performance.

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ľudmila Čábyová, PhD.

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

Faculty of Mass Media Communication

Nám. J. Herdu 2,

917 01 Trnava

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

ludmila.cabyova@ucm.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6008-2883>



Ľudmila Čábyová works at the Department of Marketing Communication, where she deals with the topic of media marketing and media monitoring. For the publication *Marketing and Marketing Communication in the Media*, she received the *Literary Fund Award* – the most cited publication. She is one of the founders and organizers of the international conference *Marketing Identity* (originally *New Trends in Marketing*), which the faculty has been organizing since 2002. The conference is a prestigious international event, the outputs of which are registered in WoS.



Christian Oggolder, Christina Krakovsky

From Literacy to Skills Discussing Media Education and Its Goals

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-03>

ABSTRACT

Digital media and accompanying forms of communication also affect risks and opportunities regarding media-related competencies. Since a broad basis of knowledge is required to understand the increasingly complex contexts in both mediatized and interpersonal communication, media literacy and media education must be considered crucial to meet these current challenges. However, media education is noticeably limited to digital skills aimed at preparing citizens primarily for the world of work. Understanding media literacy in this way means degrading the acquirement of competencies for democratic participation and debate to a mere nice-to-have. This paper aims to critically discuss the ongoing move of media literacy education and programs toward acquiring digital skills primarily. Therefore, we assessed Austrian governmental decrees and curricula in terms of their focus on both the promotion of citizens' employability and media education concerning democratic participation and deliberative communication. In addition, we conducted interviews with two leading Austrian experts in media education to gain insights from different perspectives.

KEY WORDS

Digital Agency. Digitalization. Digital Skills. Media Education. Media Literacy. Technological Determinism.

1 Introduction

Digital media and current forms of communication have “*considerable consequences for social organization and cultural change.*”¹ These consequences also affect risks and opportunities regarding media-related competencies. Moreover, after the initially predominantly positive assessment of their societal potential, digital media increasingly challenge democratic and deliberative communication. Since a broad basis of knowledge is required to understand the growing complex contexts in mediatized and interpersonal communication, media literacy and media education are crucial for citizens to navigate this current situation.

Media literacy was a vital issue in the 1990s and early 2000s and the subject of various societal discussions and scientific studies.² However, today, the focus has shifted toward digital skills, aimed at preparing citizens primarily for the world of work.³ Since media literacy is a broad category,⁴ this current focus on digital skills is far too narrow to cover all aspects of media literacy. Thus, it runs the risk of overlooking essential aspects and neglecting the question of how to deal confidently and profitably with the entire range of digital challenges. Moreover, as Buckingham points out, “*media/digital literacy is often invoked in a spirit of ‘solutionism’. When media regulation seems impossible, media literacy is often seen as the acceptable answer – and indeed a magical panacea – for all media-related social and psychological ills.*”⁵

In Austria, the plethora of data on media-related competencies appears promising. Numerous recent studies as well as longitudinal studies contribute to this wealth of information. This data is credible and easily accessible in digital format, simplifying the process of collecting it. However, the challenge lies in the nature of the field itself. Defining media literacy raises questions, as does identifying the research areas that should be included. The scope of the research area must also be considered. The presence of experts and specialized research structures is generally favourable but requires a multidisciplinary approach.⁶

Research into media-related competencies is, therefore, well advised to include media education.⁷ According to the shift of focus concerning media literacy, media education has also become increasingly limited to digital competencies and user skills in a similarly narrow sense.⁸ Moreover, today, media education focuses on promoting digital skills to achieve better “employability” for the citizens,⁹ respectively, for employers and entrepreneurs

¹ CASTELLS, M.: *Communication Power*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 55.

² LIVINGSTONE, S.: What Is Media Literacy? In *Intermedia*, 2004, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 18-20.

³ TRÜLTZSCH-WIJNEN, C., BRANDHOFER, G. (eds.): *Bildung und Digitalisierung: Auf der Suche nach Kompetenzen und Performanzen*. Baden-Baden : Nomos, 2020, p. 7; HELSPER, E. J., VAN DEURSEN, A. J. A. M.: Digital Skills in Europe: Research and Policy. In ANDREASSON, K. (ed.): *Digital Divides: The New Challenges and Opportunities of e-Inclusion*. New York, Abingdon : Routledge, 2019, p. 129.

⁴ See: BUCKINGHAM, D.: *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge, Malden : Polity Press, 2003. See also: POTTER, W. J.: Review of Literature on Media Literacy. In *Sociology Compass*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 6, p. 417-435.

⁵ See: BUCKINGHAM, D.: Teaching Media in a ‘Post-Truth’ Age: Fake News, Media Bias and the Challenge for Media/Digital Literacy Education. In *Cultura y Educación*, 2019, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 213-231.

⁶ EBERWEIN, T., KRAKOVSKY, C., OGGOLDER, C.: *Austria: Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000 – 2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/89280/austria.pdf>>.

⁷ See: BUCKINGHAM, D.: *The Media Education Manifesto*. Cambridge, Medford : Polity Press, 2019.

⁸ See: CWIELONG, I., SOSSONG, S., PERSIKE, M. et al.: Daten und Data Literacy im Kontext der Wissenschaft. In *Medienimpulse*, 2021, Vol. 59, No. 3, p. 1-36. See also: OPPL, S., FUCHS, W., DOBIASCH, M.: Zur inhaltlichen Schwerpunktsetzung im Rahmen der verbindlichen Übung “Digitale Grundbildung” an österreichischen Mittelschulen. In *R&E-SOURCE*, 2021, Vol. 16, p. 1-16. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.53349/resource.2021.i16.a990>>; SWERTZ, C.: Bildung, Verantwortung und digitale Daten. In *Medienimpulse*, 2021, Vol. 59, No. 3, p. 1-39. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21243/mi-03-21-12>>; BRANDHOFER, G. et al.: Bildung im Zeitalter der Digitalisierung. In *Nationaler Bildungsbericht 2018*. Salzburg : IQS, 2018, p. 307-362. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.17888/nbb2018-2-8>>.

⁹ *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/piaacdesign>>.

who follow a purely economic approach. Understanding media literacy in this way means degrading the acquirement of competencies for democratic participation and debate to a mere nice-to-have. Because of that, a considerable risk to democratic values is undoubtedly posed. Following Kellner, “critical media and techno-literacies are an imperative for participatory democracy and citizenship because digital information communication technologies and a market-based media culture have fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world.”¹⁰ However, this goes far beyond skills that primarily focus on correctly using software and applications, which ultimately only promotes employability.

This paper aims to critically discuss the ongoing move of media literacy education and programs toward acquiring digital skills primarily. Therefore, we assessed Austrian governmental decrees and curricula in terms of their focus on both the promotion of citizens’ employability and media education concerning democratic participation and deliberative communication. In addition, we conducted interviews with two leading Austrian experts in media education to gain insights from different perspectives.

2 Methodology

Austria is a pioneer in implementing digital education in school curricula. Starting with the school year 2022/2023, the mandatory subject “basic education in digital skills” (*Digitale Grundbildung*)¹¹ has been implemented for lower secondary education (5th to 8th grade). However, this new subject also raises several questions regarding a holistic perspective on media education. Thus, we formulate the following research questions:

1. How does the implementation of the new subject “basic education in digital skills” relate to media education that supports opportunities for self-determined participation?
2. What are the aims of implementing this new subject?
3. How is the Austrian approach embedded in the international discourse on this topic?

To answer these questions, firstly legal texts and curricula were examined. In Austria, media has been part of education for a long period of time. However, the first media decree was published only in 1973. In its most recent revision, the “Grundsatzlerlass zur Medienerziehung” (Basic Decree on Media Education) was published in 2012¹² and is the basis of Austria’s legal regulation of media education. Hence, media education is still supported and shaped by the respective ministries responsible for education. In practice, however, it has been mostly dedicated teachers who devote themselves to media education or media didactics¹³ as the subject matter was basically only dealt with voluntarily. This is hopefully going to change with the mentioned introduction of the new subject.

Secondly guided interviews have been conducted with two leading Austrian experts in media education. These interviewees represent two opposing approaches to media education and what media literacy should be about. Thus, one argues scientifically as a scholar for media education and the other speaks from an applied perspective as a teacher and responsible for digital education in schools.

¹⁰ KELLNER, D.: *Technology and Democracy: Toward a Critical Theory of Digital Technologies, Technopolitics, and Technocapitalism*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2021, p. 261.

¹¹ *Digitale Grundbildung*. [online]. [2023-07-03]. Available at: <<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/zrp/dibi/dgb.html>>.

¹² *Grundsatzlerlass zur Medienerziehung Wiederverlautbarung der aktualisierten Fassung*. [online]. [2023-07-03]. Available at: <<https://rundschriften.bmbwf.gv.at/rundschriften/?id=613>>.

¹³ See: BLASCHITZ, E., SEIBT, M.: *Medienbildung in Österreich. Historische und aktuelle Entwicklungen, theoretische Positionen und Medienpraxis*. Wien : LIT Verlag, 2008.

Both the legal texts and the statements of our interviewees were analyzed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the actual developments in media education using Austria as an example.

3 Results

Based on the *Basic Decree on Media Education*, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education Science and Research (BMBWF) claims that “the goal for school media education is media literate students who can navigate the world shaped by the media and who have developed an understanding of the basic values of democracy and freedom of expression.”¹⁴ Therefore, the goal of media education should be to enable students “to use media and their tools self effectively, critically, and reflectively and assess the associated opportunities and risks. They know the rules of conduct and legal basis for safe and socially responsible action in and with the media.”¹⁵

These goals are based on traditional definitions of media competence, understood as communicative action that promotes self-determined opportunities for participation.¹⁶ In contrast to the development of certain skills, abilities and knowledge, education in the pedagogical sense is understood as a reflective relationship to one’s own actions and knowledge.¹⁷

Thus, the curriculum of the new compulsory subject “basic education in digital skills” refers to the “Frankfurt Triangle”, which considers media education from the following three perspectives: a technological-media one, a socio-cultural one and finally an interactive one.¹⁸ Accordingly, the core concept of the new curriculum considers the teaching content from these three perspectives: how do digital technologies work, what social interactions result from their use and what options for interaction and action arise for students.¹⁹ Consequently, this means that technological aspects are only one of three parts in this model.

However, there are other BMBWF initiatives with a different focus, especially those that follow EU-wide digital education programs like the “Digital Education Action Plan”²⁰ or the “EU Youth Strategy.”²¹ Implementing the “Austrian Youth Strategy”, the following goal, beside others, is formulated: “Enhance and strengthen young people’s digital literacy and qualifications and their media skills in the classroom so that they leave the education system with those skills that enable them to use technology.”²² In this case, it becomes clear that the focus is on the technology and the ability to use it.

¹⁴ Bundesministerium Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung. Medienbildung. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulpraxis/prinz/medienbildung.html>>.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ BAACKE, D.: Medienkompetenz – Begrifflichkeit und sozialer Wandel. In VON REIN, A. (ed.): Medienkompetenz als Schlüsselbegriff. Bad Heilbrunn : Klinkhardt, 1996, p. 113; See: TULODZIECKI, G., GRAFE, S.: Media Competence. In HOBBS, R., MIHAILIDIS, P. (eds.): *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy*. Hoboken : Wiley-Blackwell, 2019, p. 1-14. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118978238.ieml0113>>.

¹⁷ SWERTZ, C., FESSLER, C.: Literacy: Facetten eines heterogenen Begriffs. In *Medienimpulse*, 2010, Vol. 48, No. 4, p. 4. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21243/mi-04-10-05>>.

¹⁸ BRINDA, T. et al.: Frankfurt-Dreieck zur Bildung in der digital vernetzten Welt. Ein interdisziplinäres Modell. In KNAUS, T., MERZ, O. (eds.): *Schnittstellen und Interfaces. Digitaler Wandel in Bildungseinrichtungen*. München : kopaed, 2020, p. 159. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:22117>>.

¹⁹ *Digitale Grundbildung*. [online]. [2023-07-03]. Available at: <<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/zrp/dibi/dgb.html>>.

²⁰ European Commission, *Digital Education Action Plan*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>>.

²¹ *EU Youth Strategy*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en>.

²² *Austrian Youth Strategy – Digital/Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/youth_strategy/digital.html>.

Thus, two competing concepts of media education can currently be identified, which is also reflected in the statements by the two interviewed experts. Of course, this does not only apply to Austria, but can also be observed in other countries.²³ As one of our interviewees declared, there is the industry and economy driven approach, fostering (digital) skills to obtain qualified employees. Incidentally, the EU has proclaimed the “European Year of Skills” this year.²⁴ Conversely, there are efforts by UNESCO regarding “Media and Information Literacy”.²⁵ In contrast to the EU, the UN organization claims very clearly that it “*supports the development of media and information literacy for all to enable people’s ability to think critically and click wisely.*”²⁶ Moreover, UNESCO’s understanding of media literacy goes far beyond digital skills, arguing that “*media and information literacy is an interrelated set of competencies that help people to maximize advantages and minimize harm in the new information, digital and communication landscapes. Media and information literacy covers competencies that enable people to critically and effectively engage with information, other forms of content, the institutions that facilitate information and diverse types of content, and the discerning use of digital technologies.*”²⁷ In addition, the organization also clearly states that “*capacities in these areas are indispensable for all citizens regardless of their ages or backgrounds.*”²⁸

Coming back to the exemplary Austrian case, the different positions of our interviewees confirm the contrasting approach to the topic in this country as well. On the one hand, a representative of the ministerial initiative, the *National Competence Center eEducation Austria*²⁹ claims that “*when it comes to the use of media, no matter what kind you have this technical aspect, that is, how do I get along with handling.*”³⁰ He emphasizes the basic idea of problem-solving skills that can be learned and trained within the framework of technology-centered media education. “*And that is a fundamental principle of software development: you try to understand what you want to solve and then approach that solution constructively. Furthermore, conveying this basic idea alone is what we see as problem-solving competence.*”³¹ This assumption is very common within groups of IT experts and software developers and underlines the claim that media literacy must also include coding skills or knowledge concerning digital security. Accordingly, one of our interviewees takes a similar view: “*It is still important to us that the basic technological understanding is conveyed further, for example when people work in social apps to know what that means and what happens to their data, for example.*”³²

On the other hand, the scholar of educational science we interviewed claims that the main problem with the approach mentioned above is “*that for 90% of the students, this [kind of knowledge] is entirely irrelevant. (...) I would even say 99% [of them] find it completely irrelevant because it has nothing to do with the digital culture they are experiencing. It doesn’t help them to understand it, it does not connect with it.*”³³

²³ *Studies on National Media Research Capability as a Contextual Domain of the Sources of ROs.* [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/>>; *Country Case Studies on Critical Junctures in the Media Transformation Process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000–2020).* [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-2/>>.

²⁴ *European Year of Skills.* [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en>.

²⁵ *Media and Information Literacy.* [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy?hub=750>>.

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

²⁷ *About Media and Information Literacy.* [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/about>>.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*

²⁹ *National Competence Center eEducation Austria.* [online]. [2023-07-10]. Available at: <<https://eeducation.at/en>>.

³⁰ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on September 2nd 2022.

³¹ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on September 2nd 2022.

³² Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on September 2nd 2022.

³³ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

In addition, he mentions the “Media and Information Literacy” initiative of the United Nations, which has already been described above. He claims that this approach to media literacy and media education *“is based on human dignity, the right to self-determination and the right to informal self-determination. In other words, in this case it’s not about me operating machines, (...) it’s about being able to use machines. The goal is that I use the machines for my purposes.”*³⁴

4 Discussion

Concerning our first research question, how does the attempt at the Austrian compulsory subject “basic education in digital skills” relate to the traditional and broader approach to media education, i.e., acquiring media literacy beyond the knowledge of how to use digital devices³⁵ makes it challenging to achieve satisfactory results. Based on the “Frankfurt Triangle”, *“a well-thought-out connection between computer science, media studies and media education”*³⁶, this framework for the curriculum creates opportunities to delve deep into the subject. Accordingly, both interviewees emphasize this, *“especially considering the nonexclusively technical approach, the interaction with society, and what that means for the individual.”*³⁷ However, one expert emphatically points out that, *“ultimately, the curriculum focuses on application fields that are most relevant for teachers.”*³⁸ Thus, it will ultimately depend heavily on the approaches of the respective teachers, where the focus is set.

So, what are the aims of implementing the new school subject “basic education in digital skills”? To answer this question, recalling the EU initiatives mentioned earlier makes sense. These initiatives and programs overwhelmingly address digital skills. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the Austrian government has a considerable interest in producing tech-savvy citizens, who have good training in dealing with digital technologies and are therefore well prepared for the labour market. *“In this respect, the orientation is not surprising. With digital skills it is about preparing schoolchildren for the job market. It’s not about the education. It’s about preparing for the job market.”*³⁹

Moreover, ambitions considering the concept of deliberative democracy, empowering citizens, and getting them involved in democratic processes, thus, seem to play a subordinate role. *“Yes, of course, that is irrelevant,”* emphasizes one expert during the interview. *“Does it bring anything to the labour market? No, of course not. These points are not there: political participation, the ability to express political will, to assert one’s political will, to assert one’s political interests.”*⁴⁰

Finally, regarding the third research question, we can immediately follow up on the previous statement. Austria is very much guided by the directives and programs of the European Union.⁴¹ Hence, the Austrian approach is well embedded in the international, at least European, discourse on the subject. However, UNESCO’s position mentioned above of supporting a holistic, human-centred understanding of media education and, subsequently, corresponding media competence remains optional.

³⁴ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

³⁵ BUCKINGHAM, D.: *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge, Malden : Polity Press, 2003, p. 4.

³⁶ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

³⁷ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on September 2nd 2022.

³⁸ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

³⁹ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

⁴⁰ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

⁴¹ See: VUORIKARI, R., KLUZER, S., PUNIE, Y.: *DigComp 2.2: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens – With New Examples of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes*. Luxembourg : Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. [online]. [2023-07-06]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/115376>>.

5 Conclusion

Our study has shown that there are currently two fundamentally conflicting positions regarding media competence and media education. On the one hand there are economy driven approaches which identify the main goal of media education in preparing citizens for jobs. On the other hand, we have initiatives that position themselves against the neoliberal and economic stance and focus on people. However, this finding applies not only to Austria but to Europe and beyond, supported on the one hand by the OSCE and on the other hand by UNESCO.⁴²

Similar to the widespread discussions on this topic, there are also representatives of the respective positions in Austria, which is reflected in the different opinions of our interviewees. Admittedly, the respondent who is broadly in favour of digital and coding skills is not so much a representative of business interests as more a representative of scientific and technical education.

Regardless, media education's importance continues to be emphasized by all sides, especially politics. A vital expression of the continuing importance of this topic is introducing the compulsory subject "Basic education in digital skills" in Austrian schools since 2022/23. Nonetheless, the assessment of the interviewed scholar for media education could be more pleasing: *"Developments during the last three years have made me very pessimistic. I am afraid that the stupid variant aimed at operating technology will prevail and that the main goal will be for people to get used to and accept the digital structure. (...) This structure boils down to adapting the environment to digital technologies rather than vice versa."*⁴³

Acknowledgement: This study is based on results of the MEDIAdelcom-Project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 101004811.

Literature and Sources:

About Media and Information Literacy. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/about>>.

Austrian Youth Strategy – Digital/Media Literacy. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/youth_strategy/digital.html>.

BAACKE, D.: Medienkompetenz – Begrifflichkeit und sozialer Wandel. In VON REIN, A. (ed.): *Medienkompetenz als Schlüsselbegriff*. Bad Heilbrunn : Klinkhardt, 1996, p. 112-124.

BLASCHITZ, E., SEIBT, M.: *Medienbildung in Österreich. Historische und aktuelle Entwicklungen, theoretische Positionen und Medienpraxis*. Wien : LIT Verlag, 2008.

BRANDHOFER, G. et al.: Bildung im Zeitalter der Digitalisierung. In *Nationaler Bildungsbericht 2018*. Salzburg : IQS, 2018, p. 307-362. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.17888/nbb2018-2-8>>.

BRINDA, T. et al.: Frankfurt-Dreieck zur Bildung in der digital vernetzten Welt. Ein interdisziplinäres Modell. In KNAUS, T., MERZ, O. (eds.): *Schnittstellen und Interfaces. Digitaler Wandel in Bildungseinrichtungen*. München : kopaed, 2020, p. 157-167. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:22117>>.

BUCKINGHAM, D.: *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge, Malden : Polity Press, 2003.

BUCKINGHAM, D.: *The Media Education Manifesto*. Cambridge, Medford : Polity Press, 2019.

⁴² Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

⁴³ Information obtained from personal communication (anonymous) on July 5th 2022.

- BUCKINGHAM, D.: Teaching Media in a 'Post-Truth' Age: Fake News, Media Bias and the Challenge for Media/Digital Literacy Education. In *Cultura y Educación*, 2019, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 213-231. ISSN 1135-6405. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/11356405.2019.1603814>>.
- CASTELLS, M.: *Communication Power*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Country Case Studies on Critical Junctures in the Media Transformation Process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000 – 2020)*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-2/>>.
- CWIELONG, I., SOSSONG, S., PERSIKE, M. et al.: Daten und Data Literacy im Kontext der Wissenschaft. In *Medienimpulse*, Vol. 59, No. 3, p. 1-36. ISSN 2307-3187. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.21243/mi-03-21-14>>.
- Digitale Grundbildung*. [online]. [2023-07-03]. Available at: <<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/zrp/dibi/dgb.html>>.
- EBERWEIN, T., KRAKOVSKY, C., OGGOLDER, C.: *Austria: Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://dspace.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/89280/austria.pdf>>.
- European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>>.
- VUORIKARI, R., KLUZER, S., PUNIE, Y.: *DigComp 2.2: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens – With New Examples of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes*. Luxembourg : Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. [online]. [2023-07-06]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/115376>>.
- EU Youth Strategy*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en>.
- European Year of Skills*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en>.
- HELSPER, E. J., VAN DEURSEN, A. J. A. M.: Digital Skills in Europe: Research and Policy. In ANDREASSON, K. (ed.): *Digital Divides: The New Challenges and Opportunities of e-Inclusion*. New York, Abingdon : Routledge, 2019, p. 125-146.
- KELLNER, D.: *Technology and Democracy: Toward a Critical Theory of Digital Technologies, Technopolitics, and Technocapitalism*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2021.
- LIVINGSTONE, S.: What Is Media Literacy? In *Intermedia*, 2004, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 18-20. ISSN 2756-1208.
- Media and Information Literacy*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy?hub=750>>.
- National Competence Center eEducation Austria*. [online]. [2023-07-10]. Available at: <<https://eeducation.at/en>>.
- Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/piaacdesign>>.
- OPPL, S., FUCHS, W., DOBIASCH, M.: Zur inhaltlichen Schwerpunktsetzung im Rahmen der verbindlichen Übung "Digitale Grundbildung" an österreichischen Mittelschulen. In *R&E-SOURCE*, 2021, Vol. 16, p. 1-16. ISSN 2313-1640. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.53349/resource.2021.i16.a990>>.
- POTTER, W. J.: Review of Literature on Media Literacy. In *Sociology Compass*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 6, p. 417-435. ISSN 1751-9020. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12041>>.
- Studies on National Media Research Capability as a Contextual Domain of the Sources of ROs*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/>>.
- SWERTZ, C.: Bildung, Verantwortung und digitale Daten. In *Medienimpulse*, 2021, Vol. 59, No. 3, p. 1-39. ISSN 2307-3187. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21243/mi-03-21-12>>.

SWERTZ, C., FESSLER, C.: Literacy: Facetten eines heterogenen Begriffs. In *Medienimpulse*, 2010, Vol. 48, No. 4, p. 1-22. ISSN 2307-3187. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21243/mi-04-10-05>>.

TRÜLTZSCH-WIJNEN, C., BRANDHOFER, G. (eds.): *Bildung und Digitalisierung: Auf der Suche nach Kompetenzen und Performanzen*. Baden-Baden : Nomos, 2020.

TULODZIECKI, G., GRAFE, S.: Media Competence. In HOBBS, R., MIHAILIDIS, P. (eds.): *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy*. Hoboken : Wiley-Blackwell, 2019, p. 1-14. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118978238.ieml0113>>.

Authors



Dr. Christian Oggolder

Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC)
of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and the University of
Klagenfurt (AAU)

Bäckerstraße 13, 1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA

christian.oggolder@oeaw.ac.at

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4157-4038>

Christian Oggolder is Senior Scientist at the Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Klagenfurt (CMC), Vienna, Austria. His research focuses on media development and media change, media history, memory studies and media literacy.

Mag. Christina Krakovsky

Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC)
of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and the University of
Klagenfurt (AAU)

Bäckerstraße 13, 1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA

christina.krakovsky@oeaw.ac.at

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0914-1881>



Christina Krakovsky is Junior Scientist at the Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Klagenfurt (CMC), Vienna, Austria. Her research focuses on media and communication history, journalism/public sphere and memorial culture, media and political participation/civic engagement.



Lilia Raycheva, Lora Metanova, Neli Velinova, Mariyan Tomov

Media Literacy Web Challenges During Five Digital Parliamentary Campaigns in Bulgaria (2021–2023)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-04>

ABSTRACT

Since 2021 the Bulgarians had to go to the polls for five national parliamentary votes (one regular - April 4, 2021 and four early – July 11 and November 14, 2021, October 2, 2022, and April 2, 2023). Internet platforms, social media and especially social networks became increasingly popular channels for politicians to communicate with voters. The aim of the study focuses on the media literacy web challenges during the digital Parliamentary pre-election communication between politicians and society. The object is the specifics of the one-month campaigns. The subject refers to the digital election messages of political parties' leaders presented in their Facebook profiles. The study is interdisciplinary and it uses mixed research methods. The results are indicative for those interested in digital political communication. The structured and analyzed information can be utilized into patterns for policy support for decision makers, academia, media, telecommunications, media literacy experts, general publics and private sector.

KEY WORDS

Digital Communication. Facebook. Media Literacy. Pre-election Campaign. Social Networks.

1 Introduction

In contemporary times, societies are challenged by notable political and economic transformations accompanying the dynamic developments of information and communication technologies. The changes in the Bulgarian media ecosystem of today, which encompasses the well-established traditional media with the potential of the blogosphere, social networks and mobile communications, are being catalysed by the critical junctures in these transformations. Due to the globalization processes, the media themselves are undergoing a multi-layered metamorphosis.

Nowadays, media are among the main factors for the deliberative democracy, which should ensure fair and reasonable debate among citizens. Traditional and modern Internet-based media interact with people's daily routine. Although social media stimulate publics to express their opinions, share content and communicate in a personalized way, they are often open to manipulation and inhibit public debates on important societal issues. The concept of media literacy addresses the potential of contemporary societies for their resilience to the negative effects of declining public trust due to highly polarized politics.

1.1 Information, Digital and Media Literacy

Defining media literacy in contemporary communication process faces a multi-complex approach. Following the transition from an economy based on material goods to one based on knowledge¹, in post modernity², the diffusion between information and technology has been a prerequisite for blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. Thus, the present-day knowledge-based society upgrades the achievements of disseminating of raw data by the information society to transforming this data into integrated resources that allow people to take effective action.³

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning, enabling individuals of different educational backgrounds to find, critically and competently evaluate, accurately and creatively use, and responsibly communicate information in all its various formats efficiently and effectively, in regard with acquisition of knowledge, as well as in situations requiring decision making or problem solving.⁴

While information literacy has a closer tie to library science, media literacy is more related to the social effects of content created by the media industry.

Unifying information literacy and media literacy as a composite concept considering the right to freedom of expression and access to information through ICTs has been tackled by UNESCO in the first of a kind significant publication on the matter. *Media and Information Literacy. Policy & Strategy Guidelines* offers a multifaceted harmonized approach to developing national policies, legal framework and regulatory mechanisms for better media and information environment.⁵ Also, a UNESCO handbook *Journalism, "Fake News" & Disinformation* provides

¹ DRUCKER, P.: *The Age of Discontinuity*. London : Taylor & Francis, 1992, p. 264.

² LYOTARD, J.: *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 16.

³ *Toward Knowledge Societies*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141843>>.

⁴ RAYCHEVA, L.: Media Literacy Challenges on Debates on Civic Rights. In *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, 2022, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 14. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/99027/1/PDE11%281%29A1.pdf>>.

⁵ See: GRIZZLE, A., MOORE, P., DEZUANNI, M. et al.: *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*. Paris : UNESCO, 2013. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225606>>.

an internationally-relevant open model curriculum, responding to the emerging global problem of disinformation that confronts societies in general, and journalism in particular.⁶

Digitalization has led to the profound proliferation of information spread across the Internet. The netizens, i.e., the citizens of the Net, represent the new globalized way of communication.⁷ However, the rapid development of digital technologies may create a risk of digital divide, thus hampering some citizens' informed participation in democratic processes. That is why the ability of digital literacy to find, organize, evaluate, create, and disseminate information in various platforms using digital technology supplements the managerial particularities of information literacy and the communication specifics of media literacy, thus contributing to knowledge development.

Taking into account the radically transforming media economy due to mobility, user generated communication, Internet and booming availability of digital products, in 2007 the Commission launched a communication titled *A European Approach to Media Literacy in the Digital Environment*. It defines media literacy as “the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts.”⁸

For more than two decades, media literacy has been in the focus of research and discussion by the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA).⁹ Recommendations for the improvement of the campaigns on disinformation carried out in compliance with the provisions of the Code of Practice have been issued in the *Improving Media Literacy Campaigns on Disinformation* report, published by the *European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services*.¹⁰

Created in 2017, The Media Literacy Index aims to measure the potential for resilience to ‘post-truth’, ‘fake-news’ and their consequence in a number of European countries and contribute to finding solutions. Its last report of 2023 scores and ranks 41 countries in Europe. It leans on indicators for media freedom, quality of education, interpersonal trust and e-participation. Only Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia and Georgia are worse than Bulgaria (35), which ranks last in the European Union in terms of resistance to the spread of fake news.¹¹

1.2 The Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections in 2021-2023

Bulgaria is a unitary parliamentary republic. Nowadays, the political environment in the country is characterized by constant migration between parties, which escalates in the use of more populist approaches by all political forces in the country, regardless of whether they are left or right, especially in a pre-election situation.

⁶ See: IRETON, C., POSETTI, J.: *Journalism, Fake News & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism, Education and Training*. Paris : UNESCO, 2018. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641987?ln=en>>.

⁷ HAUBEN, M.: The Netizens and Community Networks. In *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 2. No pagination. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/feb/hauben.html>>.

⁸ *A European Approach to Media Literacy in the Digital Environment. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52007DC0833>>.

⁹ *European Platform of Regulatory Authorities*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.epra.org>>.

¹⁰ *Improving Media Literacy Campaigns on Disinformation*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://erga-online.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ERGA-SG2-Report-2020-Improving-Media-Literacy-campaigns-on-disinformation.pdf>>.

¹¹ *How It Started, How It Is Going. Media Literacy Index*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-Bulgarian-29.06.pdf>>.

The dynamics of the five parliamentary votes (one regular – April 4, 2021 and four early – July 11 and November 14, 2021, October 2, 2022, and April 2, 2023) as well as of the regular presidential one (November 14, 2021) show interesting trends. All of them were conducted in a situation of chronic global uncertainty in such social spheres as health care (especially under the conditions of COVID 19 epidemic), economics, politics, etc. Additionally, complications arose both from the tense international situation with the military actions in Ukraine, as well as from the high peaks of inflation and the growing intolerance for a normal and meaningful dialogue between political formations. As a result, the drop in voter turnout was indicative. Following the regular elections of 04/04/2021 (50.61%), it fell below 50%. The quantity of political candidates also declined. The number of those voters who supported no one gradually almost doubled. All campaigns were conducted in conditions of political confrontation, hostile public speaking and disregarded professional standards. (Table 1).

Elections	04.04.2021 (regular)	11.07.2021 (early)	14.11.2021 (early)	02.10.2022 (early)	02.04.2023 (early)
Parties	17	15	19	23	14
Coalitions	12 (53 parties)	8 (50 parties)	8 (47 parties)	6 (24 parties)	7 (30 parties)
Independent	2	1	2	2	2
Voters	6,789,605	6,873,784	6,946,852	6,850,969	6,862,409
Votes cast	3,334,283	2,775,754	2,669,260	2,601,900	2,682,338
Voter turnout	50.61%	42.19%	40.23%	39.41%	40.69%
Not supporting anyone	47,749	35,201	35,745	87,635	109,095

TABLE 1: Dynamics of the 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th and 49th Parliamentary elections

Source: Parliamentary Elections. Results. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://results.cik.bg/>>.

The unclear ideological messages in the election programs and the fatigue of frequent votes focused the competitors' attention on the slogans disseminated by the media, rather than on other public forms during the one-month of election campaigning (Table 2). Nevertheless, the voters were sceptical about the ability of any alternative to change the status quo in the country's executive power, shaped by three decades of transition to political pluralism and a market-place economy.

Political formation	04.04.2021 (regular)	11.07.2021 (early)	14.11.2021 (early)	02.10.2022 (early)	02.04.2023 (early)
Coalition Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces (CEDB-UDF)	Work, Work, Work	Order in Chaos	Stronger than Chaos	Stronger than Chaos	For a Stable Bulgaria Again
Coalition We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria (WCC-DB)	-	-	-	-	There Is a Way
Political party There Is Such a People (TISP)	You Are the Deciding Vote.	It's Time for Something Else	The State – This Is You	-	The State – This Is You All
Coalition Bulgarian Socialist Party for Bulgaria (BSP for Bulgaria)	With Care for People	Security in Change. With Care for You	Reasonable Solutions	For a Social and Safe Country	Yes! We can!
Political party Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)	Restarting Statehood	Restarting Statehood	For the Unity of the Nation	Security and Stability	Reason, Responsibility, Dialogue

Coalition <i>Democratic Bulgaria (DB)</i>	Bulgaria Can Do Much More	Freedom. Legality. Modernization	It's Time for Bulgaria to Win	Trust in Reason	-
Coalition <i>Stand up! Goons Out! (SU-GO)</i>	Имаме план We Have a Plan for Bulgaria	Stand up! Goons Out!	-	-	-
Coalition <i>We Continue the Change (WCC)</i>	-	-	We Continue the Change	Let's Finish Our Work	-
Political party <i>Revival</i>	-	-	<i>It's Time for a Revival</i>	<i>It's Time for Us for a Revival</i>	<i>Choose Freedom</i>
Coalition <i>Bulgarian Rise (BR)</i>	-	-	-	Safe for Tomorrow	-

TABLE 2: Slogans of political formations elected in the 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th and 49th Parliament

Source: *Parliamentary Elections. Results*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://results.cik.bg/>>.

The pre-election campaigns in Bulgaria during the period of democratization since 1989 have developed alongside the transformation of the media system, giving way to the rise of two mutually bound processes – politicization of media and mediatization of politics.¹² An important feature of the transformation of the media environment, apart from its demonopolization by the state, was the redesign of the media into a subject of commercial relations. Although the guild adopted its *Code of Ethics* in 2004,¹³ it failed to build effective mechanisms for its implementation and in many cases reacted inadequately both to socially significant events and to professional problems.

A key factor for the development of the Bulgarian media environment was the implementation of modern information and communication technologies. Nowadays, Internet platforms and especially social networks have become increasingly popular channels for politicians to communicate with voters. However, these new possibilities imply the challenges to the information, digital and media literacy of people to make their informed choices.¹⁴

2 Methodology

The aim of the study focuses on the media literacy web challenges during the digital Parliamentary pre-election communication between politicians and society. The object is the specifics of the one-month campaigns. The subject of the research refers to the digital election messages of political parties' leaders presented in their *Facebook* profiles. The scope of the examination includes those political forces which passed the 4% threshold.

The study is interdisciplinary and it uses mixed research methods, among them: exploring academic sources, sociological surveys, regulatory frameworks and media and telecommunications practices, conducting comparative analysis of the derived data from the election messages of political leaders in their *Facebook* profiles and qualitative assessment of written semi-structured interviews with broader publics. The study examines the verbal and non-verbal communication of MP candidates, the quality of their messages in terms of positivism, negativism or neutrality, as well as their commitment to social, health, economic,

¹² RAYCHEVA, L.: The Digital Notion of the Citizen-Centered Media Ecosystem. In *International Journal of Digital Television*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 241.

¹³ *Code of Ethics of Bulgarian Media*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://mediaethics-bg.org/>>.

¹⁴ RAYCHEVA, L., ZANKOVA, B., MITEVA, N. et al.: *Bulgaria. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020)*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/blg/>>.

technological and other important topics related to the welfare of the population in the country as an EU and NATO member-state. Frequencies of the usage of *Facebook* by political leaders, issues that dominate their messages, and the digital activity of the audiences have also been tracked. The qualitative study was based on the methodological framework developed by the University of Tartu, Estonia: a written diary with semi-structured questionnaires for members of 50 observed families and an explanatory essay about their media preferences during the one-month campaigns (October 14 – November 14, 2021) for president and vice president and the early one - for Parliament. It has been carried out on a voluntary basis by BA students during their first admission year at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University. They have signed an informed consent to participate in the research.

The analysis is focused on three main research questions: 1. Why do people prefer certain media for information during the election campaign? 2. Is there a liaison between the activity in the social network *Facebook* and the number of interactions with the result of the elections? 3. What are the media literacy web challenges during the digital political campaigns?

3 Results

The rapid and intensive development of technologies, the quicker access to the Internet, the ability to use the networks from different devices facilitate the digital communication. The option to connect with people in real time and without intervention of the traditional media, thus avoiding possible interpretations, makes social networks an increasingly preferred means of communication of politicians with their potential voters. Results convincingly show that all participants in the pre-election campaigns in the studied period, and not only those who crossed the 4% barrier, bet extremely seriously on their presence on *Facebook*. However, audiences of social networks increasingly prefer easily digestible video information and they more often make their choices emotionally than rationally. Thus, they gradually become passive and inert, making no significant effort to get quality information.

3.1 Empirical Study on the Facebook Profiles of the Leaders of the Political Forces in the 2021-2023 Parliamentary Elections

The elections for national Parliament (2021-2023) were held in a situation of growing insecurity, such as chronic social protests for judicial reforms and against corruption, the tensions of COVID 19 pandemic, rising inflation, and shortage of political vision. These challenges discouraged people from actively and socially meaningful participation in public debates.

Only half of the ten political formations that passed the 4% threshold in the five Parliamentary elections participated in all studied votes and belonged to political groups in the European Parliament. Obviously, this experience was among the reasons of the comparatively successful campaign of their leaders via *Facebook* messages.

Members of the centre-right *European People's Party (EPP)* are the winners in three out of the five Parliamentary elections: *Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria* and *Union of Democratic Forces*, which form a coalition (*CEDB-UDF*). In the other two votes they remained second. The coalition ruled the country (with other allied parties) for more than a decade (2009-2013, 2014-2017, and 2017-2021). The leader of *CEDB*, Boyko Borisov, was pretty active on his *Facebook* profile. The tendency for most of the posts which gathered thousands of likes, comments and shares was for the post to be supported by video or photo material. In all three election campaigns, also messages of the *EPP* leaders who declared their support for Borisov were included. The generally rational, pragmatic campaign was characteristic for

the ex-prime minister's *Facebook* page. He was trying to play the role of a unifier of the nation. Rumen Hristov - the leader of *UDF*, the coalition partner of *CEDB*, although not that popular in the social network, also registered thousands of followers and likes in his *Facebook* profile.

Negativism against the winning *CEDB-UDF* seemed to be a more unifying factor for the other political forces running for the Parliament, instead of the deliberative discussion on the issues important for the country. The caretaker governments, appointed by the President, and the narrow perimeter of their duration would hardly help for their solution. Thus, it became quite possible to add a political crisis to the health, economic, social and institutional ones – a telling trend to the erosion of democracy.

The political party *Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB)* also belongs to the *EPP* group. It is part of the Coalition *Democratic Bulgaria (DB)*, together with the political parties *Yes, Bulgaria (YB)* and *The Greens*. The coalition ranges from national conservatism and anti-corruption movement to green politics. Overall, the style and approach of *DB* co-chair Atanas Atanasov's (*DSB*) *Facebook* campaign for all elections were almost identical. The main difference was in the number of publications and likes. He relied on a more rational than emotional approach. The campaign of *DB* co-chairman Hristo Ivanov (*YB*) (a former law minister in the second *CEDB* cabinet) on his official *Facebook* page did not differ stylistically in all elections. He bet more on expert speaking and not so much on emotional personal posts. His main messages were related to the need for an independent judicial system, a better vaccination policy, more investments and fight against corruption. Although the co-chairs collected a number of likes, comments and shares, the coalition headed by them could not rank higher. However, the desire to be in power led them to conclude an unprincipled agreement with political forces with an incompatible profile (*BSP* and *TISP*). Precisely for this reason, for 2023 elections they formed a coalition with the newly founded *We Continue the Change (WCC)*, which is a centrist, anticorruption electoral alliance led by Kiril Petkov and Asen Vasilev, both former caretaker ministers.

The coalition *WCC* was a typical example of the migration of conjectural political forces in the country. Kiril Petkov's *Facebook* profile changed with each of the three campaigns he participated in – from positive (higher education abroad, change, new faces, intelligence, successful career, selflessness and lack of personal interests) to negative (against corruption of the opponents and the need for change). The other co-chairman of *WCC*, Asen Vasilev, did not maintain a *Facebook* profile. Nevertheless, the social network contributed a lot to the popularity of the new formation, which, winning the elections in November 2021, formed a difficult regular government under a coalition of political forces of different persuasions. Several weeks later, however, it became the first government in Bulgarian history to lose a vote of confidence. After the 2023 elections, a non-coalition government was formed in which *WCC-DB*, under a vague platform, allied with its main political opponent *CEDB-UDF* (the winner) and accepted the support of the other political opponent *DPS*, thereby drastically violating its pre-election promises. The *WCC* and *DB* campaigns, separately and in a coalition, were the most heavily subsidized ones.

The only representative in the country of the centre-left, *Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) of the EP*, is the *Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)*. In a variety of coalitions named *BSP for Bulgaria* it participated in all of the studied Parliamentary elections and was part of the six months government led by *WCC*, together with *DB* and *There Is Such a People (TISP)*. Due to internal contradictions, the Coalition suffered from escalating decrease of the number of MPs, although in all pre-election campaigns, its leader, Kornelia Ninova, focused in her *Facebook* profile mostly on positive, constructive and reasonable messages. With clear measures to overcome the crisis in the various sectors, it demonstrated energy and will for their realization. Her visual expression was cheerful and smiling and her speech was to the point, business-like, without unnecessary emotions. She stood firmly against the *CEDB-UDF*.

The centrist political party *Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)*, with a support base among Turkish ethnic minority communities, belongs to the liberal *Renew Europe (Renew)* political group of the *EP*, a successor to the *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*

(ALDE). It also participated in all five Parliamentary elections of the studied period. The pre-election campaigns of *DPS*, expressed on the *Facebook* profile of the leader Mustafa Karadayi, were extremely modest. The strategy in his *Facebook* profile was non-standard - unobtrusive and casual. Verbal communication was almost non-existent. There was no tension from the upcoming race, but rather confidence and calmness. It showed that *DPS* did not rely only on the election campaign in the social network, but on a solid electorate.

The populist political party *There Is Such a People* (TISP) came second in the regular elections. It became the leader in the vote in July 2021 thanks to the Bulgarians living abroad, but not for those paying their taxes in Bulgaria. Four months later, in November, it fell to fifth place. In 2022, it did not pass the 4% threshold, while in the 2023 elections, it was the last to enter the Parliament. Presenting itself as a “political product”, the party was named after one of the music albums of its leader, a popular TV performer Slavi Trifonov and its *Coo-Coo* band. The rise of this political formation actually continued the trend around the world of TV and show business stars entering politics. The pre-election campaigns for all four votes on Trifonov’s *Facebook* profile were similar, and the activity, although not great, was decreasing. He preferred emotional tone rather than rational messages. Gradually, however, *TISP* drifted unprincipled from its initial program. Most of the posts, complemented with videos from Trifonov’s own TV station – 7/8, gathered a lot of interactions with thousands of likes, comments and shares.

Revival is a nationalist political party with rising number of MPs in the last three Parliaments. Its founder and chairman is Kostadin Kostadinov. The party defines itself as a patriotic formation. However, it has also been classified by various analysts and media as anti-European and anti-Western. Its leader organized a referendum against the adoption of the euro as a national currency. In accordance with Kostadinov’s serious activity in his *Facebook* profile was the growing number of likes, comments and references of publications made by his followers. One of the main themes in Kostadinov’s rhetoric was his position on the non-interference of the country in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the lifting of sanctions against Russia. According to him, the real aggressor in this war are the United States. His posts are based on facts, but inspired and at times – extreme. His demeanor is ambitious and steadfast. In his speeches, however, a large dose of populism can be detected. He often emphasizes the emotional approach, trying to present *Revival* as the only political alternative.

Bulgarian Rise (BR) is a national conservative political party. It was founded by its leader – the former caretaker prime minister and defence minister Stefan Yanev in the *PP-DB-BSP-TISP* government. As such, he was dismissed from office after he had refused to define Russia’s special military operation against Ukraine as a war. There is little consensus over the party’s stances on economic matters. The party has garnered some criticism for not expressing substantive positions on most political issues. The leader of *Bulgarian Rise* is laconic in his *Facebook* posts, but often uses photos and video to communicate with his online audience. He was one of the few leaders to present the main highlights of the party’s pre-election program in his messages.

The most eclectic coalition, *Stand Up! Goons Out! (SUGO)*, united several political formations of quite different profiles – social democratic, environmental, populist, liberal, agrarian, etc. The two leaders – Maya Manolova, a former member and a MP of the socialist party, and a former national ombudsman Nikolay Hadgigenov, a lawyer and one of the three members of the “Poisonous Trio” – the coordinators of the 2020 protests, did not provide consolidated platform for the regular election of 04.04. and for the early one on 11.07. For the early election of 14.11., although the political formation changed its name to *Stand Up! We Are coming! (SUWAC)* and only one leader was left - Maya Manolova, the coalition did not pass the 4% threshold. The *Facebook* page of the *SUGO/SUWAC* coalition leader, Maya Manolova, was very active, but populist promises dominated in her strategy and thus the coalition did not pass the 4% threshold in the following votes.

The comparison of the studied pre-election campaigns displayed that almost all political leaders had accounts and had been relatively active in their *Facebook* campaigns. Nevertheless, there was no direct correlation between the *Facebook* presence and the results of the elections. The findings of the study showed that funding invested in political advertising, scope of media activity, populism, hate speech and online interactions were not sufficient for electoral prevalence. Deficits in purposeful political messages and in clear party programs were the more serious challenges to the developments of deliberative democracy. It became clear that the growing impact of social networks on the process of communication between society and political leaders confirmed the assumption that this model of interaction would rigorously develop.

3.2 Qualitative Assessment of Written Semi-Structured Interviews on Media Literacy

Modern societies are characterized as communicative constructions¹⁵ by hybrid media context in the ontology of the social sphere.¹⁶ The rapid development of information and communication technologies in recent years has created the need in audiences to acquire new skills and to improve them continuously. This situation creates a disturbing trend of permanent alienation of certain social groups, who have not had to work in a high-tech environment and who have not acquired the habits of using new technologies and the Internet. Media and digital literacy have grown from specific professional competencies to a mandatory condition for adaptation and orientation in the modern digital world.

According to the *National Statistical Institute* data, the share of people between the ages of 65 and 74 who have regularly used the Internet in 2021 is 30.8%. In comparison, regular Internet users between the ages of 55 and 64 comprise 63.1%, and those between 45 and 54 - 82.1%. Among young people, the share rises to over 90%.¹⁷ Social networks, however, are not particularly popular among people over 65 in Bulgaria – 44% of respondents use them vs. 55.56% of non-users. Not a single respondent relies on social networks to get informed about news and current affairs.¹⁸

Nowadays people are characterized by heterogeneous media preferences, which are determined by age, gender, social status, cultural identity, etc. In order to achieve a more reliable information, awareness of hybrid content is often observed in media usage. This notion substantiated the aim of the undertaken study to analyze the use of media among different members of 50 Bulgarian families with regard to their perceptions of information disseminated during the presidential and parliamentary election campaigns of November 2021. Media preferences refer to: listening to the radio; consumption of music streaming services; watching TV, films and videos (including on demand); reading newspaper and online news; reading magazines; reading books; usage of social media.¹⁹

When describing the media environment and access to media, it is noteworthy that, regardless of the age group, almost every home has a TV set (98%), but only 31% of the respondents possess a radio receiver. The age group of 51-65 and over 65 have radio receivers at home (83%), while young people under 18 and between 19-30 listen to the radio mostly in their car when they are on their way to work or to university (only 19% of them claim that they

¹⁵ COULDRY, N., HEPP, A.: *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2017, p. 15.

¹⁶ CHADWICK, A.: *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Households with Internet Access at Home*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/2808/households-internet-access-home>>.

¹⁸ *Trust and Media Usage in 2022*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/?p=4213>>.

¹⁹ See: RAYCHEVA, L., TOMOV, M., VELINOVA, N. et al.: Older Persons Media Usage During a One Month. Election Campaign: A Bulgarian Case Study. In GAO, Q., ZHOU, J. (eds.): *Human Aspects of IT for the Aged Population*. Las Vegas : Springer, 2023, p. 248-260.

have a radio receiver at home). The trend for personal computer ownership is reverse. 74% of the under-aged own a personal computer or have access to a shared one at home, and 95% of the respondents aged 19-30 possess such a device. For the age group 31-50, the percentage is 83, for the 51-65 age group, it is 61%, and for the oldest age group, over 65 years, it is only 6%. Smartphone ownership is similar. The Mediated Construction of Reality up to 18 years – 78%, 19-30 years – 94%, 31-50 years – 59%, 51-65 years – 61%, and over 65 years – 5%.

The most used device is TV set (48% of respondents), followed by laptop (26%), smartphone – 21%, and a minor percentage is allocated to radio receiver (4%) and printed publications (1%). The answers regarding the frequency of use of these media are heterogeneous. They are accessed on a daily basis predominantly at home, but also between lectures, in free time, in cases when the respondents are purposefully looking for certain information or are willing to learn more about a particular current topic of social life in the country and abroad.

The mother of one of the respondents said:

“Intensive periods of media use for my elderly parents over 65 years old are mostly during news broadcasts, while for the parents themselves, who belong to the age group of 31-50 years, any time when they are free enough is an intense time to use media. Therefore, the busier they are, the less they access media content. The media-free moments for adults are when they are reading a book, while for us (31-50) there are almost no such moments. No matter the activity, there is always a chance to glance at the smartphone.”

From the observations made, it seems that each member of a family had a different media preference and to a large extent it depended on the age group to which he/she belongs.

One of the respondents – a student, says:

“While my grandfather listens to the radio and still prefers mostly print media, my parents have adapted to technologies and boldly use electronic media. My sister and I belong to Generation Z, and for us, print media is rather old-fashioned, while communication on social networks, online learning and the Internet are completely normal.”

The study focused also on the most frequently used media (Fig. 1). Online media was the most preferred media by 72% of the respondents. 54% preferred watching TV, while 34% preferred watching TV, while 34% used social media. The percentage favoring print publications and video platforms such as YouTube is negligible.

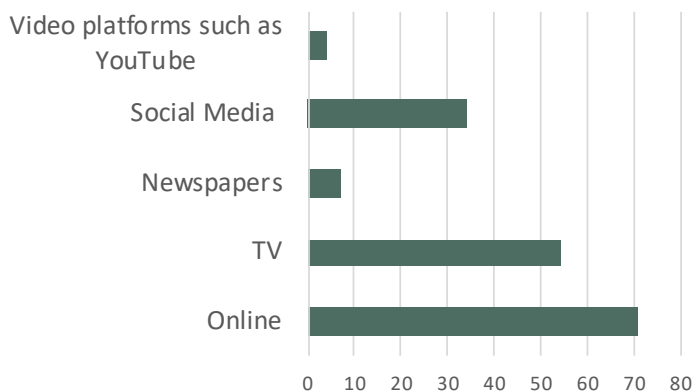


FIGURE 1: What media do you use most often?

Source: own processing, 2023

When asked why they use these media more often, 46% answer that they are looking for the information they need on certain topics that interest them, and 29% say that they use certain media for entertainment. Among the remaining responses (Fig. 2) were those for easy access/timely information, convenience and communication.

One of the respondents shared observations about their grandfather’s (over 65) media preferences:

“The oldest member of the family does not want to rely on modern methods of information, such as websites and social networks. He has no desire to learn how to handle them and prefers to watch TV and to read newspapers. These media are used for both information and entertainment. The person finds everything he is interested in and does not need other media.”

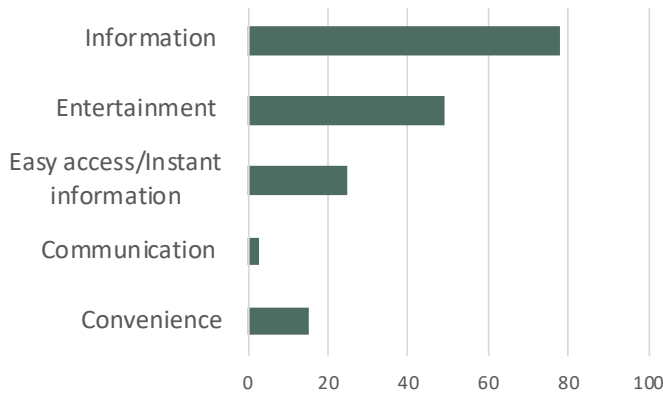


FIGURE 2: Why do you use these media more often?

Source: own processing, 2023

Surprisingly, social media or social networks have not been selected by the observed respondents as a reliable source of information.

The poll also paid serious attention to media preferences during election campaigns. 84% of the interviewees, when asked whether they receive the necessary information in media in order to make an informed choice about the presidential or the MP candidates, answered positively, while 16% gave a negative assessment.

When asked why they prefer particular information channels, the respondents gave mixed answers. (Fig. 3). Most of the interviewees – 23%, answered: “To choose who to vote for”, and 21% indicated that they trusted the channel. Other responses included: “Convenience”, “More information and more detail”, “Synthesized information”, etc.

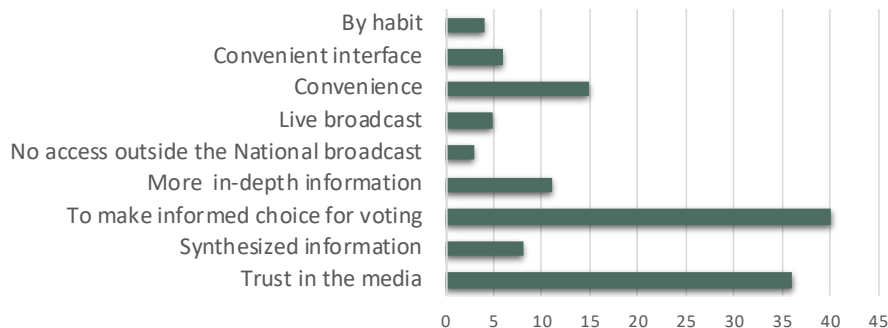


FIGURE 3: Why do you prefer this channel for information during pre-election campaigns?

Source: own processing, 2023

Significant questions regarding disinformation in modern communication have also been put by the observing pollsters. They are related to the credibility of the information and they examine whether family members are able to distinguish between reliable facts and fake news. 60% of the respondents answered that they could filter out fake news, while 40% admitted that they could not distinguish between fake and credible facts.

It is noteworthy that according to young people, their parents, and especially grandparents (over 65 years of age), are more vulnerable to fake news.

One of the interviewers noted:

“The older people feel that they have reached a period in their lives when they no longer need to technologically develop their knowledge and skills. They rely solely on other people’s opinions or on what they see on television, which is the main source of information for them. Computer illiteracy affects them as it restricts them from searching for additional information online. Reading newspapers and books has long ceased for them and they are completely not aware of the specifics of new media. With younger people, it is just the opposite – they feel that the information they are ‘flooded’ with should be verified, as they are getting information mainly online. The digital environment they are in allows them to interact with more people, listen to different opinions and distinguish between fake news.”

On the other hand, an intergenerational gap exists where young people consider their ancestors to be people with outdated views of the world surrounding them, unprepared for modern technologies, unable to distinguish between fake and credible news, thus becoming subject to political manipulation. Young respondents are confident in the correctness of the information they have chosen, thus displaying the so-called “cognitive dissonance” – they are convinced that they can successfully distinguish fake news from correct data. It is noteworthy that most of the older members of the observed families claim that although accessing different media, younger generations compare neither content, nor sources and tend to trust more easily digestible, but not checked and verified information. The elderly are concerned that their heirs prefer rather emotional than rational perception of information.

4 Discussion

The results of the conducted comparative study of the five pre-election campaigns (for the regular one and for the four early votes in 2021-2023) show that the Bulgarians preferred to be informed first by television, and then by social networks – mostly by *Facebook*. The hypothesis of the increasing impact of social networks on the process of communication between the public and political formations is confirmed. Online communication tends to replace live political contacts with the public, and numerous likes, comments and shares expand the boundaries of the audience. Judging by the quality of the content of the posts, relying on populism in its various dimensions is a profitable strategy. The pre-election slogans of almost all candidates turn out to be a pacifier emptied of content. Aggressive rhetoric is also effective for some of the new political formations. In few of the *Facebook* profiles studied, political leaders clearly presented their programs so that voters could make an informed choice.

In response to the research question, “Why do people prefer certain media for information during the election campaign?”, the study outlines in detail the level of trust to the preferred media. Definitely, the messages of the political leaders in their *Facebook* profiles can hardly impact the choice of older people. With regard to the second research question, “Is there a liaison between the activity in the social network and the number of interactions with the result of the elections?”, the findings show that *Facebook* activity is not the most important factor in electors’ voting. They are also influenced by other forms of election pre-campaigning, as well as

by the value of the MP candidates' previous public activity. As for the third research question, "What are the media literacy web challenges during the digital political campaigns?", the answers indicated several aspects: access to mobile communication devices, knowledge of how to use the various applications, but above all – how to build skills and habits for searching, factchecking and verifying information. This is especially important during pre-election campaigns, so that electors are confident that they make the right choice.

5 Conclusion

The dynamics of the election campaign of the participants in the race for both the 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, and the regular 49th National Assembly show that neither the amount of funding invested in political advertising, nor the scope of media and online activity, nor populism in its various dimensions turn out to be directly proportional to the success achieved. Deficits in the quality of advertising forms, in the clarity of party programs and in the targeting of messages are the more serious challenge to the informed choice of voters. These discrepancies may lead to the falsification of democracy. The election apathy somehow displaced the initial political euphoria in society – definitely a protest vote of the Bulgarians against the political class. Bulgarian voters refused to yield to any mass media, political and sociological propaganda, especially when dished out along negative lines.²⁰

The results of the conducted study are indicative to those interested in contemporary media developments and, especially, in the role that media play in people's lives in hybrid media contexts.

Acknowledgement: This article is developed within the framework of the research project "Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape" (MEDIADCOM) within the European scheme HORIZON 2020 – Research and Innovation Framework Program. Project No: 10100481.

Literature and Sources:

A European Approach to Media Literacy in the Digital Environment. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52007DC0833>>.

Code of Ethics of Bulgarian Media. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://mediaethics-bg.org/>>.

COULDRY, N., HEPP, A.: *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2017.

DRUCKER, P.: *The Age of Discontinuity*. London : Taylor & Francis, 1992.

European Platform of Regulatory Authorities. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.epra.org>>.

GRIZZLE, A., MOORE, P., DEZUANNI, M. et al.: *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*. Paris : UNESCO, 2013. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225606>>.

HAUBEN, M.: The Netizens and Community Networks. In *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 2. ISSN 1083-6101. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/feb/hauben.html>>.

²⁰ *Parliamentary Elections.* [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cik.bg>>.

Households with Internet Access at Home. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/2808/households-internet-access-home>>.

How It Started, How It Is Going. Media Literacy Index. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-Bulgarian-29.06.pdf>>.

CHADWICK, A.: *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2017.

Improving Media Literacy Campaigns on Disinformation. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://erga-online.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ERGA-SG2-Report-2020-Improving-Media-Literacy-campaigns-on-disinformation.pdf>>.

IRETON, C., POSETTI, J.: *Journalism, Fake News & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism, Education and Training*. Paris : UNESCO, 2018. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641987?ln=en>>.

LYOTARD, J.: *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1984. *Parliamentary Elections*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cik.bg>>.

RAYCHEVA, L.: Media Literacy Challenges on Debates on Civic Rights. In *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, 2022, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 12-41. ISSN 2304-5388. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/99027/1/PDE11%281%29A1.pdf>>.

RAYCHEVA, L.: The Digital Notion of the Citizen-Centered Media Ecosystem. In *International Journal of Digital Television*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 235-250. ISSN 2040-4182. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/jdtv.9.3.235_1>.

RAYCHEVA, L., TOMOV, M., VELINOVA, N. et al.: Older Persons Media Usage During a One Month. Election Campaign: A Bulgarian Case Study. In GAO, Q., ZHOU, J. (eds.): *Human Aspects of IT for the Aged Population*. Las Vegas : Springer, 2023, p. 248-260. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34866-2_19>.

RAYCHEVA, L., ZANKOVA, B., MITEVA, N. et al.: *Bulgaria. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020)*. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/blg/>>.

Toward Knowledge Societies. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141843>>.

Trust and Media Usage in 2022. [online]. [2023-08-12]. Available at: <<https://osis.bg/?p=4213>>.

Authors



Prof. Lilia Raycheva, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.
Sofia 1000
BULGARIA
lraycheva@yahoo.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4234-5982>

Lilia Raycheva is a professor of media and communications at the St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University in Bulgaria and a former member (2001–2008) of the national regulator for radio and television (CEM). She has a longtime experience with media and its practices. One of her TV programs (1980–2011) has been very popular. Her scientific works are extensively published home and abroad. She is a member of a number of international scientific networks and a coordinator of international and national research projects. Her research interests include: media ecosystem development, screen language, political communication, media consumption, media literacy, etc.



Mgr. Lora Metanova, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.
Sofia 1000
BULGARIA
loranikolova76@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5873-1346>

Lora Metanova is a long-time journalist. She participated in a number of national and international scientific conferences and research projects on media issues. Her scientific publications and interests are in the field of political communication, media literacy and transformations in the media environment due to the development of new technologies.

Mgr. Neli Velinova, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.
Sofia 1000
BULGARIA
nelikdkd@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4113-4879>



Neli Velinova has a longtime journalistic and PR experience. She was a post-doctoral student at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the the St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University in Bulgaria (2019–2021). In 2021–2023 she has been the leader of the DATASOC research project funded by the National Scientific Fund at the Ministry of Science and Education. Her research interests and publications are connected with the field of social protests, political communication, media consumption, media ecosystem, etc.



Mgr. Mariyan Tomov, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.
Sofia 1000
BULGARIA
mariyan.d.tomov@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4352-0781>

Mariyan Tomov is an independent researcher. He was a post-doctoral student at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the the St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University in Bulgaria (2014). He has participated in a number of international and national research projects. He is the author of scientific publications and academic conference papers. His research interests are in the field of ICT impacts, political communication, populist discourse, migration, virtual family, etc.



Martín Oller Alonso

“Not See the Forest for the Trees.” The Significance of Context in Media Monitoring Capabilities from a Comparative Perspective

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-05>

ABSTRACT

This article presents the upgraded Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) initially proposed by Oller in 2016. OMM2 underlines organic analysis principles, focusing on dynamic, comparative and diverse perspectives. It offers a methodology tailored for studying communication and media in developing nations, especially those with evolving intermedia journalistic cultures, emerging or fragile democracies, and autocratic governance. Particularly applicable to nations recently joining the EU, like those in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe (SCEE), OMM2 aids in analyzing journalism, media monitoring, and political communication in these regions. These countries, often characterized by political upheaval and historical events like colonialism (e.g., Eastern Bloc), are the focus of the MEDIADELCOM project. Media assessment entities in these areas are part of a larger network encompassing diverse societal facets. In the SCEE context, deliberative communication signifies collective decision-making through public discourse, recognizing diverse opinions. Utilizing OMM2 for a comparative study of media monitoring is crucial to comprehend deliberative discussions in these EU-associated European democracies.

KEY WORDS

Comparative Analysis. Deliberative Communication. Eastern Europe. Journalism Cultures. MEDIADELCOM. Monitoring Capabilities. Organic Multilevel Model 2.0.

1 Introduction

The realm of European media and communication research has witnessed a significant influx of studies throughout the 21st century, exploring diverse concerns and developments associated with modern media transformation. However, this wealth of research has faced limitations in promptly pinpointing troubling tendencies and delivering practical research advancement scenarios for academics, policymakers and specialists. Current knowledge is vast yet uneven, lacking cohesion and dispersed across various sources.

The *MEDIADELCOM* project¹ seeks to tackle this challenge by consolidating existing knowledge and information into a cohesive and structured framework. How? Through an international comparative study that concentrates on the comparative meta-analysis of deliberative communication in fourteen countries, primarily with recent EU membership (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden) based on four domains: (1) Journalism; (2) Legal and regulation; (3) Media usage patterns; and (4) Media related competencies.

The 21st century has witnessed the solidification of comparative research in media, journalism and communication fields globally. This trend is driving scholars in political communication to explore new methodological tools or adapt existing ones to suit contemporary research approaches. The days of applying research methods in a decontextualized and asynchronous manner are gone. Contemporary international comparative research necessitates a “glocal” contextual and diachronic analysis capable of revealing the unique characteristics of the immediate, intermediate, peripheral and “remote” environments that shape communication professionals’ conditions. As a result, the multilevel model emerges as one of the best-suited strategies for systematizing the contextual influences affecting research at local, regional, national and international levels.

This article introduces the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2),² which builds on earlier models.³ Why? Because the *MEDIADELCOM* project benefits from an optimal diachronic international comparative approach, providing a contextual analysis over time of fourteen EU countries.

The OMM2 is rooted in the concept of organic analysis, emphasizing dynamism, a diachronic perspective and heterogeneity. It serves as an ideal model for characterizing journalism, media and related studies in regions like Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, known for political and economic instability, emerging democracies, recent EU membership, as well as periods of colonialism (Eastern Bloc). According to Oller and Barredo, it is an optimal approach for examining and understanding communication and media studies in developing countries characterized by intermediate journalistic cultures and/or autocratic political systems.⁴ The institutions, structures, organizations, agents and professionals responsible for assessing media platforms are not isolated components in any country or region. Instead, they are part of a broader cultural, social, educational, communicational, political, and economic network. In the European context, deliberative communication relates to the collective decision-making process enabled by public dialogue and the evaluation of multiple arguments. Consequently, examining media monitoring capabilities is essential for understanding the state of deliberative discussions across various European democracies within EU.

¹ Author’s note: For more information see: *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

² See: OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163.

³ Author’s note: In the subsequent part of this article, I will delve into some of the key points. For an in-depth understanding, readers are advised to refer to: OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.

⁴ OLLER, M., BARREDO, D.: Intermediate Journalistic Cultures. International Comparative Studies in Journalism. In *Journal Medijska istraživanja/Media Research*, 2013, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 39-60.

The OMM2 structure reformulates the notion of interconnected layers found in previous models centered around journalism and media research, incorporating a comparative outlook and the addition of supra level analysis. This analysis considers the role of transnational organizations, institutions, agents, and international structures that operate cross-sectionally among various nations from a comparative perspective. It is also applied for the first time to investigate the monitoring capacity within a specific field, such as deliberative communication, as part of the *MEDIADEL.COM*. Halliki Harro-Loit, professor at the University of Tartu and the head of this project, underscores “*the significance of the diachronic aspect in comparative research, as well as the necessity for skilled researchers and data analysts to contribute to such endeavors*”⁵. The project also addresses the distinct challenges of monitoring media accountability in Europe, incorporating insights from a recently concluded global study on the proliferation of diverse media self-regulation instruments and deliberative democracies. Hence, this pioneering, comparative, diachronic and integrative meta-analytical approach depicts communicative models as dynamic systems, highlighting their interconnectivity and distinctiveness. Consequently, the structure of the OMM2, akin to a tree, adapts to the project’s requirements. This structure comprises four tiers: (1) the branches and leaves (actor/micro level), which portray individual professionals; (2) the trunk (institutional/meso level), signifying internal institutions and organizations; (3) the roots (system level/macro level), which lay the groundwork for a country’s foundational structures; and (4) the forest (trans-systemic/supra level).

2 Analysis of Influence Models

In the field of journalism research, numerous influence models have been established to comprehend the dynamics at play during the creation and distribution of information within the media. These models can be categorized based on their analytical levels and the variables they deem pertinent to explain the phenomena under examination. Contextual influence models in journalism research have been developed through empirical approaches, sharing the common goal of bridging the gap between theory and empirical occurrences to better understand the mutual influence between media and society.

When classified by levels of analysis, multiple primary trends can be discerned from the contextual studies of varying influence levels. McQuail devised a model incorporating five analytical levels (international organizations, societal level, institutional level, organizational level and individual level) concerning the influence levels of society, media, and media audiences or users.⁶ Chaffee and Berger suggested three analytical levels: individual, organizational and legal, as well as economic circumstances and other institutions connected to the information system.⁷ Whitney, Sumpter, and McQuail, along with Ettema and Whitney, grounded their models on a three-tiered structure: individual, institutional and organizational.⁸

⁵ *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

⁶ See: MCQUAIL, D.: *Introduction to the Theory of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1983.

⁷ See: CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R.: *Analysis Levels: An Introduction*. In CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R. (eds.): *Handbook of Communication Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1987, p. 143-145.

⁸ See: WHITNEY, D. C., SUMPTER, R. S., MCQUAIL, D.: *Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, and Institutions*. In DOWNING, J. D. H., MCQUAIL, D., SCHLESINGER, P., WARTELLA, E. (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 2004, p. 393-410.; WHITNEY, D. C., ETTEMA, J. S.: *Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions*. In VALDIVIA, A. N. (ed.): *A Companion to Media Studies*. Hoboken, NJ : Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 157-187.

On the other hand, when classifying models by relevant variables, different influences on journalistic process can be identified. Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model, built upon five layers or levels spanning from micro to macro, has undergone several revisions by the authors.⁹ Weischenberg's journalistic paradigm is also noteworthy, portraying journalists as individual actors at the center of a circular arrangement within his onion skins model (*zwiebelschalen*).¹⁰ Voakes' model concentrates on social influences in journalists' ethical decision-making, suggesting a hierarchy of influences with relative value assigned to each level: individual, small group, organization, competence, occupation, extra-media and law.¹¹ Similarly, McQuail and Windahl's model categorizes factors influencing newsrooms and journalistic work into six groups: audience, owners, social and political institutions, advertisers, content providers and agencies.¹²

Over the past decade, multilevel models have emerged that aim to incorporate various levels and influence variables. Esser's model (*mehrebenenmodell*) is organized into four levels, extending from the social sphere and the historical and cultural conditions of society to the values, ideas and professional roles of journalists.¹³ Other notable multilevel models include those by Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney & Wise¹⁴ and Preston and Metykova¹⁵.

Oller and Meier proposed an integrated multilevel model structured around three levels (actor, institution and systems) that underscores the interaction between actors and different contextual levels.¹⁶ Furthermore, Reese and Shoemaker's revision of their hierarchy of influences model highlights the significance of ethnographic and quantitative analysis.¹⁷ These are the elements that were also incorporated in the initial version of the OMM published in 2016 and implemented in the Latin American context, specifically in Ecuador.¹⁸

AUTHORS	Individuals	Media routines	Organization of the media	Media structure	Society (Politics and Economics)	Culture and ideology	Trans-national level
McQUAIL, 1983	•	•	•	•	•		
ETTEMA & WHITNEY, 1982	•	•		•			
CHAFFEE & BERGER, 1987	•		•		•		

⁹ See: SHOEMAKER, P. J., REESE, S.: *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Media Content*. New York, NY : Longman, 1991.

¹⁰ See: WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 1: Media Systems, Media Ethics, Media Institutions*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992; WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 2: Media Technology, Media Functions, Media Actors*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

¹¹ See: VOAKES, P. S.: Social Influences on the Decision-Making of Journalists in Ethical Situations. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 18-35.

¹² See: MCQUAIL, D., WINDAHL, S.: *Communication Models. For the Study of Mass Communications*. 2nd edition. London : Pearson Education, 1993.

¹³ See: ESSER, F.: *The Forces Behind the Headlines. English and German Journalism in Comparison*. Freiburg, München : Verlag Karl Alber, 1998.

¹⁴ See: GROSSBERG, L., WARTELLA, E., WHITNEY, D. C., WISE, J. M.: *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2006.

¹⁵ See: PRESTON, P., METYKOVA, M.: From News Networks to House Rules: Organizational Contexts. In PRESTON, P. (ed.): *Making the News. Journalism and News Cultures in Europe*. New York, NY : Routledge, 2009, p. 72-91.

¹⁶ See: OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.

¹⁷ See: REESE, S., SHOEMAKER, P.: A Sociology of Media for the Networked Public Sphere: The Model of Hierarchy of Influences. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, p. 389-410.

¹⁸ See: OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de Ecuador. Perfil, situación y percepción profesional de los periodistas (Vol. I)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2017; OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de Ecuador (Vol. II)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2019.

SHOEMAKER & REESE, 1991	.	.	.	.	.	.
McQUAIL & WINDAHL, 1993			.				
WEISCHENBERG, 1992, 1995	.	.	.	.	.
VOAKES, 1997	.		.	.	.	.
REUS, 1998	.	.	.	.	.
ESSER, 1998	.	.		.	.
WHITNEY et al., 2004	.	.		.			
GROSSBERG et al., 2006	.		.	.		.
DONSBACH, 2000, 2008	.	.	.		.
PRESTON & METYKOVA, 2009	.	.	.	.	.	.
HANITZSCH et al., 2010	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER & MEIER, 2012	.	.	.	.	.	.
SHOEMAKER & REESE, 2014, 2016	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER, 2016	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER, 2023	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

TABLE 1: *Historical Overview of Multilevel Models*

Source: own processing according to HANITZSCH, T.: Zur Wahrnehmung von Einflüssen im Journalismus. Komparative Befunde aus 17 Ländern. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2009, Vol. 57, No. 2, p. 153-173.; OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163.

These models of influence in journalism (and, to some extent, in communication field) offer different perspectives and approaches to understanding how the media influences the society, and how society influences the media. However, none of them focus on a diachronic comparative meta-analysis of journalism or another field of communication. Thus, I adapt, enhance and advance the OMM for the meta-analysis of deliberative communication in fourteen European countries, as part of the *MEDIADELCOM* project.

3 Meta-Analysis of Deliberative Communication: MEDIADELCOM Project

MEDIADELCOM is financed by the EU's funding program for research and innovation Horizon 2020. This project is an initiative aimed at scrutinizing and monitoring deliberative communication in fourteen countries within the European Union (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden). Its goal is to bolster European integration, societal unity and, consequently, the Europeanization process, mainly in the emerging democracies within the sample. *MEDIADELCOM*'s consortium contends that European political and cultural landscapes can grow more effectively if certain policies augment the conditions for deliberative communication and their capacity to study it.

The consortium's goal is to devise a methodology capable of assessing and forecasting the potential risks and opportunities associated with (the study of) deliberative communication that could arise from media transformations in the period from 2000 to 2020.

MEDIADELCOM offers a comprehensive evaluation of deliberative communication and societal cohesion within Europe based on the study of four domains: (1) Legal and regulation domain: Ethics and accountability systems; (2) Journalism; (3) Media Usage Patterns; (4) Media Related Competencies. This project develops a diagnostic tool (the method of diachronic comparative meta-analysis of media monitoring) that will be beneficial for policy makers, educators, media critical bodies and institutions, as well as for media experts and journalists. However, dissecting the capacity and quality of research and monitoring in EU is quite a complex undertaking. According to the previous results published by *MEDIADELCOM*, data might be non-existent in some contexts (and nations), inaccessible in an open or digital format. Additionally, data that is accessible might not be structured properly. The non-availability of reliable and processable data poses a major obstacle. To enhance research and monitoring capabilities, it is crucial to guarantee that data is available in open, digital, structured and tabular formats. Additionally, efforts should be made to boost the reliability of the data and ensure it contributes to the promotion of democracy. Data availability is not the sole issue, but data provided by different actors often exhibit issues related to closure. Data from universities and public bodies is rarely made available, while data from transnational organizations is limited and, often, unprocessable and lacks a structured, tabular format.

Due to this reason, research, monitoring, and education in the realms of media, communication, and journalism in EU involves a diverse range of actors, each playing their part to define the risks and opportunities in (the monitoring and study of) deliberative communication in a micro, meso, macro and supra level. These include transnational organizations monitoring democracy and media systems globally, large comparative research projects, units in media industry structures or related to media industries, scholars and research groups in universities, independent organizations or professional associations and organizations that could be considered branches of the government or a public body.

Overall, the *MEDIADELCOM* project is an ambitious initiative, aiming to improve the (study of) deliberative communication in the European Union through research, analysis, and policy recommendations.¹⁹

4 Proposal of the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) for the Meta-Analysis of Deliberative Communication in Comparative Perspective in EU

This chapter introduces the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) for conducting a meta-analysis of deliberative communication in a comparative perspective. The OMM2 framework aims to effectively analyze and compare deliberative communication across diverse contexts by examining the micro, meso, macro and supra levels of interaction. The Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 consists of fourth interconnected layers:

- Micro-Level (Individual Actors): This level focuses on individual actors participating in deliberative communication, examining their cognitive abilities, communication skills, motivations, attitudes and behavioral patterns. Key factors to consider include individual backgrounds, values, experiences and the influence of social identities on deliberative processes.

¹⁹ MEDIADELCOM. [online]. [2022-03-17]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/>>.

- Meso-Level (Institutional Context): At this level, the model investigates the institutional context in which deliberative communication occurs. It considers the roles of formal and informal institutions, rules, norms, and practices that shape and facilitate deliberation. Aspects to examine include the influence of media, educational systems, civil society organizations and public policies on deliberative processes and their outcomes.
- Macro-Level (Systemic Context): The macro level encompasses the broader systemic context, such as cultural, historical, and political factors that affect deliberative communication. This level considers the overall environment that enables or hinders deliberative processes, including the influence of political systems, power dynamics, societal values and the macro-context.
- Supra-Level (Trans-systemic setting): In the revised version of the OMM, a novel element representing transnational and comparative contexts has been introduced: Supra level. This element incorporates a broad spectrum of global factors, including worldwide institutions, international laws and treaties, global cultures and multinational corporations. It is in these transnational and comparative contexts where the influences of globalization and global trends are most palpable (in a local, regional, and national level), and where cross-national comparisons are drawn. Specifically, it encompasses the Global Political System, characterized by political landscapes and transnational structures; the Global Economy with its trade, markets, fiscal policies and interconnected systems; Global Education through international educational policies; the Cultural/Historical/Social Global System, which encapsulates worldwide trends, values, phenomena and social systems; the Ideological Transnational Perspective that deals with ideas and belief systems that transcend boundaries on a global scale; the Military/Religious System, which includes global security dynamics, alliances and conflicts; the Media System featuring transnational platforms and international media policies; and finally, the Technological Global System marked by its interconnections, multinational corporations and its operation on a global scale.

This study, based on the *MEDIADELCOM* project, encompasses fourteen countries, displaying a range from affluent to impoverished nations, and those with low to very high *Human Development Index*. The countries' sizes also span from very small (Estonia with 1.3 million inhabitants) to very large (Germany with 84 million inhabitants). Despite these differences, there are similarities in their historical and contextual backgrounds.

Sweden, Germany and Austria serve as examples of stable democracies since World War II, representing media systems in Western and Northern Europe. Hallin and Mancini typically view these countries as representative of democratic-corporatist media systems.²⁰ According to the *2022 World Press Freedom Index*, Sweden ranks 3rd, Germany 16th, and Austria 31st.²¹ Historically, Sweden has been particularly conducive to independent journalism, being the first country to introduce the *Freedom of Information Act* in 1766. In contrast, Italy and Greece underwent traumatic dictatorships in the 20th century and belong to the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist group, as identified by Hallin and Mancini. This group is distinguished by high political parallelism, low levels of professionalization and media instrumentalization.

In the case of emerging democracies within the sample of *MEDIADELCOM* – the focus of this article – there are critical junctures and significant changes. All post-socialist nations share a common critical juncture around 1989/90, connected to the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – more from a cultural and historical standpoint than a geographical one. Within the post-socialist group countries with recent EU membership, some sub-groups can

²⁰ See: HALLIN, D. C., MANCINI, P.: *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²¹ *World Press Freedom Index 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index>>.

be identified. Estonia and Latvia are post-Soviet states that gained independence following the dissolution of the USSR. These Baltic nations share a common history and experiences as part of the USSR. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia were independent nations before 1990 but were members of the Warsaw Pact, falling within the Soviet sphere of influence and control. Conversely, Croatia was part of the SFRY²², a socialist state that remained non-aligned and outside the Soviet sphere. The transition to free media and capitalist markets with private ownership significantly influenced media development in these countries. Key reforms included adopting media laws and transforming state broadcasting into public service broadcasting.

Given this backdrop and context, as we will discuss further, the media and communication research landscape in Europe during the 21st century has experienced a notable surge in studies, delving into diverse issues and phenomena tied to contemporary media shifts. Nevertheless, the abundance of research has encountered challenges in swiftly detecting problematic trends and proposing actionable research progression strategies for scholars, policymakers and experts. The existing knowledge, while extensive, is unbalanced, with a lack of cohesion and distribution across multiple sources.

4.1 Individual Actors – MICRO

In the OMM, the branches and leaves of the tree represent individual professionals due to their irregular position, diversity and number, since their perception and ideas within a country (or region) are not homogeneous. For these reasons, at this level, the interests and working methods in organizations at the individual level are carefully detailed, being determined by the training, work experience, age and gender of journalists,²³ among others.

At the micro level of contextual analysis, individual factors influencing the work of researchers and media professionals are examined, including sociodemographic and cultural, economic, political and professional factors. These factors are critical because all professionals are constantly forced to make decisions in their work. In addition, the analysis of this contextual level allows us to understand their attitudes and perceptions about their work and role in research and in society.

At this level, reference psychosocial influences are considered, such as the values, principles and beliefs of professionals/researchers, as well as the influence of organizations working for data protection and security concerns. In addition, their individual characteristics are examined, such as level of education, specialization, gender, age, political leanings, religious affiliation, salary, professional position, membership of a professional association, years of experience and perceptions about their professional ethics and autonomy.

Analysis of the individual level is important to understand the degree of influence of practitioners on final decisions in relation to the other contextual levels, such as the institutional level and the system level. The professional and social structure in which the EU works influences their individual norms, values, ideas, perceptions, behaviors, lines of research and actions.

The contextual analysis performed by the OMM involves a bidirectional analysis between professionals as individuals and the rest of the actors, organizations and institutions at the other contextual levels. Power relations are embedded in the social construction of space and time, while they are conditioned by the spatio-temporal characteristics of social formations and, of course, in professional relations. Analysis of this contextual level is important to understand the impact of individual factors on information production and distribution and decision-making. In social theory, space cannot be conceived independently of social/professional practices.

²² Author's note: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

²³ See: JOHNSTONE, J. W. C., SLAWSKI, E. J., BOWMAN, W. W.: *The Newspeople. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Champaign : University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Spatial and temporal concepts are the basis of our contextual analysis because in all historical transformations, the emergence of a new social structure is related to the redefinition of the material foundations of our existence, space and time.²⁴

Citizen deliberation in Europe at the micro-level is spontaneous and less organized. It occurs when more than one person meets and discusses a topic, keeping in mind the principles of deliberation. The quality of these debates is based on several indicators, such as citizens' knowledge and trust. If these media-induced conditions are met, public deliberation will be enhanced. For example, audiences who are exposed to a variety of topics in a topic and are willing to discuss and deliberate will have a better quality of deliberation.

Several data sources provide insights into various aspects of European citizens' deliberation at the micro level. *Eurobarometer and European Social Survey (ESS)* data supply information on the level of debate of European citizens on politics and current affairs and on their level of information on specific topics.²⁵ This data also delivers information on equal opportunities for citizens to have a voice in the political system. The *European Values Study (EVS)* provides information on levels of interpersonal trust, which is another important factor for the quality of deliberation. The *Leibniz Institute for the social Sciences (GESIS)* website provides data on citizens' trust in different institutions, which is key to the quality of deliberation.

From a micro-level comparative perspective, the role of different actors involved in media and communication research varies across countries. In Estonia and Latvia, individual researchers and NGOs are significant contributors to the field, while in Croatia and Poland, academic departments and research centers play a more prominent role. In countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Italy, a range of institutions, universities, and private companies participate in media and communication research, each with distinct histories and developmental paths.

Various agents/actors, including NGOs, journalists' unions, professional associations and diverse stakeholders play a role in shaping research governance. This encompasses aspects like funding distribution, research agendas and the impact of these stakeholders, while also addressing concerns about information overload, research imbalances and the need for publishing governance. Individual actors, such as university-based scientists, research groups and media industry professionals contribute to the understanding of media landscapes across different countries. International organizations like *Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders*, journalist unions, professional associations and NGOs also influence research agendas and governance in countries like Croatia and Greece. Challenges in accessing funding for media and communication research projects vary at the micro level, depending on individual actors, such as researchers and scholars. In countries like Germany, Sweden and Austria, funding sources are more diverse, with support from national and EU institutions, foundations and universities. In contrast, in countries like Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania, publicly funded research projects in this field are relatively scarce, and EU funding plays a crucial role in enabling access to European researchers and promoting comparative research.

"The vertical line of the center of Europe" includes Italy, Germany, Sweden and, in some study areas, Austria. These countries are characterized by robust data availability, well-established public authorities and institutions, a relatively strong investigative journalism sector and comprehensive research on employment conditions, journalist education and safety. Various actors contribute to increased knowledge about current developments in these countries.

Children, considered a particularly vulnerable group concerning media usage, are the focus of the longitudinal project *EU Kids Online*, which started in 2009 and covers all participating *MEDIADELCOM* countries. Qualitative academic studies aim to interpret quantitative data

²⁴ See: CASTELLS, M.: *The Emergence of the Network Society*. Oxford : Polity Press, 1997.

²⁵ *Standard Eurobarometer 94 – Winter 2020-2021: Media Use in the European Union*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/726029>>; *Flash Eurobarometer: News & Media Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.

trends and explore audience viewpoints, ideologies and various demographic groups. In some countries (e.g., Sweden), data informs policymakers and media authorities, while in others (e.g., Czech Republic, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary), it is insufficient or unavailable for policy-decision making. International studies, such as *Eurobarometer*, *Media Pluralism Monitor* and *Reuters Digital News* research offer comparative data with open access, covering most *MEDIADELCOM* countries on a longitudinal basis.

In media users' competencies across fourteen European countries, two dimensions are analyzed: (1) social practices rooted in one's social environment and broader contexts and (2) key personal characteristics essential for effective self-realization in today's mediated society. The absence of universally accepted Media and Information Literacy (MIL) definitions and inconsistent data leads to fragmented policy development. Opportunities arise from EU interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digitization and the emergence of social media, which have raised awareness and mobilized various stakeholders.

4.2 Institutional Level – MESO

The *MEDIADELCOM* study examines how discursive reactions to policies influence research policy development and adoption, and how educational, scientific, technical institutions/institutes play a key role in this process. In the investigative context, the meso-level of the analysis focuses on the organization and structure of the media, including its structure, routines, processes, editorial line, rules and profiles of journalists as a group. The editorial environment is a strong determinant of journalism, and the organizations and routines of the media are the direct result of how the work of the media is organized. Therein lies the importance of its study. Like this meso-institutional level, it determines the possibilities and capacities of all actors in terms of research and publications focused on deliberative communication and its influence on democratic processes in Europe. Organizational culture is embedded in the culture of institutions and affects how professionals work together and complete tasks. Technological innovation has also shaped organizational environments, being responsible for important changes in the production of scientific documents and in the institutional priorities of organizations. Similarly, the type of institution (educational organization, research institute, statistics department, transnational organization), ownership (public, private, community), range of influence (local, regional, national and international) where professionals work define the model of publications. The relationship of professionals is determined by these factors. The structural hierarchy also influences the decision-making capabilities of professionals and the structure and organization of work within departments, sections, areas, etc.

The meso-level of contextual analysis is essential to understand how institutions and organizations influence the process of scientific production in terms of communication and decision-making. Both in the context of deliberative communication and journalism, understanding the organizational, cultural and technological systems that influence these processes can be of great help to improve citizen participation and the quality of scientific and media production.

At the meso-level, deliberation in Europe can take specific forms, such as round tables, plenary meetings or deliberative surveys where a group of citizens come together to discuss and find solutions to a specific problem. A relevant study highlights the importance of institutions for citizen deliberation and the role they play in the political and scientific production process.²⁶ Examples of these institutions include deliberative surveys and policy initiatives in which citizens,

²⁶ *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions. Catching the Deliberative Wave.* [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>>.

“mini audiences”, as a small, diverse, and representative group, participate in the debate. The *MEDIADELCOM* study examines the impact of discursive reactions to policies and how they influence research policy development and adoption. Why? Because institutions occupy shared space – where politics, market, education and journalism are among the forces competing for public attention from fundamentally the same vantage point – they work hard to substantiate claims of independence and distinctiveness from each other.²⁷

This level also examines some of the issues related to deliberation in Europe, including bureaucratization, intermediate positions, communication and information channels, hierarchy. Understanding these issues and their impact on deliberation can help policymakers and democratic institutions create more effective processes for citizen participation and decision-making. Therefore, the meso-dimension of deliberation provides a deeper understanding of the specific institutional forms of deliberation and their impact on the production of research in this matter in Europe. Innovative citizen participation, public institutions, private organizations and new democratic institutions play a key role in promoting and improving the media and the political monitoring process.

From a meso-level comparative perspective, the development of primary academic institutions for media and communication research varies significantly among countries. For instance, Austria’s University of Vienna houses the largest and oldest Department of Communication, while its counterparts at the University of Salzburg and the University of Klagenfurt have shorter histories. Institutionalization and accreditation of journalism and communication programs have been crucial for countries like Romania and the Czech Republic, while NGOs, independent researchers, and foreign research centers have significantly contributed to the field in Bulgaria. The establishment of university departments, research centers and academic journals has fostered media and communication research development in countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Italy, each offering varying numbers of programs and academic journals dedicated to the field.

The analysis also highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective media research governance, particularly in Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe. These countries often prioritize monitoring and analyzing media development, with contributions from various actors in media professions, political and economic sectors and civil society. Institutional forces at the meso-level shape media research and governance through the involvement of public bodies, independent authorities, market research institutions and academic institutions. National research governance differs across countries, with Estonia and Latvia primarily driven by EU grant funding, and international and European comparative research projects and networks, such as COST, influencing research agendas. The availability of funding sources affects institutions like universities and research organizations at the meso-level. Countries such as Estonia and Latvia face inconsistent funding approaches, while the Czech Republic, Greece and Hungary experience unfavorable funding situations that put media research at risk. In contrast, Italy’s government plays a more significant role in funding media research through the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR).

In the legal domain, research and monitoring capabilities vary across countries, with Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden having significant data and analyses on media laws and freedom of expression. In contrast, countries like the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Estonia face gaps in research and data collection. In terms of media accountability, Austria, Estonia and Germany have well-established monitoring practices, while the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia face challenges in this area.

Countries with shorter EU membership, overlapping with the third cluster, display varying monitoring capacities and data quality concerning media sector digitalization processes, working conditions for journalists and journalistic education and training. Some of these countries,

²⁷ See: ZELIZER, B., BOCZKOWSKI, P., ANDERSON, C. W.: *The Journalism Manifesto*. Cambridge: Polity, 2022.

such as Hungary and Poland, face challenges with data reliability due to politicization. Estonia stands out with its regular state monitoring system for journalist education and training but faces limitations in terms of irregularity and discontinuity.

Non-profit actors generally provide the most accessible data, while the availability of commercial data is more restricted. The data collected by academic institutions is often available in public libraries or behind paywalls. In some countries, data accessibility is relatively high (e.g., Romania, Germany, Sweden), while in others it is limited (e.g., Italy, Croatia).

In media users' competencies across these fourteen European countries, the absence of universally accepted MIL definitions and inconsistent data lead to fragmented policy development. Opportunities arise from EU interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digitization and the emergence of social media, which have raised awareness and mobilized various stakeholders.

4.3 Systemic Context – MACRO

In the macro dimension, the *Deliberative Democracy Monitoring Index* is used to measure the level of deliberation in a democracy. This index considers several factors, such as the deliberation of political elites, the role of the media in promoting public deliberation and public policy decisions. The indicators used in the index include the common good, the level of participation in society, the breadth of consultation, the need for reasoned justification and respect for arguments to the contrary. These indicators are used to measure the level of deliberation of citizens and, in addition, the point at which the research and monitoring of the media of a country or group of countries is located. The deliberative principle of European democracy states that the common good must motivate political decisions and that respectful dialogue and informed and competent participants are necessary for the functioning of democracy. Persuasion is also a key component of the deliberative process, and its study, as arguments and counterarguments are weighed to arrive at a collective decision. The *Deliberative Democracy Monitoring Index* provides a useful tool for measuring the level of deliberation in European democracy and underlines the importance of citizen participation, media participation and respectful dialogue in decision-making: “As an extension of participatory democracy, this is an opportune time for Member States [EU] to promote and adopt good and effective practices of citizen participation and where it is decided to use deliberative democracy techniques”²⁸.

The OMM, through the configuration of contextual reality as a tree inside a forest, establishes the roots as the structuring systems and the basis of a country or region. The systems level comprises the political-executive, legislative and judicial systems; the economic system – market structure, economic policy, etc.; the education system – academia, professionalization, training, etc.; cultural/historical/social systems – social organizations, cultural institutions, laws of historical memory, etc.; media system; and technology – development, access, legislation, infrastructure, etc.

Political and economic factors undeniably play a significant role in shaping media and its study; however, it is essential to also consider other variables associated with a country or community's cultural environment. This is because cultural distinctions can account for variations in professional perspectives.²⁹ Additionally, ideological forces encompass ideas and meanings that serve the interests and power dynamics of society. Within social systems like communication³⁰ and education/research, media exist within institutional relationships, and the nature of these

²⁸ *Report on Deliberative Democracy*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publishing, 2023, p. 27. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/report-on-deliberative-democracy-eng/1680aaf76f>>.

²⁹ HANUSCH, F.: Cultural Forces in Journalism: The Impact of Cultural Values on Māori Journalists' Professional Views. In *Journalism Studies*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 191-206.

³⁰ See: LUHMANN, N.: *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt : Suhrkamp, 1984.

relationships influences the form that professionalism takes.³¹ Technological advancements in journalism and society at large are becoming increasingly important for the media industry and journalism as both a practice and a profession.³² The emergence of business clusters, convergence initiatives and new digital communication technologies have enabled a worldwide network of communication and research exchanges. The education system is an integral component of the process of researching, publishing and monitoring the media and journalism. The educational training of professionals and researchers will determine their practices, which is something that is directly related to legislation and changes in the (de)regulation of media systems.

From a macro-level comparative perspective, the role of various actors in media and communication research differs across countries, as exemplified by Estonia and Bulgaria. In Estonia, academic groups from the University of Tartu and Tallinn University conduct primary data collection on research organizations, with around 30 individuals involved in journalism and media research. In Bulgaria, foreign and domestic research centers, associations, institutes and NGOs undertake research, with independent researchers significantly contributing to recent years. Factors such as policies, funding and political ideologies have greatly impacted media and communication research in countries like Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Romania experienced disruptions in journalism studies during its communist era, while Bulgaria's research relied on NGOs due to declining enrollment in journalism and communication programs. The 1990s witnessed the establishment of media and communication departments in universities across Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Political and regulatory influences at the macro level have also affected media and communication research development. Hungary has seen increased government control over academia since 2012, with most universities now overseen by party-affiliated foundations. Italy established regulatory monitoring institutes like AGCOM³³ in 1994, while Greece institutionalized media and communication studies in the 1990s, and Italy's history in the field extends back to the 1960s. Sweden possesses comprehensive research data on media development from various sources, while Germany's central organization, DGPK³⁴, connects researchers in media and communication studies and offers numerous monitoring initiatives. Austria's communication and media research is organized under the *Austrian Society of Communication*, which represents both academia and media practice.

Macro-level systems and structures, including national research governance, politicization of research and involvement of international organizations like *Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders* differ among countries. Funding, particularly from the EU and pan-European or international comparative research projects and networks (e.g., COST), significantly influences research agendas. The media research landscape across Italy and Central, Southern, and Eastern European countries comprises a diverse mix of actors, institutions and systems. Governance, research agendas and the level of politicization of research vary substantially among countries such as Croatia, Greece, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Estonia and Latvia. Macro-level dependence on national and EU funding sources differs considerably between countries, with some systems supporting or hindering media research and monitoring. Southern, Central and Eastern European (SCEE) countries often lack systematic, nationally focused longitudinal studies, but researchers can access longitudinal data by participating in European or international comparative projects that collect data periodically.

The focus of media research in a macro-level in both legal and self-regulatory areas typically revolve around long-standing concerns, such as balancing freedom of expression with privacy and data protection rights, and media ownership transparency. Emerging issues like whistleblower protection and disinformation are not consistently addressed across countries.

³¹ See: REESE, S.: Journalism Research and the Hierarchy of Influence Model: A Global Perspective. In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 29-42.

³² See: LEWIS, S. C.: Journalism in an Era of Big Data. In *Digital Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 321-330.

³³ Author's note: Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni.

³⁴ Author's note: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft.

International comparative research projects have contributed to the development of media accountability in countries like Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia and Poland.

Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Croatia face challenges concerning continuity and diversity in data sources, reliance on private market research companies for media data collection and issues with media ownership transparency. Generally, these countries lack public data on production conditions, and there is an urgent need for further knowledge development in this area. In countries without academic or publicly funded longitudinal studies, commercial research offers a snapshot of media usage changes from an industry perspective. However, this data is often not publicly available, limiting its value for policy planning and in-depth analysis. Countries with longer traditions of academic audience research are better prepared for diachronic analysis of media usage patterns. Yet, some countries still lack adequate research for longitudinal analysis (e.g., Italy, Croatia, Greece), and small academic communities or limited resources for research can result in fragmented or insufficient media usage monitoring (e.g., Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia).

The meta-analysis reveals a varied Media and Information Literacy (MIL) landscape, marked by differences in definitions, policies, educational integration and research capabilities. Despite this diversity, we can group countries into three clusters based on the embeddedness of MIL and media-related competencies in social contexts, educational systems and social and political contexts. Central and Eastern European countries are particularly influenced by external contexts, such as their relationships with the Russian Federation, which shape the development and monitoring of media-related competencies. Opportunities arise from the emphasis on fact-checking and recognizing propaganda tools as crucial competencies for individual safety and national security, forming the foundation for necessary actions.

4.4 Trans-Systemic Setting – SUPRA

The trans-systemic, or supra, level transcends national boundaries, encapsulating systems and structures that operate on a European and global scale. In this forest, I delve deeper into the components of the trans-systemic level for a better understanding of *MEDIADELCOM* results. The political dynamics on a global scale have the potential to influence the media and communicative landscape significantly. With the advent of globalization, political decisions taken in one country can reverberate in other parts of the world, affecting global media narratives. This is particularly true in the context of international relations and geopolitical struggles, where the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy discourse. The global economy and its various facets such as trade, markets, fiscal systems and interconnected financial systems shape global journalism, communicative and media structures. As European organizations often rely on international markets for their revenue streams, changes in the global economic landscape can drastically influence media operations, including content production, distribution and consumption.

International educational policies and academic exchanges play a significant role in shaping the future of global communication and media studies and research. Collaborative educational initiatives across borders facilitate (or not) knowledge and wisdom exchange and help standardize research methodologies and practices. Additionally, these collaborations contribute to a shared understanding of media systems and journalistic norms, promoting a more globally conscious media landscape.

Cultural and social trends, values and phenomena that permeate social systems worldwide influence European systems. Media often mirrors societal values and concerns; as such, global cultural shifts can lead to changes in media content and representation. Similarly, global social movements and historical events can also profoundly impact the media landscape, leading to transformative changes in media practices and structures. This underscores the significance of

the longitudinal/diachronic examination provided by *MEDIADELCOM*. Also, as belief systems transcend boundaries, they can shape European systems. Media often act as a conduit for ideological dissemination, and with the rise of global media platforms, ideologies can spread rapidly across European nations. This dynamic interaction between transnational ideologies and media systems influences the narratives and discourses propagated by global media, encouraging the phenomenon of “Europeanisation”, especially among countries with shorter EU membership.

The war in Ukraine has been visualized in Europe, as it has not happened for a long time, the global security dynamics, alliances and conflicts, that have notable implications for European systems. Media plays a critical role in reporting and analyzing international security issues, and it’s influenced by global security policies and dynamics. Similarly, global religious dynamics can shape the media landscape, particularly in terms of representation and discourse around religious issues and the migratory phenomenon.

Transnational platforms and international media policies significantly influence global media systems. These platforms and policies often dictate the flow of information on a global scale, shaping narratives and discourses in the process. Additionally, they play a crucial role in media convergence, fostering collaboration among media organizations across nations. In this regard, the proliferation of technology, led by transnational companies, has significantly impacted European media systems. From altering journalistic practices to changing consumption habits, technology has reshaped the global media landscape. Furthermore, legislation and policies around technology at an international level can influence media practices and structures. As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, its impact on global media systems will continue to grow.

The trans-systemic, or supra, level involves a complex interplay of various global systems and structures inside of UE. These components, in conjunction with one another, shape the European media landscape, influencing everything from content production and distribution to consumption and interpretation. Understanding this dynamic interaction is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of deliberative communication and its level of investigation, surveillance and monitoring.

The influence of these global factors is evident in the differences in the roles of various actors in deliberative communication research across European countries. The media research landscape across EU comprises a diverse mix of global actors, institutions and systems. The governance, research agendas and the level of politicization of research vary substantially among countries. Furthermore, supra level dependence on international and EU funding sources differs considerably between countries, with some systems supporting or hindering media research and monitoring.

The trans-systemic, or supra, level of citizen deliberation within Europe embodies a complex and multi-faceted landscape of institutions, actors, policies and processes. This level integrates the micro-, meso-, and macro- perspectives, producing a comprehensive panorama of the deliberation space within the continent. Trans-systemic examination illuminates the multifarious interactions, dependencies, and influences within and across different strata, elucidating the interconnected dynamics of media, communication, and deliberation in EU.

From a trans-systemic standpoint, deliberation quality, as affected by various agents and structures, reflects a diverse and nuanced picture. As I have shown in previous sections, at the micro-level, citizen knowledge and trust, along with media-induced conditions, determine the efficacy of spontaneous deliberation instances. These individual and small-scale deliberative engagements contribute to the overall deliberative health in the broader national and regional contexts, underpinning the meso- and macro-level dynamics. At the meso-level, research institutions, academic departments, NGOs and a host of other actors play substantial roles in shaping the research governance, thereby influencing the deliberation quality. This influence extends from setting research agendas to funding distribution, and from handling information

overload to addressing imbalances in research. The meso-level perspective also highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective governance, with institutional forces shaping research direction and execution. And, at the macro-level, the deliberative landscape is heavily influenced by a variety of factors including policies, funding, political ideologies and historical contexts. Institutional forces, research governance and the involvement of international organizations shape the overarching structure and approach to media and communication research across different countries. Media research also encompasses a gamut of issues from freedom of expression and privacy rights to media ownership transparency and whistleblower protection.

The trans-systemic perspective illuminates the dynamic interplay of legal and self-regulatory mechanisms, policy interventions, educational initiatives and funding provisions in shaping media and communication research. It highlights the differential access to funding, varied research capacity and diverse institutionalization of research in the studied countries, indicating the presence of systemic asymmetries that warrant attention.

Trans-systemically, the European deliberative landscape presents a plethora of opportunities. The European Union's interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digital transformation and social media emergence have all contributed to greater awareness and mobilization of various stakeholders. Central and Eastern European countries' focus on media-related competencies for individual safety and national security offers a new paradigm for enhancing deliberation quality. However, challenges persist. Inconsistencies in Media and Information Literacy (MIL) definitions and data fragment policy development, with the lack of systematic, nationally focused longitudinal studies limit deeper understanding of media usage patterns. Furthermore, certain countries, especially the younger democracies in the EU, grapple with issues related to data quality, monitoring capacities and politicization.

Consequently, the trans-systemic perspective underscores the need for more integrated and coordinated efforts across all levels – from individual citizens to nation-states and supranational bodies like the EU – to enhance the quality and impact of deliberative communication in Europe. It calls for fostering a culture of deliberation that is informed, inclusive and reflective of diverse voices, and that respects the principles of freedom of expression, privacy and transparency. To realize this, there is a need for improved data collection and monitoring, robust media and communication research, inclusive policymaking, effective legal and self-regulatory mechanisms and continued education and awareness initiatives.

5 Conclusion

The *MEDIADELCOM* project conducts a comparative meta-analysis of deliberative communication across fourteen EU countries, mainly the ones with recent EU membership. In this endeavor, contextual analysis plays a crucial role in assessing media monitoring capabilities from a comparative standpoint. Consequently, the multilevel model of contextual analysis emerges as one of the most fitting approaches for systematizing environmental influences across local, regional, national and international levels. Understanding the extent of contextual influences on professionals' final decisions in relation to other structural levels is vital. The Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) serves as a suitable method for organizing empirical and theoretical data across various geographical areas on a diachronic and comparative basis. This model represents a fresh direction in the cultural, contextual and ethnographic examination of deliberative communication in Europe from a comparative angle, even more in the “semi-peripheral” countries.

Each nation's scientific output features unique flows, products and practices. As such, the study focuses on micro, meso, macro and supra factors and the interplay between them. The importance of employing the OMM2 as a contextual meta-analysis method at a comparative level

stem from the intricacy of media monitoring analysis and deliberative communication in emerging democracies of EU. This complexity arises from a paradox: The history of a simultaneous vortex of external events and the complete lack of change of any kind. Everything seems different, and yet, everything remains the same.³⁵

Based on the micro-level analysis, the sociodemographic factor directly affects the profile of the agents involved in media and communication research, which varies across countries. Various actors, including individual professionals, NGOs, journalists' unions, professional associations and diverse stakeholders, play a role in shaping research governance. Challenges in accessing funding for media and communication research projects vary at the micro level, depending on individual actors, such as researchers and scholars (e.g., Romania). In some countries, funding sources are more diverse, with support from national and EU institutions, foundations and universities, while in others, EU funding plays a crucial role in enabling access to European researchers and promoting comparative research.

At the meso-level, the growth and development of premier educational/research establishments for media and communication studies differ across nations. Institutionalization, organization, structure, routines and professional standards and the accreditation of journalism and communication programs are crucial in some countries, while NGOs, independent researchers and foreign research centers contribute significantly to the field in others. The meso-level analysis highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective media research governance, particularly in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. National research governance and availability of funding sources affect institutions like universities and research organizations. For example, countries such as Estonia and Latvia face inconsistent funding approaches, while others experience unfavorable funding situations that put media research at risk.

The findings highlight the intrinsic importance of institutions and organizations, where their type/model, ownership, scope and professional makeup enable scientific and research-related advancements, acting as catalysts for change or maintaining the status quo based on internal dynamics. The significance of "middle-ground roles" is particularly pronounced in countries with lower levels of institutionalization or those undergoing enhancement, such as in the contexts of countries with recent EU membership.

From a macro-level comparative perspective, the deliberative democracy index measures the level of deliberation in democracies, and the role of the macro-systems in media and communication research differs across European countries. For example, Estonia's research is primarily conducted by academic groups, while Bulgaria relies on research centers, associations, institutes and NGOs. Macro-level factors, such as policies, funding and political ideologies have significantly impacted media and communication research in countries like Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Systems and structures, including national research governance, politicization of research, and involvement of international organizations, differ among countries. Funding from the EU and other international comparative research projects and networks significantly influences research agendas. These findings reveal a novel cross-border landscape (supra-level) that dictates the extent of research and surveillance in the examined nations. This is due to the existence of an overarching, transnational layer that impacts uniformly, depending on each country's research level. Additionally, this layer interacts with various supranational entities, including national-level satellites such as non-governmental organizations.

The trans-systemic level (SUPRA) within an international comparative context encapsulates the complex interrelationships and dependencies among the analyzed European countries and their communicative and journalism systems. Surpassing national and even continental confines, this level zeroes in on the interactions and interfaces of systems on a worldwide stage. Through

³⁵ See: ANDERSON, C. W.: *Reconstructing the News: Metropolitan Journalism in The Digital Age*. Philadelphia, PA : Temple University Press, 2013.

an international comparative lens, the trans-systemic level interrogates patterns, trends and phenomena that transpire across diverse systems or nations, encapsulating political, economic, cultural and educational/research systems, among others. This level of analysis empowers understanding of the ripple effects that certain factors or policies in one system can trigger across deliberative systems, as well as how disparate countries respond to analogous global challenges. The trans-systemic level offers the opportunity to juxtapose practices, policies and results among the EU countries, delivering a more comprehensive perspective that unveils hidden patterns and links not discernible when scrutinizing deliberative communication and its level of monitoring and research.

Monitoring capacities in legal and ethical media regulation exhibit varying levels of institutionalization and engagement from different actors and structures. Legal regulation often benefits from the input of legal scholars and lawyers, while media accountability primarily relies on communication or media scholars and practitioners. The diverse research, monitoring and institutional support across countries underscore the significance of transnational research and monitoring efforts for understanding and addressing media regulation and accountability challenges. Certain financial assistance is crucial for some researchers, as it enables them to access specific information sources, publications and professional mobility opportunities that would otherwise be unattainable.

Although research on the journalism domain is well-established in EU countries, improved coordination and integration with the non-academic sphere are needed. This could involve fostering closer collaboration with policymakers and media practitioners to better understand the challenges in developing monitoring capabilities across various contexts. This contextual meta-analysis emphasizes the importance of further research and enhancing monitoring capacities in the analyzed European countries, offering valuable insights into risks and opportunities in journalism that can inform policies and actions aimed at reinforcing journalism's role in delivering impartial and accurate information in the public interest.

Recommendations for further development and research in media users' competencies include harmonizing visions and coordinating actions among various agents, conducting more research on the normative framework and institutional contexts of media-related competencies, and transitioning from a defensive philosophy in MIL teaching programs to a greater focus on creativity and citizen participation.

Despite differences in data collection scope, data collection quality in media usage patterns remains relatively consistent across countries. Comprehensive studies in countries with sufficient academic and public resources cover all relevant variables for the *MEDIADELCOM* project, providing information about media access, trust and relevance on a longitudinal basis. These studies employ academically verified methodologies, enabling policy planning and societal self-reflection. Countries with extended EU membership generally have higher data saturation and continuity.

In sum, by adopting the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0, researchers gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their monitoring capabilities of deliberative communication in EU, allowing them to identify the factors that promote or hinder deliberation and research governance across diverse settings. This framework guides the creation of policies, interventions and practices that promote more inclusive, efficient and democratic deliberative processes, contributing to the progress and growth of emerging democracies in the European Union.

Acknowledgement: This article represents an amalgamation of my prior work and the outcomes derived from the MEDIADELCOM project. The MEDIADELCOM project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, under grant agreement No 101004811. I wish to express my appreciation to this project and to all the researchers involved, whose contributions have been instrumental in the realization of this article.

Literature and Sources:

- ANDERSON, C. W.: *Reconstructing the News: Metropolitan Journalism in The Digital Age*. Philadelphia, PA : Temple University Press, 2013.
- CASTELLS, M.: *The Emergence of the Network Society*. Oxford : Polity Press, 1997.
- CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R.: Analysis Levels: An Introduction. In CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R. (eds.): *Handbook of Communication Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1987, p. 143-145.
- ESSER, F.: *The Forces Behind the Headlines. English and German Journalism in Comparison*. Freiburg, München : Verlag Karl Alber, 1998.
- Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.
- Flash Eurobarometer: News & Media Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.
- GROSSBERG, L., WARTELLA, E., WHITNEY, D. C., WISE, J. M.: *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2006.
- HALLIN, D. C., MANCINI, P.: *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- HANITZSCH, T.: Zur Wahrnehmung von Einflüssen im Journalismus. Komparative Befunde aus 17 Ländern. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2009, Vol. 57, No. 2, p. 153-173. ISSN 1615-634X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5771/1615-634x-2009-2-153>>.
- HANUSCH, F.: Cultural Forces in Journalism: The Impact of Cultural Values on Māori Journalists' Professional Views. In *Journalism Studies*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 191-206. ISSN 1461-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.859864>>.
- Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions. Catching the deliberative wave*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>>.
- JOHNSTONE, J. W. C., SLAWSKI, E. J., BOWMAN, W. W.: *The Newspeople. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Champaign : University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- LEWIS, S. C.: Journalism in an Era of Big Data. In *Digital Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 321-330. ISSN 2167-0811. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.976399>>.
- LUHMANN, N.: *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt : Suhrkamp, 1984.
- MCQUAIL, D., WINDAHL, S.: *Communication Models. For the Study of Mass Communications*. 2nd edition. London : Pearson Education, 1993.
- MCQUAIL, D.: *Introduction to the Theory of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1983.
- OLLER, M., BARREDO, D.: Intermediate Journalistic Cultures. International Comparative Studies in Journalism. In *Journal Medijska istraživanja/Media Research*, 2013, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 39-60. ISSN 1330-6928.
- OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.
- OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de ecuador. Perfil, situación y percepción profesional de los periodistas (Vol. I)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2017.
- OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de ecuador (Vol. II)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2019.
- OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163. ISSN 2411-9970.

PRESTON, P., METYKOVA, M.: From News Networks to House Rules: Organizational Contexts. In PRESTON, P. (ed.): *Making the News. Journalism and News Cultures in Europe*. New York, NY : Routledge, 2009, p. 72-91.

REESE, S., SHOEMAKER, P.: A Sociology of Media for the Networked Public Sphere: The Model of Hierarchy of Influences. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, p. 389-410. ISSN 1520-5436. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1174268>>.

REESE, S.: Journalism Research and the Hierarchy of Influence Model: A Global Perspective. In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 29-42. ISSN 1981-9854. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.25200/BJR.v3n2.2007.116>>.

Report on Deliberative Democracy. Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publishing, 2023, p. 27. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/report-on-deliberative-democracy-eng/1680aaf76f>>.

SHOEMAKER, P. J., REESE, S.: *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Media Content*. New York, NY : Longman, 1991.

Standard Eurobarometer 94 – Winter 2020-2021: Media Use in the European Union. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/726029>>.

VOAKES, P. S.: Social Influences on the Decision-Making of Journalists in Ethical Situations. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 18-35. ISSN 0890-0523. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327728jmme1201_2>.

WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 1: Media Systems, Media Ethics, Media Institutions*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992.

WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 2: Media Technology, Media Functions, Media Actors*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

WHITNEY, D. C., ETTEMA, J. S.: Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions. In VALDIVIA, A. N. (ed.): *A Companion to Media Studies*. Hoboken, NJ : Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 157-187. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999066.ch9>>.

WHITNEY, D. C., SUMPTER, R. S., MCQUAIL, D.: Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, and Institutions. In DOWNING, J. D. H., MCQUAIL, D., SCHLESINGER, P., WARTELLA, E. (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 2004, p. 393-410.

World Press Freedom Index 2022. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index>>.

ZELIZER, B., BOCZKOWSKI, P., ANDERSON, C. W.: *The Journalism Manifesto*. Cambridge : Polity, 2022.

Annexes

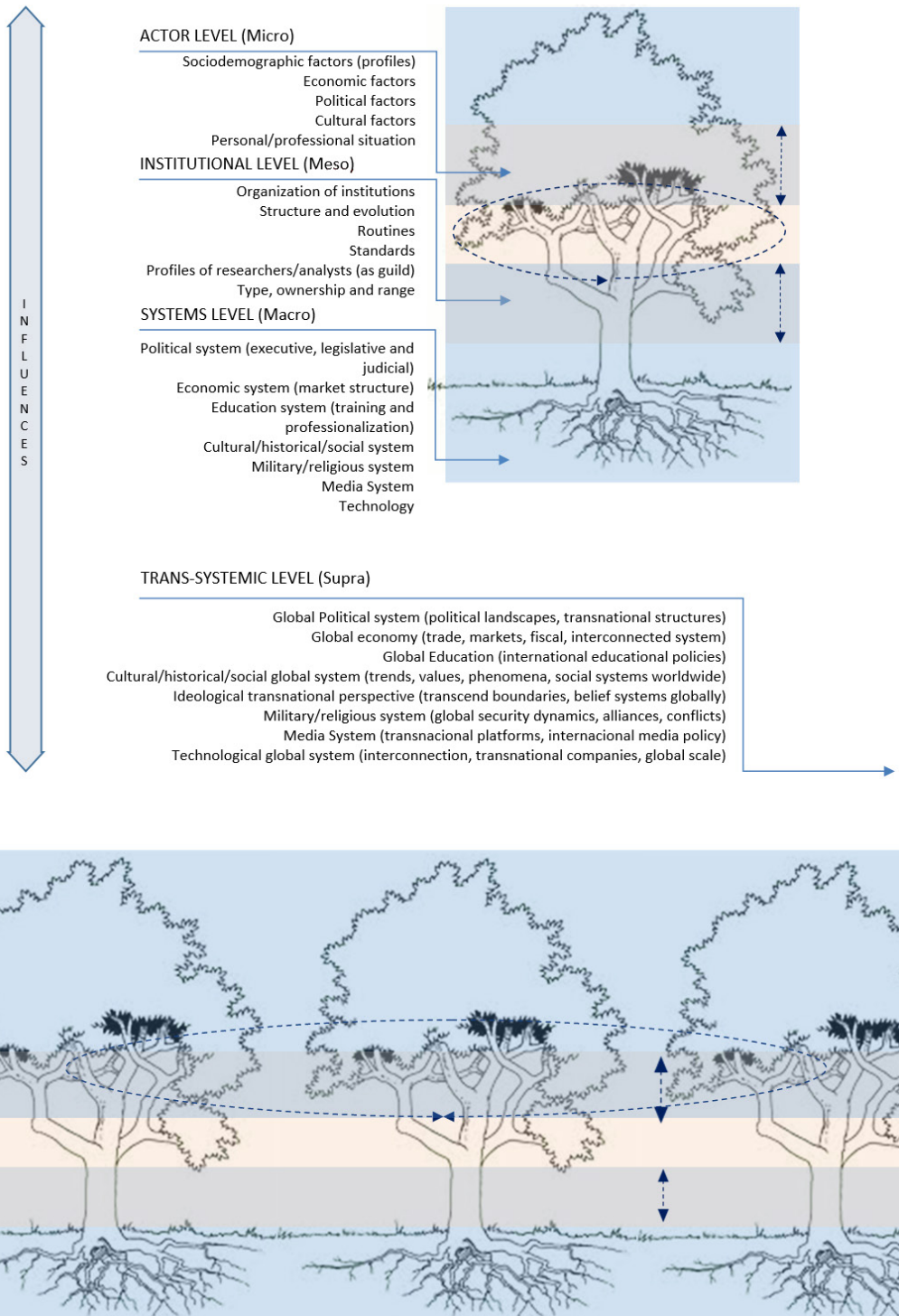


FIGURE 1: Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2)

Source: own processing, 2023

Author



Martín Oller Alonso, PhD.

University of Salamanca
Department of Sociology and Communication.
Avenue Francisco Tomás y Valiente s/n
37071 - Salamanca
SPAIN
martin.olleralonso@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2256-5681>

Martín Oller Alonso holds a PhD. degree in Journalism (Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid, 2012); a master's degree in advanced studies in Communication (2009),; a degree in Advertising and Public Relations (2011),; Journalism (2008); Magisterium (University of Murcia); and Sciences of Physical Activity and Sport (Catholic University of Murcia, UCAM, 2002). He is involved in several international research projects, such as PHARM, World of Journalism Study (WJS), Journalistic Cultures and Pre-professional Journalistic Culture, based on the comparative analysis of communication, journalism, journalists, and journalism degree students in more than a hundred countries around the world. He has published more than 20 scientific books, collaborated on almost fifty books as a co-author, produced more than sixty scientific articles, and participated as a speaker in nearly 90 conferences in various countries around the world. Likewise, he has resided in Switzerland, England, France, Spain and Ecuador; conducting research stays in Italy, Cuba and the United States. Currently, although Oller Alonso continues his scientific activity in Latin America - mostly Ecuador and Cuba, he is carrying out a postgraduate stay at the University of Milano as part of the research group of the MEDIADELCOM (2022-2024).



Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte, Ioana Avădani, Cristina Lupu, Christian Oggolder, Alnis Stakle, Slavomír Gálik, Norbert Vrabec, Lora Metanova, Neli Velinova

Media Literacy Policy for Unknown Media Audiences

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-06>

ABSTRACT

Media literacy target audiences are an important part of media policy. Other national media policy objectives, such as quality and responsibility of the mass media, safety, and sustainability of the media environment, are also related to society's media literacy. Aligning policy measures with the changing challenges of modern media use is not an easy task. Without systematic research, policy makers lack an in-depth understanding of the needs of media users and cannot be accurate in providing support mechanisms. By adopting a mediatization framework, this study seeks to dissect the symbiotic relationship between media and society within a mediatized context, paying particular attention to how media logic intertwines with various social subsystems and influences the trajectory of media policy development, specifically in the realm of media literacy. Drawing upon bibliographic data from the Mediadelcom project and conducting a meticulous content analysis of national media policy documents, we critically evaluate the media literacy policies in Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia. The study aims to underscore how an overreliance on media logic and negligence of audience needs thwarts the efficacy of media literacy policies, ultimately hindering their capacity to fulfil their intended objectives. This research endeavours to illuminate these dynamics, providing valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers striving to enhance media literacy and foster a more informed, responsible, and resilient media landscape.

KEY WORDS

Audience Research. Media Education. Media Literacy Policy. Media Related Competencies. Mediatization Theory.

1 Introduction

To better understand the development of a policy, academic theories conceptualising the policy process propose to study a policy cycle – a set of stages and steps that allow a closer look at processes, decisions, and actors of policy making.¹ In the various models², the first or one of the first stages is connected to the information, problem definition, and agenda setting. Jann and Wegrich describe the agenda setting process in the policy cycle as being attached to political attention: *“As numerous studies since the 1960s have shown, problem recognition and agenda-setting are inherently political processes in which political attention is attached to a subset of all possibly relevant policy problems. Actors within and outside government constantly seek to influence and collectively shape the agenda (e.g., by taking advantage of rising attention to a particular issue, dramatising a problem, or advancing a particular problem definition). The involvement of actors (e.g., experts), the choice of institutional venues in which problems are debated and the strategic use of media coverage have been identified as tactical means to define issues.”*³

This shows how, at this stage, the policy process is not only profoundly interconnected with media activity by shaping the issue or problem, but media logic might influence the very definition of the problem or issue the policy is developed to handle. In the case of policy aimed at increasing media literacy in a country or media literacy policy data used to describe media audiences gathered for commercial means and strategic use of media coverage by actors involved can be considered as possible sources of influence.

Analysing the data used to develop the media policy documents, we found that the policy documents included quantitative data on media use, offering these data as a basis for discussion on audience media consumption change, digital technology use and disinformation. However, wide areas of the media literacy issues remained intact. Thus, politics defined media literacy in a way whereby some aspects of the complex of media related competencies are not envisioned in the policy and its implementation plan. In Latvia, for example, the same data were employed to assess society’s media literacy, public media development and media regulation priorities. In Romania, much of the effort and support of the state goes to disinformation recognition skills as part of the national defence policies. Austria places a strong focus on basic digital education as part of its school curricula, not least to prepare young people for the current demands of the labour market.

In our study, we hypothesise that understanding media audiences is important in defining media literacy issues, but media policies were developed by following general trends of media logic without linking media audience data to media literacy research data that are not always available for all areas of media related competencies.

For example, the data used to develop Latvia’s media policy reflect the structure, methods, and priorities of audience research available in Latvia. Since 2000, the Latvian media audience has largely understood by collecting the quantitative media consumption data which are designed to attract advertising investment to media organisations. The understanding of media audiences is based on data collected in the interests of the commercial media in other countries too, like for example “Media-Analysen” in Austria, obtained using uniform methods and presented descriptively. In many countries, there is a lack of research that would explain media perception,

¹ See: JANN, W., WEGRICH, K.: Theories of the Policy Cycle. In FISCHER, F., MILLER, J. G., SIDNEY, S. M. (eds.): *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York : Routledge, 2017; See also: BIRKLAND, T. A.: *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. London, New York : Routledge, 2019, p. 43-62.

² See: ANDERSON, J. E.: *Public Policymaking*. New York : Praeger, 1975; See also: JENKINS, W. I.: *Policy Analysis*. London : Martin Robertson, 1978; HOGWOOD, B. W., GUNN, L.: *Policy Analysis for the Real World*. London : Oxford University Press, 1984.

³ JANN, W., WEGRICH, K.: Theories of the Policy Cycle. In FISCHER, F., MILLER, J. G., SIDNEY, S. M. (eds.): *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York : Routledge, 2007, p. 46.

societal attitudes towards the media and media effects in a more complex way that would form a fundament for policy makers. To build a conceptual framework for analysis of links between media policy development and societies we use a mediatization theory approach⁴, which helps to understand the relationship between media and society in a mediatized world.⁵

2 Theoretical Approach

In order to answer those questions we conceptualize media literacy and media literacy policy in the contemporary social world saturated by media.

2.1 Media Literacy from the Perspective of Mediatization Theory

Media exert an unprecedented and profound influence on our daily lives, shaping organisational processes and leaving their mark on every facet of society. This phenomenon, termed “mediatization”⁶ extends across various domains and societal levels. It manifests in public affairs, politics, social institutions, organisations, interpersonal relationships, gender dynamics, daily routines, employment, consumption patterns, and lifestyles. Much like other overarching processes such as globalisation and individualization, mediatization holds sway over society highlighting the importance of re-thinking and re-conceptualising – not only the governance principles in the mediatized world, but also the way we act as rational and responsible people and citizens.⁷ In other words, an analysis of contemporary society shows it, along with its subsystems, to be increasingly mediatized so that from every member of society a certain level of media-related knowledge and skills is required to participate in social life and follow his/her own goals. This is why media literacy has gained more and more attention as a fundamental part of contemporary literacy – a literacy for all. Not only must a media literate person possess knowledge about the role and functioning of media in contemporary society, especially in the context of democratic participation, opinion making and deliberation, media literacy includes access and practice, media related knowledge and skills, creativity and criticality. So if understanding of mediatization and mediatized society is an integral part of media literacy it must be achieved from inside media related practice.

Another aspect is the changing media environment. The significance of traditional mass media based mediatization was challenged by the digital communication’s impact on society in the first decades of the 21st century where it became evident through the substantial increase in internet users and the expanding array of ways people use these technologies, significantly shaping their lives. Consequently, there is an increasing necessity for integrating the understanding and use of these technologies into our everyday routines and social interactions. Because of social media and the wide use of algorithms utilising metadata for retrieval of

⁴ See: LÖBLICH, M.: The History of Media Policy Based on Mediatization: A Theoretical Perspective. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 12, p. 4468-4487. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/7835/2496>>.

⁵ See: HEPP, A., KROTZ, F. (eds.): *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; See also: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 31-35. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.

⁶ See: KROTZ, F.: Explaining the Mediatization Approach. In *Javnost – The Public*, 2017, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 103-118; See also: BENGTSOON, S. et al.: Media and Basic Desires: An Approach to Measuring the Mediatization of Daily Human Life. In *Communications*, 2021, Vol. 46, No. 2, p. 275-296.

⁷ See: PERUŠKO, Z.: Public Sphere in Hybrid Media Systems in Central and Eastern Europe. In *Javnost – The Public*, 2021, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 36-52.

information in user's feeds, informed, responsible and competent usage by all communicators in on-line communication is in the common interest⁸ and a pre-condition for the functioning of deliberative democracy.

Media literacy is a complex and changing concept. The definition of it and the inclusion into the concept of competencies needed to deal with media and messages in everyday life is an increasingly challenging task. From access to media and skills of usage of media tools for message processing, to critical thinking and reading and critical attitudes towards any type of information, from understanding the modal specifics of a text to coding ability, from effectiveness to ethics, from protection to support – media literacy skills in general must include the critical use of any kind of media and acknowledgement of the role of both traditional mass and social media.

In addition the contemporary interpretation of media literacy is directly linked with an accent on access and the usage of media in social life.⁹ It means the media competent person is able to implement his/her ideas by taking active part in social life, using media as a source of information, but also a place where social linkages are made, and social life happens – a place of deliberation and discussion.

In sum, media usage in mediatized society requires appropriate competencies in dealing with old and new technologies in a critical way. The most urgent needs and combinations of competencies is a matter of discussion, deliberation and decision, but it is clear that depending on the respective political interests, perception of actual needs as well as plans and goals set, the media education's focus can differ. Currently, for example, policies mostly focus on measures related to dealing with propaganda and disinformation, truth and untruth in the media, as well as skills, mostly digital ones, required in the working market, where, for example, at the end of last century multimodal (and visual) and multimedia skills were more in focus etc. Moreover, different types of government and non-government actors are involved to negotiate the agenda building for changing literacy policies – the respective sets of related competencies, institutional set-up, learning methods and environments – including academic researchers proposing their research data and conclusions to inform policy makers. This is the context in which research-based knowledge about media use and gaps in media related competencies of the population must be taken into account. One of the challenges is the problem of conceptualising the network of organisations involved in the implementation of policies itself. Policy makers have to think of directing a multi-level network of actors which act in research and monitoring of the media usage field, and which can identify problems translating them into lack of/gaps in competencies as well as in the field of implementation of foreseen actions. Interaction between different sub-fields like education and media industry is required. The place of media literacy policy is to mobilise resources from different fields to help individuals to deal with the above-described challenges.

In her article *Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy* Sonja Livingstone, who constantly advocated for media audiences being heard and taken in account in building knowledge based on media literacy pointed out another important aspect. Describing the inconsistency between goals and means in media literacy policy she stresses the complexity of the issue along with its urgency and the need of interactive involvement of different stakeholders and actors, e.g. schools and industry: *“Some of these actions would serve to embed the means by which our ambitions for media literacy may be met. The thorough incorporation of media literacy objectives within the school curriculum. A commitment to elucidate, explain and support the public as they engage with both*

⁸ See: ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2\(26\).4](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2(26).4)>.

⁹ *Media and Information Literacy*. [online]. [2023-09-19]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>>.

publicly and privately provided media themselves. Both of these will require state support if they are deliberately to include and provide for those who are relatively disadvantaged in society. [...] It is crucial to find a means of limiting the potentially escalating requirements of media literacy and, therefore, the potentially escalating burden on individuals. Otherwise media literacy will never be accessible by all.”¹⁰

But how to understand “all” in the context of media literacy to develop a media literacy policy that meets the needs of all different groups both separately and all together? The concept of all has an aspect of diversity, an aspect of totality and an aspect of multitude. In the context of mediatization one needs to think of a total number of all individuals making different choices upon media and content, having different opinions, needs and expectations both provoked and gratified by uses of certain formats involving media logic. It also means the maximal attention available for media messages in a given society that can be mobilised in a certain form of political capital.

One of the paradoxes or difficulties of the task of formulating and discussing with stakeholders a proper agenda for media literacy policy is the lack of proper knowledge of the quickly changing audience habits of everyday media use and the need for adequate media literacy measurement to assess literacy directly in the context of media usage; the other aspect is the model of policy making in the context that is transgressed by media logics.

The impact of mediatization on politics is widely discussed.¹¹ In focus is the interaction and mutual impact of both political and media logic or news media logic understood as a specific format of media coverage driven by professional, commercial and technological factors.¹² Several studies apply the concept of mediatization to the understanding of the development of policy including subfields of media¹³ and educational policy.¹⁴ But mediatization is a deep process.¹⁵ Besides the structural models of society in change that show the deep role media play, policy makers need more insight into mediatization processes from a media user’s everyday perspective – the emic perspective.¹⁶

To help audiences to deal with the “media literacy burden”¹⁷ media literacy policy has to base its critical vision of media development and changing role in social transformation processes and of usage practices (whereby usage practices not only are determined by this development, but in a way shape the development itself) 1) involving more social actors to discuss their perspectives, 2) proactive, creative thinking and 3) design level innovations not being involved with existing media logics is an important task for media literacy policy makers.

¹⁰ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 34. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.

¹¹ See: STRÖMBÄCK, J.: Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. In *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 228-246; See also: ESSER, F., STRÖMBÄCK, J.: *Mediatization of Politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; KROTZ, F.: *Mediatization as a Mover in Modernity: Social and Cultural Change in the Context of Media Change*. Berlin : De Gruyter Mouton, 2014; KISSAS, A.: Three Theses on the Mediatization of Politics: Evolutionist, Intended, or Imagined Transformation? In *The Communication Review*, 2019, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 222-242.

¹² See: STRÖMBÄCK, J., ESSER, F.: Introduction: Making Sense of the Mediatization of Politics. In *Journalism Practice*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 245-257.

¹³ See: LÖBLICH, M.: The History of Media Policy Based on Mediatization: A Theoretical Perspective. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 12, p. 4468-4487. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/7835/2496>>.

¹⁴ See: RODWELL, G.: *Politics and the Mediatization of School Educational Policy: The Dog-Whistle Dynamic*. New York : Routledge, 2020.

¹⁵ See: HEPP, A.: *Deep Mediatization*. London, New York : Routledge, 2019.

¹⁶ See: JANSSON, A. et al.: Mediatization from Within: A Plea for Emic Approaches to Media-Related Social Change. In *Communication Theory*, 2021, Vol. 31, No. 4, p. 956-977.

¹⁷ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 31-35. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.

2.2 Making Media Literacy Policy in the EU

As discussed previously, changing media related competencies is an essential part of key competencies for involvement of an individual in social life, work, leisure, development, self-expression and active participation in the political processes of today. That requires permanent and flexible adaptation of the existing media and educational policies with the needs people have in their everyday media use. One of the first issues on the agenda is the list of competencies needed. Policy makers in the EU developed key competency frameworks. Many of them related to the domains of digital and civic competencies are required in the contemporary media environment – including information and data literacy, skills of communication and collaboration, general critical understanding of media specifics and functions of media in democratic society, digital content creation, safety, intellectual property, problem-solving, critical thinking, ethics, skills and competencies related to argumentation and participation in civic activities etc.¹⁸

There are some other relevant EU documents that mark a longer history of expanding actions for media literacy development in society. As early as 2006 the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the protection of minors and human dignity and the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information services industry*¹⁹ was an important basis for development of further steps. Other documents include Decisions No 1718/2006/E, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC.²⁰ After 2006-2010's period of activity in the field of media literacy this subfield of policy was moved under control of the Directorate of General Education and Culture from the Directorate General Information Society that pushed the actors to reformulate the focus towards more practical settings of formal and informal education – a level more connected to decisions on the national level.²¹ *Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council*²² establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014-2020) came with a new vision and created the basis for new developments. Important focusses were set by European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI)) (95-97)⁶²³, on 16 March 2017 *European Parliament Resolution of 16 March 2017 on e-democracy in the European Union: potential and challenges*.²⁴ They created the background for further activities.

¹⁸ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling Online Disinformation: A European Approach.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0236>>.

¹⁹ *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity and on the Right of Reply in Relation to the Competitiveness of the European Audiovisual and On-line Information Services Industry.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006H0952>>.

²⁰ *Regulation (Eu) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 Establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020) and Repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1552247656548&uri=CELEX:52017IP0095>>.

²¹ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Media Literacy Research and Policy in Europe: A Review of Recent, Current and Planned Activities.* Brussels : COST, 2013.

²² *Regulation (Eu) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 Establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020) and Repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1552247656548&uri=CELEX:52017IP0095>>.

²³ *European Parliament Resolution of 14 September 2017 on a New Skills Agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI)).* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1552247656548&uri=CELEX:52017IP0360>>.

²⁴ *E-Democracy in the EU: Potential and Challenges.* [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017IP0095&rid=2>>.

More recent focus is on a complex of competencies to stand against spreading on-line disinformation and fake news. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Tackling Online Disinformation: a European Approach* of 26.4.2018 especially stresses the need for the involvement and cooperation of stakeholders including public authorities, private (media) companies, platforms, advertisers, journalists, NGOs and others to achieve long term solutions.²⁵ Special attention is given to educational settings. (Action Plan from 5.12.2018.) The *Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council* of 14 November 2018 including Article 33a as an amendment to the existing Audio-visual Media Service Directive asks member states for concrete measures to act to develop media related competencies.²⁶ It is also supported by setting of priorities for the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027²⁷ and other programs. However, as has been shown above, it is a very complex and dynamic task, especially, given the two-fold (media – education) structure of both conceptualising and implementation of media literacy policies that leaves some groups out of reach for the activities and measures and the many types and fields of primary activity of stakeholders and actors. Taking in account that EU policies were built on a rather reactive not proactive approach, and the following national policies come with certain time-lags, researchers critically observed a disconnection in EU media literacy governance.²⁸ This disconnection, the gap between means and goals,²⁹ the insufficient inclusion of all societal groups brought researchers to describe media literacy policy in Europe as “low level”.³⁰

2.3 Changing Media, Audiences and Media Related Competencies: What We Know Now and What We Don't

The core of the problem might be the focus – the difficulty of the definition of media literacy in a media environment that is permanently in flux in terms of both technological innovation and usage and content formats followed by changing types and styles of use. The problem of definition is still a challenge because it must be relatable to all the most important aspects where possible problems can emerge and be fought by relevant skills and knowledge according to the concept of ML. The report of an expert seminar in 2013 pointed to the necessity of focussing the agenda on media literacy policy: “Strategically, there are advantages in formulating a focused agenda to incentivise politicians and other -makers to lobby for media literacy initiatives and funding.”³¹

²⁵ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling Online Disinformation: A European Approach*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0236>>.

²⁶ *Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 Amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the Coordination of Certain Provisions Laid Down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in Member States Concerning the Provision of Audiovisual Media Services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in View of Changing Market Realities*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>>.

²⁷ *Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/creative-europe-2021-2027/>>.

²⁸ See: FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F.: Mapping Media and Information Literacy Policies: New Perspectives for the Governance of MIL. In FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F. (eds.): *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe*. London : Routledge, 2017, p. 19-88.

²⁹ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 31-35. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.

³⁰ See: CUBBAGE, J.: Policy Issues in European Media Literacy. In HOBBS, R., MIHALIDIS, P. (eds.): *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2019, p. 1-7.

³¹ LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Media Literacy Research and Policy in Europe: A Review of Recent, Current and Planned Activities*. Brussels : COST, 2013, p. 4.

Translated into the complexity of ML it means to map the semantic field of ML in such a way that the most urgent needs and most threatening gaps of ML in society become remarkable. This is why in order to develop sustainable ML policy there is a need for nationally representative ML research based on methods that not only give an account on best practices and add self-reporting of uses and knowledge and skills of consumers,³² but assess multiple individual skills in the contexts media use and effectiveness of teaching interventions. Even if several assessment instruments are created and surveys of ML in different age groups undertaken, there is no comprehensive research done and no universal criteria negotiated.³³

To assess media literacy level in a country in general, several contextual aspects and sets of competencies must be taken in account. For policy purposes, there is a need to develop combinatory and comparative instruments that can assist policy makers to understand the impact of the various elements in play. One of the few surveys that can serve as a benchmark and is relevant to media attitudes is the Media Literacy Index.³⁴ The Media Literacy Index is produced within the European Policy Initiative (EuPI) of the *Open Society Institute* – Sofia and assesses the potential for resilience against fake news in 41 European countries using indicators of media freedom, education and public trust. It combines several indicators and takes as one of the first indicators media freedom. Since the indicators have different importance, they have different weights in the model. Media freedom indicators have the greatest weight (Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders) along with education indicators (PISA), and literacy has the highest share among education indicators. The indicators of e-participation (UN) and trust in people (Eurostat) have less weight compared to the other indicators. The *Media Literacy Index* was first published in 2017 and included 35 countries, while the 2022 edition has added several more countries, bringing the total to 41 countries in Europe included in the assessment. The indicators are media freedom, education, trust and new forms of participation that have an indirect relationship with media consumption. The countries included in the scope of this article except Austria are from 2017 when the initiative was started, located in the middle and lower part of it. In the MLI 2023 they rank respectively as 14th (Austria), 18th (Latvia), 23rd (Slovakia), with Romania (34th) and Bulgaria (35th) completing the list of EU countries.³⁵

Some of the countries analysed here are also included in the *Digital News Report*. The Reuters Institute has conducted a survey every year since 2012, which in recent years has reached the scope of 46 countries. This survey offers a wealth of information covering population statistics, internet consumption, leading media brands, data on media ownership, media consumption, media trust and social media use.³⁶ Evaluating media literacy positions, for example, in 2018, it was discovered that Romania and Bulgaria are among the countries with the highest self-reported exposure to completely made-up news stories.³⁷

³² HILL, J.: *Policy Responses to False and Misleading Digital Content: A Snapshot of Children's Media Literacy*. Paris : OECD Publishing, 2022, p. 64.

³³ See: RASI, P., VUOJÄRVI, H., RUOKAMO, H.: Media Literacy Education for All Ages. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2019, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 1-19.

³⁴ LESSENSKI, M.: *How It Started, How It Is Going: Media Literacy Index 2022*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HowItStarted_MediaLiteracyIndex2022_ENG_.pdf>.

³⁵ Ibidem. See also: LESSENSKI, M.: *"Bye, Bye, Birdie": Meeting the Challenges of Disinformation – The Media Literacy Index 2023*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<http://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>>; LESSENSKI, M.: *Can This Be True? Predictors of Media Literacy and Resilience to the Post-Truth Phenomenon in Europe. The Media Literacy Index 2017*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <http://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MediinaGramotnost_11Okt2017_BG.pdf>.

³⁶ NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf>.

³⁷ NIC, N., FLETCHER, R., KALOGEROPOULOS, A. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2018. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/digital-news-report-2018.pdf>>.

3 Methodology

This paper is developed as a part of the MEDIADELCOM (mediadelcom.eu) research project which has as one of its goals to discover the capability or incapability of the research on media and journalism in the first two decades of the 21st century in 14 EU states to monitor the risks and opportunities in the related fields for deliberative democracy. Media related competencies was one of the fields included in the study. Therefore, methodologically, the paper is based on the results of the countries' case studies and analysis of bibliographical databases.

To explore varieties of interrelations between state driven media literacy policies and citizens' media use we have set the research questions as follows:

RQ1: How was the national media literacy policy developed (including agenda identified, context, objectives, actors, and factors that have been involved in consultations and discussions and influenced the conceptual design of the country's media literacy policy and its translation into practical instruments and programs of implementation)?

RQ2: What kind of research data were available / were used by policy makers? Was there a political discussion of the agenda?

RQ3: What are possible gaps in policy vision resulting from the media logic-based media literacy policy?

4 Results from National Case Studies

Following the defined RQs, the chapter summarises the media literacy policy processes of five countries, analysed in the context of available research data.

4.1 Case Study: Austria

In Austria³⁸, media literacy and media education have played crucial roles in research and teaching for many years.³⁹ However, with the rise of digital media, these fields have evolved into central disciplines with a cross-disciplinary approach.⁴⁰ Public institutions, including universities and university colleges, primarily conduct research on media literacy. Private initiatives, often supported by the federal ministry, implement various measures to enhance media competencies. Non-university efforts and projects receive support from private institutions and organisations, often funded by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.⁴¹ These initiatives also provide resources for teachers to use in the classroom.

Austria's policy relies on various sources, including international data from organisations like the OECD⁴², Eurobarometer, and PISA, and domestic sources like Statistics Austria⁴³,

³⁸ EBERWEIN, T., KRAKOVSKY, C., OGGOLDER, C.: *Austria: Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Deliverable-2.1-the-First-case-study-Final-F-nr.pdf>>.

³⁹ See: PAUS-HASEBRINK, I., HIPFL, B.: Medienpädagogik in Österreich: Perspektiven, Potenziale und Probleme. In *Medienpädagogik*, 2005, Vol. 11, p. 1-31. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21240/mpaed/11/2006.08.01.X>>.

⁴⁰ See: TRÜLTZSCH-WIJNEN, C., BRANDHOFER, G.: *Bildung und Digitalisierung: Auf der Suche nach Kompetenzen und Performanzen*. Baden-Baden : Nomos, 2020.

⁴¹ Authors' note: See the RTR Media Competence Atlas to get an overview of current projects, available at: <<https://medienkompetenz.rtr.at/>>.

⁴² *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/piaacdesign/>>.

⁴³ *Statistics Austria*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.statistik.at/en/>>.

responsible for federal statistics, or the recently published *Media Literacy Report*⁴⁴ by the Austrian Broadcasting and Telecom Regulation (RTR). Austria's involvement in the *Digital News Project*⁴⁵ since 2015 further contributes to the availability of valuable data.

The primary legal reference in this domain is school curricula. In addition to EU-level initiatives, the mandatory subject "Basic education in digital skills" (*Digitale Grundbildung*) has been introduced for lower secondary education students from the 5th to the 8th grade.

Since this achievement represents a pioneering role across Europe, the media reported on it. Apart from that, media literacy is usually only discussed in the media when it comes to fake news or cyberbullying. As for the gaps in the political vision resulting from media literacy policies based on media logic, there is no doubt about the simplistic approach of contemporary media education policy, which increasingly focuses on digital competencies.

4.2 Case Study: Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, non-governmental organisations play a major role in media literacy initiatives. One of the first attempts to supplement media literacy campaigns with concrete empirical data is the 2022 study presented by the Media Literacy Coalition, which is also a major driving force behind organising initiatives to increase media literacy among both students and teachers and the elderly. In 2022, the organisation presented the results of the first national survey of digital media skills of high school students in Bulgaria. The study was carried out in partnership with the Centre for Assessment in Pre-school and School Education at the Ministry of Education and Science and with the support of the "Active Citizens" Fund within the framework of the "*Integral Approach to Developing Students' Media Literacy*" project. The study was conducted among 4,300 students across the country, with two tests that measure cognitive skills according to the European DigComp 2.0 framework.

A national representative survey of the Bulgarian Centre for Safe Internet from 2016 analyses the digital media competence of Bulgarian children between 9 and 17 years of age on the basis of their behaviour on the Internet. Bulgarian children use the Internet often and in a more mobile way, which helps them develop their technical abilities, according to the *Digital and Society Index* (DESI). Most of them have digital identities and claim to be able to protect themselves from inappropriate content. A large percentage of children even claim to use programming languages.

Some of the research regarding early training in media and digital literacy are related to conducting various initiatives for the creation of such skills in students and to collecting data on the habits and attitudes of children and young people. They also contain specific recommendations and proposals that will lead to an increase in their media competencies. The basic idea is that media and digital literacy is becoming a mandatory part of the notion of literacy per se and early training is necessary and important for development, adaptation, education and successful socialisation in the future. Every year the *Coalition for Media Literacy* organises the campaign "Media Literacy Days."

National policy on media literacy is still underdeveloped in normative terms. The first legal document related to media literacy is the *Preschool and School Education Act*,⁴⁶ but the law does not contain an official definition of media literacy, and media education is not explicitly linked to the allocation of resources. Media literacy is only implicit in this new law. Media literacy was introduced in the curriculum of formal education in Bulgaria in 2018 with the

⁴⁴ *Der Medienkompetenz-Bericht 2022*. [online]. [2023-09-11]. Available at: <<https://www.rtr.at/medien/aktuelles/publikationen/Publikationen/Medienkompetenz-Bericht.de.html>>.

⁴⁵ *Digital News Project*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-project>>.

⁴⁶ *Pre-school and School Education Act*. [online]. [2023-09-11]. Available at: <https://lll.mon.bg/uploaded_files/ZAKON_za_preducilisnoto_i_ucilisnoto_obrazovanie_EN.pdf>.

amendment of Ordinance No13 of 21.09.2016 on civic, health, environmental and intercultural education. However, for the development of media literacy and competence only ten school hours are provided for the twelve-year course of secondary education in Bulgaria. At the end of 2020, the requirements of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive were transposed into Bulgarian legislation for the introduction of measures to promote and develop media literacy of citizens of all ages and for all media (Article 32, para. 24 and Article 33a of the Radio and Television Act amends SG No. 109/2020, in force since 22 December 2020).⁴⁷ Although civil society organisations, such as the Media Literacy Coalition, actively organise and conduct media literacy training, including for teachers and the elderly, such initiatives cannot offset the need for systematic education.

Data from the surveys related to media literacy and media competencies are mostly from the period 2016-2021 and they have been increasing in recent years. They are mainly the work of non-governmental organisations and scientific researchers. Research, publications and studies that address media competencies usually take a complex approach – both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

A lot of research and initiatives in Bulgaria related to addressing media literacy are available on the Internet. The main emphasis is on the importance of media literacy in the modern world and the need to work to improve the skills and competencies of media content users. Most studies are not done systematically, but register the processes for a certain period of time, although there exist studies and analyses in recent years, which are carried out annually.

The analysis outlines the need for more periodic and systematic studies of the level of media competencies of the audiences in the context of characteristics such as education and social status and, accordingly, of criteria for assessing the quality of information. Greater specification of media literacy policy is needed in terms of audience demographics, educational characteristics, and greater emphasis on critical thinking and selection of information sources to identify fake news.

4.3 Case Study: Latvia

The structure and content of media literacy (ML) policy development in Latvia mirror the critical junctures that have affected Latvian society and the media environment in the last decade. Among them, the most significant are the effects of digitization, influence of disinformation, school curriculum reform, the global pandemic, and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Media literacy implementation in Latvia has been driven by influential global and EU organisations whose evaluation criteria and research instruments (PISA test of OECD, UNESCO educational initiatives and ML conceptualisation, EU media literacy mapping project,⁴⁸ etc.) define the state's task to create a constructive response that concerns the development of media and information literacy (MIL).⁴⁹

In 2016 media literacy was included as one of four important priorities in Latvia's first ever mass media policy guidelines 2016-2020.⁵⁰ The concept chosen in policy documents combines information and media literacy (MIL). The ML implementation plan aims to allocate resources to the studies of society ML via regularly monitoring the public's self-assessment of media

⁴⁷ *The Radio and Television Act*. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134447616>>.

⁴⁸ See: FREIBERGS, V.: Mapping Media Literacy in Latvia: National Summary. In CABERERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Audiovisual Observatory. Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 274-284. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/media-literacy-mapping-report-en-final-pdf/1680783500>>.

⁴⁹ BRIKŠE, I., FREIBERGS, V., SPURAVA, G.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Latvia*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <http://imec.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LATVIA_2014.pdf>.

⁵⁰ *Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/286455>>.

use and media influence, as well as' ability to recognize misinformation being researched.⁵¹ However, these studies, which are based on respondents' self-assessment data,⁵² do not provide a full insight into the public's media literacy. This means that policy makers have an insufficient understanding of the public's media related competencies, such as resilience against disinformation and digital skills.

The media policy, the continuation of which was not developed and adopted until 2023, focused on improving the MIL knowledge of individuals, including MIL in educational content, the aim to educate MIL teachers,⁵³ and preparation of learning materials for MIL training at all levels of education. Children and young people, following representatives of older generations in 2022⁵⁴ are the main groups of society whose quantitative and qualitative research data on media use and media perception have been used to determine the target groups of MIL policy.

The political discourse and policy documents in the ML context are dominated by the task of ensuring the security of individuals by developing critical thinking and media usage skills, as well as the development of a responsible and safe media environment.

The activities defined in the first media policy determined that professional media, with the help of projects financed by the Media Support Fund, were encouraged to regularly offer content dedicated to ML to the audience, paying special attention to debunking disinformation, fact-checking materials, and media criticism.

The second direction of Plan for Implementation of the Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016 – 2020 (hereinafter – the Plan)⁵⁵ included improving the understanding of ML across various social groups, including librarians, youth and children, specialists in youth affairs of local governments.

The main actors⁵⁶ who have promoted the introduction of media literacy in the discourse of politics and society are the University of Latvia, the National Library of Latvia, the National Council of Electronic Media (responsible for implementation of EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive), and the UNESCO National Committee. At the government level, MIL falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Since EU policy initiatives and the changes in media use and media environment have also determined the development of ML, it was initially influenced by the technological determinism approach⁵⁷ in political discourse, but nowadays is mostly characterised by normativism, and the dominating understanding of media literacy is related with a protectionism approach. Thus, in the political and professional discourse, media literacy skills are mostly associated with individual/society security issues, which lead to the inclusion in ML of the use of digital media and devices, protection against disinformation, war propaganda and cybercrimes.

In Latvia MIL research is fragmented and has depended on the lack of resources and the interests of individual researchers. Nevertheless, MIL studies address a much wider range of MIL issues, than those used for ML policy building purposes, for instance, by providing

⁵¹ *Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratība*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/prezentacijas-un-petijumi>>.

⁵² *Aicinām uz Latvijas medijpratības platformas atklāšanu un ekspertu diskusiju 2023. gada 29. Martā*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/jaunums/aicinam-uz-latvijas-medijpratibas-platformas-atklasanu-un-ekspertu-diskusiju-2023-gada-29-marta>>.

⁵³ See: RUBENE, Z., KRŪMIŅA, A., VANAGA, I.: *levads mediju pedagoģijā*. Rīga : RaKa, 2008.

⁵⁴ *Kultūras ministrija uzsāk informatīvu kampaņu senioru medijpratības veicināšanai*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/kulturas-ministrija-uzsak-informativu-kampanu-senioru-medijpratibas-veicinasanai?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

⁵⁵ *Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/286455>>.

⁵⁶ See: KRŪMIŅA, L., PARŠOVA, L.: Actors of Information Literacy Education in Latvia. In *LIBRI*, 2011, Vol. 61, No. 1, p. 76-83.

⁵⁷ See: RUBENE, Z., DANIELA, L., KALNIŅA, D. et al.: Young Children and Digital Technology: Case of Latvia. In GÓMEZ-CHOVA, L., LÓPEZ-MARTÍNEZ, A., CANDEL-TORRES, I. (eds.): *11th Annual International Conference of Education*. Seville : IATED Academy, 2018, p. 760-768.

analysis of the relationship between media and media messages and the individual's mental and emotional cognitive processes, which have a direct impact on the individual's thinking, behaviour, attitude formation, values understanding.⁵⁸ Parallel to policy priorities, ML studies in Latvia also offer a broader perspective on media and society relations, emphasising power factors and interdependence relations, as well as on significant aspects of ML pedagogy⁵⁹ and have been studied during the last two decades.

In fact, ML research analysis identifies that the scientific articles as well as the strategic and visionary documents for national development and education policy (2000 – 2010) display a wide-ranging terminological and conceptual disagreement about ML. This political and conceptual discrepancy has led to the fact that only in 2020 was media literacy clearly defined as a mandatory part of digital literacy in Latvia's basic and secondary education standards. The one-sided and fragmentary nature of ML policy and its implementation, and the efforts of its various actors have not led to the development of media literacy policy in Latvia.

4.4 Case Study: Romania

Romania introduced an officially sanctioned definition of media literacy and what competencies it entails only in June 2023. The Law on Pre-University Education defines media education as *“the capacity to critically analyse the information provided by the mass media and social media and establish its accuracy and credibility. Media education includes a critical approach to the quality and the accuracy of the content, focusing on the capacity to evaluate information, manage advertising on various platforms and aptly using the search machines.”*⁶⁰ There is no state-sanctioned policy in this respect yet.

There is little reliable, longitudinal information available in Romania regarding the media competencies of the citizens and all comes from international sources such as Media Literacy Index or EU Kids Online. They depict a rather grim picture: Romania ranks 31 among the 41 countries included in the MLI, while PISA tests reveal that 41% of the students are almost functionally illiterate (OECD, 2018), meaning they have difficulties in grasping the meaning of what they read.

Despite these worrying figures, the authorities have not engaged in developing comprehensive media literacy plans. Their actions are scattered and not strategic, sometimes just the result of European obligations or quick fixes to conjunctural situations. For example, when Romania transposed the Amended Audio-Visual Media Directive in the national legislation, it allotted the media literacy prerogatives provided by the Directive to the National Council for the Audiovisual, with no preparations and no additional budget allocated for these.

The topic of media competencies in Romania has been mainly discussed in the context of disinformation and national resilience. Thus, fighting disinformation and consolidating the people's needed media competencies were included in the National Defence Strategy. Therefore, the defence and intelligence community gained attributions in this domain, including monitoring the media to spot hostile and damaging content. All the same, the law-enforcing institutions gained attributions in educating the critical thinking of the Romanians. This is particularly sensitive as, over recent years, there were attempts at creating what can be perceived as official versions of the truth and at sanctioning whoever is erring from them. This was visible especially in the

⁵⁸ See: BIEZĂ, K.: Digital Literacy: Concept and Definition. In *International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 1-15.

⁵⁹ See: MIRŢE, E., ÇAKULA, S., TZIVIAN, L.: Measuring Teachers-As-Learners' Digital Skills and Readiness to Study Online for Successful e-Learning Experience. In *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 5-16.

⁶⁰ LEGEA nr. 198 din 4 iulie 2023. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/271896>>.

context of the Covid-19 pandemic and, later on, of the war in Ukraine, when the authorities urged people to get information only from “official sources” and when alternative reports (sometimes as innocuous as social media posts of regular people) prompted threats with criminal prosecution. In March 2022, the Government invited NGOs to cooperate in screening social media, identifying disinformation and propaganda and providing this info to the state bodies. Among the search terms included in the concept of the platform as a marker of disinformation was any combination of the term “government” with “corruption” or “theft”.⁶¹ In June 2023, the Foreign Affairs Ministry opened a bid to purchase an AI-based system able to monitor social media and online media, as well as influencers and detect disinformation and propaganda.⁶² These examples demonstrate the persistence of the authorities in promoting themselves as the only legitimate guardians of truth, despite their claims of cooperation with the civil society.

In Romania, media competencies are often overlapping and even confused with the digital skills, which restricts the education field and links it exclusively to technology. Even so, Romania does not excel in educating these skills. A study in 2022 showed that the average Romanian student is “minimally functional”, able to independently perform simple tasks. Creativity and civic participation scored low. Only 25% of the students ranked as “highly functional”.⁶³ The pandemic and the swift introduction of remote schooling brought to light the lack of digital skills of teachers. Therefore, in July 2022, the Education Ministry issued an order describing the digital competencies required for education professionals.⁶⁴ Introducing media literacy as a topic of formal education is a work in progress. The 2023 education law does not include any other reference to media education beyond the definition. There are efforts to this avail, but they are led mainly by the CSOs. Some, such as the Centre for Independent Journalism, entered a partnership with the Education Ministry to educate teachers. There is an increasing number of activities of an informal nature mainly addressing ML as part of democratic competencies. Valuable as they are, the CSOs’ efforts are punctual, non-coordinated and opportunistic, heavily depending on international donors.

The target audience of the media literacy projects is formed overwhelmingly by children and youths. Adults are targeted only if their profession allows them to turn into disseminators themselves, such as teachers and librarians. Although identified as one of the groups most vulnerable to disinformation, the elderly are not expressly targeted by any training or awareness raising initiatives.

Academic research on the matter of media competencies is scattered and conducted on small groups, but the topic is more and more frequently addressed.

4.5 Case study: Slovakia

In Slovakia, media audience research on media literacy is conducted with a focus on relatively narrow target groups. Most of them are oriented towards students and young people. The most up-to-date data is provided by the EduMediaTest survey conducted in 2021 by

⁶¹ POPESCU, S.: *Platformă anti fake news pentru stat. Cine acuză liderii politici de corupție, suspect de propagandă rusă. Reacția guvernului.* [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/statul-face-o-platforma-anti-fake-news-cine-acuza-presedintele-si-premierul-de-incompetenta-e-suspect-de-propaganda-rusa.html>>.

⁶² VASILACHE, A.: *MAE își face Big Brother bazat pe IA: De ce va monitoriza site-uri de știri, blog-uri și conturi social media de jurnaliști, celebriți și demnitari.* [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-it-26335020-mae-isi-face-big-brother-bazat-monitoriza-site-uri-stiri-blog-uri-conturi-social-media-jurnalisti-celebritati-demnitari.htm>>.

⁶³ *The Development of the First Digital Literacy Assessment Test in Romania.* [online]. [2022-08-01]. Available at: <<https://uipathfoundation.com/automation-and-digitalisation>>.

⁶⁴ *ORDIN nr. 4150 din 29 iunie 2022 pentru aprobarea cadrului de competențe digitale al profesionistului din educație.* [online]. [2022-08-01]. Available at: <<https://juridicisj.eu/ORDIN%20nr%204150%202022.pdf>>.

the Slovak media regulator, the Media Services Council. 1,317 Slovak high school students participated, and the study showed that young people in Slovakia are the most competent in the technological and digital aspects of media literacy.⁶⁵ On the other hand, they showed the greatest reserves in critical analysis of media content as well as in detecting fake news. However, a risk factor for examining the level of media audiences in Slovakia is the absence of representative research aimed at better understanding the level of media literacy of the adult population. The last representative survey focused on this target group was conducted by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava in 2014. The results of the research focused on the level of media literacy of the adult population in the Slovak Republic showed that the most pronounced division in this area is related to age differences. Data from the research showed that with increasing age we can observe a decreasing level of media competence and critical thinking of the respondents.⁶⁶ The need to increase media literacy of different target groups appears in several strategic materials and related action plans. These materials are part of the latest report on measures to promote and develop media literacy skills prepared by the Media Services Council for the European Commission in 2023.⁶⁷ However, this report only refers to the above-mentioned research from 2021 and 2015. Therefore, an important recommendation around raising the level of knowledge of media literacy is the implementation of longitudinal research focusing on age and social groups of the population in Slovakia.

5 Discussion

In most countries, national policymakers act almost exclusively or at least in part following EU-level documents and requirements, and those countries who are lagging in national level policies in introducing legal frameworks for ML development at the end of the second decade of the 21st century (like Romania and Bulgaria) rank the lowest in MIL.⁶⁸ Media literacy should be viewed as a vibrant and evolving concept, one that arises from the communicative exchanges among various participants in a swiftly changing landscape. Throughout Europe and in other regions, numerous innovative endeavors are underway to enhance the media literacy of specific populations. These projects are often met with great enthusiasm and can provide enriching experiences for those involved. Yet, such initiatives seldom possess the capacity to be expanded to a broader, national or international scale. Moreover, despite the many positive outcomes attributed to these projects, independent evaluations of their effectiveness are infrequent. Concurrently, the realm of media literacy exhibits a substantial disparity between its objectives and actual execution, as the resources allocated are typically inadequate to achieve the desired goals.⁶⁹ Mostly considered were available statistical data on media usage, primarily prepared for media company commercial interests and following the logic of existing media, not thinking of other logic to be implemented in people's interests. For example, debates around the necessity

⁶⁵ *EduMediaTest: Výsledky pilotného testovania na Slovensku*. [online]. [2023-09-14]. Available at: <<https://medialnavychova.sk/edumediatest-vysledky-pilotneho-testovania-na-slovensku/>>.

⁶⁶ See: PETRANOVÁ, D., VRABEC, N.: *Mediálna gramotnosť dospeljej populácie v SR*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda, 2015.

⁶⁷ *Report of the Council for Media Services to the European Commission on Measures to Promote and Develop Media Literacy Skills Pursuant to Article 33a (3) AVMSD*. [online]. [2023-10-10]. Available at: <https://rpms.sk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Media_Literacy_Report_Slovak_CMS.pdf>.

⁶⁸ LESSENSKI, M.: *"Bye, Bye, Birdie": Meeting the Challenges of Disinformation – The Media Literacy Index 2023*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<http://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>>.

⁶⁹ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 31-35. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.

of teaching coding in formal education and allowing open code software solutions at school was not making it into policy agenda setting discussions. On the contrary, in order to ensure a systemic approach, creative and free uses of media have rather diminished its importance in the discourse on ML policy visions. It is remarkable that the latter is mostly based on the protective attitude of policy makers stressing safety⁷⁰ over the creativity or freedom that is typical for developments of internet governance in general and stands in accord with mediatized politics where politicians can propose the agenda of ML pointing to real risks of safety.

The problem of conceptualising ML or MIL in national policies is connected to the difficulty of definition of ML, but since the discussion during the first decade of the century enjoyed a lot of enforcement of theoretical work also in national languages done by academics and public intellectuals, it can be concluded that policy makers did not use this source to stay in line with the complexity of ML when developing policy vision. However, these discussions were also marked by moral panic.⁷¹ That again is a context where political agenda finds its focus in the public discourse on safety.

Thus, media literacy sometimes serves surreptitious agendas. For example, in Romania, the state agents used the avenue of media-related competencies to increase control over the society and media, in a rather patriarchal, controlling mode. This tendency is even more clear in the so-called post-truth years after 2016 and in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine neighbouring 3 of 5 countries. Disinformation, countering propaganda, cybersecurity, and online safety are obviously essential and legitimate issues. However, when they become the focus of media education, the authorities may promote control and coercion instead of deliberative communication. In order to meet the requirements of a society based on deliberation and democracy, societies need to include civic engagement as part of media competencies (as intended in the UNESCO approach to ML).

The involvement of state institutions in the creation of ML policy and activities set new side effects in societies that are not free from the attitude created by authoritarian regimes towards state initiatives and the role of the media as channels of political propaganda in their collective memory and current experience. The data describing the audience of Bulgaria, Latvia, and Romania on media use and trust in the media show that mistrust among certain audience groups is related to mistrust of the state. Thus, the efforts of state institutions to promote public understanding of the importance of ML for the education of modern countries' citizens meet with an attitude similar to resistance. For example, in a survey,⁷² more than half of the Latvian population admitted that they are not interested in media literacy, demonstrating the so-called buffer culture⁷³ in relations with the state. This is another risk that threatens the positive efforts of individual countries to develop ML policies and shows that unified policies may fail to be successful. Nevertheless, in a globalised and networked environment, supranational efforts regarding media literacy are undoubtedly crucial. However, overcoming this risk depends on regular research of the media audience and the development of studies not limited to testing specific ML skills, because the ML of society is also determined by data on the level of civic

⁷⁰ See also: ERSTAD, O., AMDAM, S.: From Protection to Public Participation. In *Javnost - The Public*, 2013, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 83-98.

⁷¹ See: ROHLOFF, A., WRIGHT, S.: Moral Panic and Social Theory: Beyond the Heuristic. In *Current Sociology*, 2010, Vol. 58, No. 3, p. 403-419; See also: STANLEY, C.: *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. 3rd Edition. London, New York : Routledge, 2002; CHAS, C.: Media, Government and Moral Panic: The Politics of Paedophilia in Britain 2000-1. In *Journalism Studies*, 2002, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 521-535; CHAS, C.: *Moral Panics and the Media*. Buckingham : Open University Press, 2003; CHAS, C.: *Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media*. Maidenhead : Open University Press, 2006; CHAS, C.: Moral Panic Analysis: Past, Present and Future. In *Sociology Compass*, 2008, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 1127-1144.

⁷² See: ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy Policy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2\(26\).4](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2(26).4)>.

⁷³ SEDLENIEKS, K.: *Asinis ir bufersķidums*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://satori.lv/article/asinis-ir-buferskidums>>.

engagement, the perception of media accountability and the assessment of the quality of democracy.

Another problem connected to our interpretation of mediatized contexts is the fact that the research is not sufficient to allow policy makers to understand where additional support and innovation is needed. In most of the countries testing and assessing of ML is not systematic and involves not all groups of competencies. For example, if digital competencies, critical thinking and reading as well as recognition of fake news is included in tests, ability to act and talk argumentatively and express rationally as well as communicative ability including ethics of communication and knowledge about media as a social sub-system is rarely tested. Another problematic aspect is the fact that not all the groups are tested. Mostly, as stated by Slovakian and Romanian examples, systematic research only covers children and youth that is accessible through the formal education framework. Much less is known about older generations (who significantly differ in terms of media usage patterns), specific ethnic, gender, sub-cultural groups etc. Since mediatization reaches out to every segment of social life, media related competencies must be studied on site – in the environment where they are used by different individuals using tactically different media and following both general trends promoted by media logics and their own goals. This perspective – a perspective of a person thriving and surviving in his/her media environment of life, fighting with the “ML burden posed on them” is not used either by researchers, or – following them – in policy. Relocating both back to the mediatized social lifeworld is an important task for the future.

Moreover, there is no academic research about the impact of policies, institutional set-up, effectiveness of methods, competencies and sufficiency (in numbers) of teachers of MIL. Who is teaching MIL? Are there enough teachers/trainers/facilitators with a solid background in media education and human rights? What kind of competencies are/ are not included into the teaching content? These are questions that are still waiting for a comprehensive and coherent answer, based on reliable research.

Media and digital literacy are perceived as an effective remedy against the spread of fake news and misinformation, as a tool for creating and training critical and analytical thinking. Media skills help people to judge, analyse, and verify information, and digital literacy allows them to navigate the web and fully participate in digital life. These competencies have become a criterion for defining a person as “literate”. Due to the development of new technologies and easier access to information, the concept of “media literacy” is becoming increasingly complicated and even more requirements have become necessary. This highlights the need to continuously update training and enrich it with the acquisition of new skills, which are also necessary for the full integration of people from all demographics and social strata, given the digitization of all spheres of public life.

6 Conclusion

The analysis of Mediadelcom’s bibliographic data shows that the research on media literacy in the studied EU countries doesn’t provide sufficient data on all aspects and media – related knowledge groups and all groups of society, and there is no systematic survey to measure the dynamics of audience media competencies.

The comparative analysis of case study results shows that both ML policy measures and the research on media related competencies in the countries analysed can be described as non-systematic, one-sided, fragmented, and insufficient almost in all countries. There are sporadic initiatives by institutions and individuals, often on an NGO basis and some innovations in the formal education content. However, there needs to be a connecting policy based on systematic and systemic monitoring of competencies and involved actors in teaching, testing, researching and promoting ML, including all areas and aspects of this complex task. Even in Austria, where

media education has a longer tradition and is accompanied by research and policy activities, there are oversimplified models in the policy vision and an over-focus on digital skills and competences, which creates the risk that other areas of ML will be underdeveloped. A national media literacy policy is predominantly based on something other than research data that would allow defining the main problems of the media audience in the context of existing media literacy gaps and needs – be it EU requirements, media usage research data collected for commercial goals, media coverage of media illiteracy based social problems or political reaction emerging from ideological reading of all mentioned. Consequently, media literacy policy is primarily based on a political agenda driven by media logic and associated leading political ideas and economic interests. Problem-specific research data hardly plays a role. The conclusion is, therefore, that media literacy policy is aimed at a media audience whose composition and needs for politics still need to be better understood. This is shown by the contradictions between media literacy policy ideas and their implementation. Even in cases where countries focus on children and young people as a target group and policy makers have data, media literacy content is introduced into school programs very slowly and inconsistently. In sum, media literacy policies in researched countries are very general, as their implementation depends more on political will and political capital than on stakeholders' involvement or a clear implementation plan. Thus, the current politics cannot respond in a targeted and complex manner to deficits and gaps in society's media literacy and, thus, adequately address contemporary media use dynamics.

Most policies and actions have been reactive, declarative and geared toward restrictions and control, containing the currently known effects of disinformation. A more forward-thinking approach may be needed to guarantee that media education is able to cope with fast-paced innovation in the media fields and remains relevant for the future.

Acknowledgement: This study is based on results of the MEDIAdelcom-Project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 101004811.

Literature and Sources:

Aicinām uz Latvijas medijpratības platformas atklāšanu un ekspertu diskusiju 2023. gada 29. Martā. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.neplp.lv/lv/jaunums/aicinam-uz-latvijas-medijpratibas-platformas-atklasanu-un-ekspertu-diskusiju-2023-gada-29-marta>>.

ANDERSON, J. E.: *Public Policymaking*. New York : Praeger, 1975.

BENGTSSON, S. et al.: Media and Basic Desires: An Approach to Measuring the Mediatization of Daily Human Life. In *Communications*, 2021, Vol. 46, No. 2, p. 275-296. ISSN 1613-4087. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2019-0122>>.

BIEZĀ, K.: Digital Literacy: Concept and Definition. In *International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 1-15. ISSN 2574-8254. DOI: <<http://doi.org/10.4018/IJSEUS.2020040101>>.

BIRKLAND, T. A.: *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. London, New York : Routledge, 2019.

BRIKŠE, I., FREIBERGS, V., SPURAVA, G.: Media and Information Literacy Policies in Latvia *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Latvia*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <http://imec.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LATVIA_2014.pdf>.

CHAS, C.: Media, Government and Moral Panic: The Politics of Paedophilia in Britain 2000-1. In *Journalism Studies*, 2002, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 521-535. ISSN 1461-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670022000019182>>.

CHAS, C.: *Moral Panics and the Media*. Buckingham : Open University Press, 2003.

CHAS, C.: *Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media*. Maidenhead : Open University Press, 2006.

CHAS, C.: Moral Panic Analysis: Past, Present and Future. In *Sociology Compass*, 2008, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 1127-1144. ISSN 1751-9020. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00122.x>>. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling Online Disinformation: A European Approach* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0236>>.

Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/creative-europe-2021-2027/>>.

CUBBAGE, J.: Policy Issues in European Media Literacy. In HOBBS, R., MIHAILIDIS, P. (eds.): *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2019, p. 1-7. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118978238.ieml0184>>.

Der Medienkompetenz-Bericht 2022. [online]. [2023-09-11]. Available at: <<https://www.rtr.at/medien/aktuelles/publikationen/Publikationen/Medienkompetenz-Bericht.de.html>>.

Digital News Project. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-project>>.

Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 Amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the Coordination of Certain Provisions Laid Down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in Member States Concerning the Provision of Audiovisual Media Services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in View of Changing Market Realities. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>>.

EBERWEIN, T., KRAKOVSKY, C., OGGOLDER, C.: *Austria: Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities*. [online]. [2023-07-05]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Deliverable-2.1-the-First-case-study-Final-F-nr.pdf>>.

E-Democracy in the EU: Potential and Challenges. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017IP0095&rid=2>>.

EduMediaTest: Výsledky pilotného testovania na Slovensku. [online]. [2023-09-14]. Available at: <<https://medialnavychova.sk/edumediatest-vysledky-pilotneho-testovania-na-slovensku/>>.

ERSTAD, O., AMDAM, S.: From Protection to Public Participation. In *Javnost - The Public*, 2013, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 83-98. ISSN 1318-3222. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2013.11009115>>.

ESSER, F., STRÖMBÄCK, J.: *Mediatization of Politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

European Parliament Resolution of 14 September 2017 on a New Skills Agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI)). [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1552247656548&uri=CELEX:52017IP0360>>.

FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F.: Mapping Media and Information Literacy Policies: New Perspectives for the Governance of MIL. In FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F. (eds.): *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe*. London : Routledge, 2017, p. 19-88. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628851>>.

FREIBERGS, V.: Mapping Media Literacy in Latvia: National Summary. In CABERERA BLÁZQUEZ, F. J., VALAIS, S. (eds.): *Audiovisual Observatory. Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28*. Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 274-284. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/media-literacy-mapping-report-en-final-pdf/1680783500>>.

HEPP, A., KROTZ, F. (eds.): *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

HEPP, A.: *Deep Mediatization*. London, New York : Routledge, 2019.

HILL, J.: *Policy Responses to False and Misleading Digital Content: A Snapshot of Children's Media Literacy*. Paris : OECD Publishing, 2022.

- HOGWOOD, B. W., GUNN, L.: *Policy Analysis for the Real World*. London : Oxford University Press, 1984.
- JANN, W., WEGRICH, K.: Theories of the Policy Cycle. In FISCHER, F., MILLER, J. G., SIDNEY, S. M. (eds.): *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York : Routledge, 2017. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315093192>>.
- JANSSON, A. et al.: Mediatization from Within: A Plea for Emic Approaches to Media-Related Social Change. In *Communication Theory*, 2021, Vol. 31, No. 4, p. 956-977. ISSN 1050-3293. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtaa021>>.
- JENKINS, W. I.: *Policy Analysis*. London : Martin Robertson, 1978.
- KISSAS, A.: Three Theses on the Mediatization of Politics: Evolutionist, Intended, or Imagined Transformation? In *The Communication Review*, 2019, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 222-242. ISSN 1071-4421. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2019.1647726>>.
- KROTZ, F.: Explaining the Mediatisation Approach. In *Javnost – The Public*, 2017, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 103-118. ISSN 1318-3222. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2017.1298556>>.
- KROTZ, F.: *Mediatization as a Mover in Modernity: Social and Cultural Change in the Context of Media Change*. Berlin : De Gruyter Mouton, 2014.
- KRŪMIŅA, L., PARŠOVA, L.: Actors of Information Literacy Education in Latvia. In *LIBRI*, 2011, Vol. 61, No. 1, p. 76-83. ISSN 0024-2667. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/libr.2011.007>>.
- Kultūras ministrija uzsāk informatīvu kampaņu senioru medijpratības veicināšanai*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://www.km.gov.lv/jaunums/kulturas-ministrija-uzsak-informativu-kampanu-senioru-medijpratibas-veicinasanai?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.
- Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratība*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/prezentacijas-un-petijumi>>.
- LEGEA nr. 198 din 4 iulie 2023*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/271896>>.
- LESSENSKI, M.: *How It Started, How It Is Going: Media Literacy Index 2022*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HowItStarted_MediaLiteracyIndex2022_ENG_.pdf>.
- LESSENSKI, M.: “Bye, Bye, Birdie”: Meeting the Challenges of Disinformation – The Media Literacy Index 2023. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<http://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>>.
- LESSENSKI, M.: *Can This Be True? Predictors of Media Literacy and Resilience to the Post-Truth Phenomenon in Europe. The Media Literacy Index 2017*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <http://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MediinaGramotnost_11Okt2017_BG.pdf>.
- LIVINGSTONE, S.: Media Literacy for All? On the Intellectual and Political Challenges of Implementing Media Literacy Policy. In LIVINGSTONE, S. (ed.): *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Brussels : COST, 2011, p. 31-35. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/07/53626.pdf>>.
- LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Media Literacy Research and Policy in Europe: A Review of Recent, Current and Planned Activities*. Brussels : COST, 2013.
- LÖBLICH, M.: The History of Media Policy Based on Mediatization: A Theoretical Perspective. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 12, p. 4468-4487. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/7835/2496>>.
- Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/286455>>.
- Media and Information Literacy*. [online]. [2023-09-19]. Available at: <<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>>.
- MIRĶE, E., ČAKULA, S., TZIVIAN, L.: Measuring Teachers-as-Learners’ Digital Skills and Readiness to Study Online for Successful e-Learning Experience. In *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 5-16. ISSN 1691-5534. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2019-0013>>.

NIC, N., FLETCHER, R., KALOGEROPOULOS, A. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/digital-news-report-2018.pdf>>.

ORDIN nr. 4150 din 29 iunie 2022 pentru aprobarea cadrului de competențe digitale al profesionistului din educație. [online]. [2022-08-01]. Available at: <<https://juridicisj.eu/ORDIN%20nr%204150%202022.pdf>>.

PAUS-HASEBRINK, I., HIPFL, B.: Medienpädagogik in Österreich: Perspektiven, Potenziale und Probleme. In *MedienPädagogik*, 2005, Vol. 11, p. 1-31. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.21240/mpaed/11/2006.08.01.X>>.

PETRANOVÁ, D., VRABEC, N.: *Mediálna gramotnosť dospelej populácie v SR*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda, 2015.

PERUŠKO, Z.: Public Sphere in Hybrid Media Systems in Central and Eastern Europe. In *Javnost – The Public*, 2021, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 36-52. ISSN 1318-3222. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2021.1861405>>.

POPESCU, S.: *Platformă anti fake news pentru stat. Cine acuză liderii politici de corupție, suspect de propagandă rusă. Reacția guvernului*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/statul-face-o-platforma-anti-fake-news-cine-acuza-presedintele-si-premierul-de-incompetenta-e-suspect-de-propaganda-rusa.html>>.

Pre-school and School Education Act. [online]. [2023-09-11]. Available at: <https://lil.mon.bg/uploaded_files/ZAKON_za_preducilisnoto_i_ucilisnoto_obrazovanie_EN.pdf>.

RASI, P., VUOJÄRVI, H., RUOKAMO, H.: Media Literacy Education for All Ages. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2019, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 1-19. ISSN 2167-8715. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2019-11-2-1>>.

Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity and on the Right of Reply in Relation to the Competitiveness of the European Audiovisual and On-line Information Services Industry. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006H0952>>.

Regulation (Eu) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 Establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020) and Repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1552247656548&uri=CELEX:52017IP0095>>.

Report of the Council for Media Services to the European Commission on Measures to Promote and Develop Media Literacy Skills Pursuant to Article 33a (3) AVMSD. [online]. [2023-10-10]. Available at: <https://rpsms.sk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Media_Literacy_Report_Slovak_CMS.pdf>.

NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf>.

RODWELL, G.: *Politics and the Mediatization of School Educational Policy: The Dog-Whistle Dynamic*. New York : Routledge, 2020.

ROHLOFF, A., WRIGHT, S.: Moral Panic and Social Theory: Beyond the Heuristic. In *Current Sociology*, 2010, Vol. 58, No. 3, p. 403-419. ISSN 0011-3921. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392110364039>>.

ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy Policy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229. ISSN 1899-5101. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2\(26\).4](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2(26).4)>.

RUBENE, Z., KRŪMIŅA, A., VANAGA, I.: *Ievads mediju pedagoģijā*. Rīga : RaKa, 2008.

RUBENE, Z., DANIELA, L., KALNIŅA, D. et al.: *Young Children and Digital Technology: Case of Latvia*. In GÓMEZ-CHOVA, L., LÓPEZ-MARTÍNEZ, A., CANDEL-TORRES, I. (eds.): *11th Annual International Conference of Education*. Seville : IATED Academy, 2018, p. 760-768. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2018.1159>>.

SEDLNIEKS, K.: *Asinis ir buferšķīdums*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://satori.lv/article/asinis-ir-buferskidums>>.

STANLEY, C.: *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. 3rd Edition. London : Routledge, 2002.

Statistics Austria. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://www.statistik.at/en/>>.

STRÖMBÄCK, J.: Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. In *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 228-246. ISSN 1940-1612. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161208319097>>.

The Development of the First Digital Literacy Assessment Test in Romania. [online]. [2022-08-01]. Available at: <<https://uipathfoundation.com/automation-and-digitalisation>>.

The Radio and Television Act. [online]. [2023-08-30]. Available at: <<https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134447616>>.

TRÜLTZSCH-WIJNEN, C., BRANDHOFER, G.: *Bildung und Digitalisierung: Auf der Suche nach Kompetenzen und Performanzen*. Baden-Baden : Nomos, 2020.

VASILACHE, A.: *MAE își face Big Brother bazat pe IA: De ce va monitoriza site-uri de știri, blog-uri și conturi social media de jurnaliști, celebrități și demnitari*. [online]. [2023-09-12]. Available at: <<https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-it-26335020-mae-isi-face-big-brother-bazat-monitoriza-site-uri-stiri-blog-uri-conturi-social-media-jurnalisti-celebritati-demnitari.htm>>.

Authors



Prof. Anda Rožukalne

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
16 Dzirciema str.,
Rīga, LV 1007
LATVIA
anda.rozukalne@rsu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5474-4222>

Anda Rožukalne is a member of Academia Europea and a professor at the Faculty of Communication of Rīga Stradiņš University in Latvia. Her research interests include journalism values, media systems, service media, media regulation and self-regulation, and media audience studies. Rožukalne represents Latvia in the *EC Media Pluralism Monitor* and in the global *Worlds of Journalism Study*.

Assoc. Prof. Ilva Skulte

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
16 Dzirciema str.,
Rīga, LV 1007
LATVIA
ilva.skulte@rsu.lv

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4589-6600>



Ilva Skulte is an associate professor at the Faculty of Communication, Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia. Her research interests include cultural journalism, analysis of media and political discourse, analysis of (literary) text and media as well as media literacy and children.



Ms. Ioana Avădani, MA

Center for Independent Journalism
Bdul. Regina Elisabeta, no 32
050017, Bucharest
ROMANIA
ioana@cji.ro
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0298-1913>

Ioana Avădani is the President of the *Board of the Centre for Independent Journalism* in Bucharest, Romania. She has 30 years of media experience. Her expertise is in media development, media training and media and information literacy. She teaches Introduction to Media Education at the University of Bucharest (post graduate level). She has an MA in Anthropology, National School for Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest and one in Applied Ethics, University of Bucharest.

Ms. Cristina Lupu, MA

Center for Independent Journalism
Bdul. Regina Elisabeta, no 32
050017, Bucharest
ROMANIA
cristina@cji.ro



Cristina Lupu is the Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Journalism in Romania, leading the first national media literacy programme in the country. She is a media literacy and communications trainer and has an MA in Strategic Marketing, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest.



Dr. Christian Oggolder

Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC)
of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and the University of
Klagenfurt (AAU)
Bäckerstraße 13, 1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA
christian.oggolder@oeaw.ac.at
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4157-4038>

Christian Oggolder is Senior Scientist at the Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Klagenfurt (CMC), Vienna, Austria. His research focuses on media development and media change, media history, memory studies and media literacy.



Alnis Stakle, Dr. paed.

Rīga Stradiņš University
Faculty of Communication
16 Dzirciema str.,
Rīga, LV 1007
LATVIA
alnis.stakle@rsu.lv
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0962-0076>

Alnis Stakle works as Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the Rīga Stradiņš University and as Director of BA programs “Multimedia Communication” and “Photography”. He teaches photography, visual content analysis and visual literacy. He is author of a number of academic and peer-reviewed articles. His current research interests include visual culture, photojournalism, media literacy and visual arts.

Prof. PhDr. Slavomír Gálik, PhD.

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Mass Media Communication
Nám. J. Herdu 2,
917 01 Trnava
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
slavomir.galik@ucm.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1547-8483>



Slavomír Gálik has worked at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava, Slovakia since 2004 and on a continual basis since 2007. He focuses on the philosophy of media, in particular on the influence of media on man and questions related to information and knowledge society. He is currently one of the principal investigators of the international projects *Worlds of Journalism Study* and leads the Slovak Team of *Horizon 2020: Mediadecom* project. He is the author of several monographs and scholarly studies involving the topics of philosophy of media and communication.



Prof. Mgr. Norbert Vrabec, PhD.

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Mass Media Communication
Nám. J. Herdu 2,
917 01 Trnava
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
norbert.vrabec@ucm.sk
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2612-4856>

Norbert Vrabec is a Professor at the Department of Media Education in the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. His research activities focus on media literacy, media competencies, critical thinking, digital media, social media communication and data journalism. He participates in several international projects in the field of media studies. He is the co-author of *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe: Cross-Country Comparisons* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2017) and a member of the *International Communication Association (ICA)*, the *International Association for Media Education (IAME)* and other renowned organisations in the field of media studies.



Mgr. Lora Metanova, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.

Sofia 1000

BULGARIA

loranikolova76@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5873-1346>

Lora Metanova, PhD. is a long-time journalist. She defended her doctoral dissertation in Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Politics and Media) in 2020 at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bulgaria – 15, Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd, 1504 Sofia, Bulgaria. Her research interests are in the field of political communication, media literacy, and transformations in the media environment due to the development of new technologies.

Mgr. Neli Velinova, PhD.

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
49, Moskovska str.

Sofia 1000

BULGARIA

nelikdkd@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4113-4879>



Neli Velinova, PhD. defended her doctoral dissertation in 2018 at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of SU St. Kliment Ohridski – 15, Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd, 1504 Sofia, Bulgaria. During the period 2019–2021 she was a postdoctoral fellow. In 2021–2023, as a young scientist at the Faculty of Journalism, she was a project manager of the research project *Audience Agency in Datafied Societies (DATASOC)*. She works on various international projects related to social protests in Bulgaria, political changes, political communication, populist discourse, and Bulgarian media ecosystem, etc.



Bianka Francistyová, Ján Višňovský

Journalism in Slovakia Five Years After the Murder of Ján Kuciak

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-07>

ABSTRACT

February 2023 marked five years since the tragic assassination of Ján Kuciak, an investigative journalist from Aktuality.sk, and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová. The results of the investigation of the murders revealed the primary motive behind the murder was Kuciak's dedicated pursuit of investigative journalism. This revelation sparked the consequential societal upheaval and tensions which triggered significant shifts within high-ranking politicians, later leading to governmental crisis. Furthermore, the murder garnered attention and prompted critical discussions within European institutions. As a result, Slovakia, which used to be one of the best countries when it came to Freedom of the Press, dropped down in rankings. This study delves into the far-reaching consequences of this event, focusing on the profound political, legislative, and societal transformations that have unfolded in the wake of Kuciak's murder. These changes have left an indelible mark on journalists, reshaped the landscape of journalism as a profession, and brought changes to Slovak media legislative.

KEY WORDS

Freedom of Speech of the Journalists. Ján Kuciak. Journalists. Murder. Slovak Media Law. Slovakia.

1 Introduction

As of February 2023, five years have passed since the murder of Ján Kuciak, an investigative journalist for the *Aktuality.sk* portal, and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová. It has also been five years since the journalistic profession underwent one of its most difficult tests, which put freedom of speech and Slovak democratic society to the test. According to the results of the investigation, the reason for the murder of Ján Kuciak was his investigative journalistic work.¹ Ján Kuciak reported on the group centred around businessman Marian Kočner and the links between the Italian mafia and Slovak political leaders. The murder, which took place on 21st February 2018, has raised many questions. From the reasons for the murder and the people who ordered it, to the debate about the violations of the democratic principles of the state and the future of the journalistic profession itself. It was the first murder of a journalist in the era of the independent Slovak Republic.² According to the results of the investigation, Tomáš Szabó was an accomplice, Miroslav Marček admitted to shooting, Zoltán Andruskó was a middleman, and Alena Zsuzsová ordered the murder.³ However, prosecutors believe that Alena Zsuzsová played the role of middlewoman for the Slovak businessman Marian Kočner,⁴ although, Marian Kočner has not yet been legally convicted of ordering the murder.

A statement of the editors-in-chief on the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée was issued by twelve representatives of the Slovak media and condemned the murder of the journalist. They urged the state to do everything possible to find the killer so that journalists could carry out their work safely.⁵ Marína Urbániková and Lenka Haniková stated that journalism has never been a safe profession, because all over the world journalists are intimidated, attacked, kidnapped or murdered.⁶ Evidence of the dangerous nature of the profession is also provided by murders both within and outside the European Union. For example, since 2010 alone, journalists have been murdered in Greece, Latvia, Azerbaijan, France, Poland, Serbia, Denmark, Malta, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Georgia and possibly in Belarus. As of today, 2,074 journalists have been murdered around the world since 1997, 211 of whom have been murdered in Europe, therefore in countries that often describe themselves as democratic.⁷ The murders have been reported in the media, but there are also numerous cases of mysterious disappearances of journalists that have not yet been solved. One example concerns another Slovak investigative journalist, Pavol Rýpal, who disappeared without a trace in 2008. His work covered VAT and excise fraud, but also the mysterious disappearances of hundreds of people.⁸ Although realistically it is still impossible to know whether the journalist decided to leave or whether someone murdered

¹ VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., BIELIK, P.: Actual Trends in Investigative Journalism Methods and Techniques. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2022, Vol. 65, No. 1-2, p. 29-40.

² NICHOLSON, T.: *Slovakian Journalism's Darkest Day*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.politico.eu/article/jan-kuciak-gorilla-slovakia-journalist-dead-darkest-day/>>.

³ CSANYI, P.: Slovakia Political Briefing: Fight for Justice of Ján Kuciak Continues. In *China-CEE Institute*, 2021, Vol. 41, No. 1, p. 2-3. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://china-cee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021p07_Slovakia.pdf>.

⁴ GRIFFEN, S.: *Background: Murder of Ján Kuciak*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Jan-Kuciak-Background.pdf>>.

⁵ *Vyhlasenie šéfredaktorov k vražde Jána Kuciaka*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/567821/vyhlasenie-sefredaktorov-k-vrazde-jana-kuciaka/>>.

⁶ URBÁNIKOVÁ, M., HANIKOVÁ, L.: Coping with the Murder: The Impact of Ján Kuciak's Assassination on Slovak Investigative Journalists. In *Journalism Practice*, 2022, Vol. 16, No. 9, p. 1927.

⁷ Authors's note: Information is up-to-date to 26th September 2023. Source: *Deaths*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <https://ipi.media/deaths/?incident_type=0&years=0&country=europe&gender=0&search=&>.

⁸ *Nezvestného novinára Paľa Rýpala stále nevyhlásili za mŕtveho: Takéto je vysvetlenie rodiny!* [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www1.pluska.sk/regiony/stredne-slovensko/novinar-palo-rypal-je-nezvestny-13-rokov-rodina-otala-jeho-vyhlasenim-mrtveho>>. See also: MASSAYOVÁ, V.: *EXKLUZÍVNE Paľo Rýpal je nezvestný už 15 rokov: Pred zmiznutím písal o Kataríne Hrozányovej*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.startitup.sk/exkluzivne-palo-rypal-je-nezvestny-uz-15-rokov-pred-zmiznutim-pisal-o-katarine-hrozanyovej/>>.

him, it is safe to say that the journalistic work he conducted was dangerous. It is also proof that what happened to Ján Kuciak and his fiancée was not unexpected. On the contrary, problems with the safety of journalists were bubbling just below the surface before that, until they eventually led to this tragedy 10 years later. The murder of the investigative journalist and his fiancée brought a wave of changes within the Slovak Republic. However, these would not have taken place without the mobilisation of the public and the protests of Slovak citizens on the streets, where, according to Scott Griffen, protesters gathered in the largest numbers since the Velvet Revolution in 1989.⁹ The aim of the study is to shed light on the changes in society, the perception of the journalistic profession and the freedom of the journalist, and the transformation of media legislation five years after the event, which continues to traumatize Slovak society, even today.

2 Political and Social Context and Changes After the Murder of a Journalist

The social unrest following the murders brought about significant political changes. The first to resign was Culture Minister Marek Maďarič, who said that the Ministry of Culture was the closest part of the government to the media and that he could not imagine sitting quietly in his chair after the tragedy.¹⁰ Subsequently, Robert Kaliňák, who held the post of Minister of the Interior, also resigned at the insistence of the public.¹¹ The then-president of the Slovak Republic, Andrej Kiska, stated that the distrust of the citizens towards the state was enormous, even after Robert Kaliňák's resignation. As a possible remedy, he saw a fundamental reconstruction of the government that would not polarize society, or early elections.¹² According to Michal Ovádek, Andrej Kiska was one of the biggest critics of the SMER-SD leader and warned that the government should be rebuilt.¹³ Robert Fico, who was Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for three terms, resigned from his post on 15th March 2018. On the same day, Peter Pellegrini was entrusted with forming a new government. Tomáš Drucker became Minister of the Interior in the newly formed government and resigned only after three weeks in government. The reason was the belief that the dismissal of the then-police president Tibor Gašpar was not correct. According to Ján Kuciak, he committed several criminal acts, for which he is currently being prosecuted. Protesters and people at the For a Decent Slovakia rally claimed that there was no

⁹ GRIFFEN, S.: Covering up a Murder. In *British Journalism Review*, 2018, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 5. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956474818816832>>. See also: *Death of Investigative Journalist Sparks Mass Protests in Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/09/death-of-investigative-journalist-sparks-mass-protests-in-slovakia>>; *Vražda Kuciaka a Kušnírovej bola úkladná a na objednávku*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/484456-live-prokurator-informuje-o-progrese-v-pripade-vrazdy-kuciaka-a-kusnirovej/>>.

¹⁰ TÓDOVÁ, M.: *Maďarič v pondelok podá demisiu: S vraždou Jána Kuciaka sa neviem vyrovnáť*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1043843/madaric-v-pondelok-poda-demisiu-s-vrazdou-jana-kuciaka-sa-neviem-vyrovnat/>>.

¹¹ *Obrazom: Tisíce demonštrantov opäť žiadali demisiu Kaliňáka*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://sita.sk/obrazom-tisice-demonstrantov-opat-ziadali-demisiu-kalinaka/>>. See also: ŠKOLKAY, A.: What Does the Murder of Journalist, and Follow-up Events, Tell Us about Freedom of the Press and Politics in a European Country? In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2019, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 28. [online]. [2023-09-26]. Available at: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.12.1\(22\).2](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.12.1(22).2)>.

¹² PALKOVÁ, S., ŠKRANKOVA, P., VESELÁ, P.: *Kiska chce novou vládu nebo předčasné volby. Fico to rezolutně odmítl*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/andrej-kiska-jan-kuciak-reakce.A180304_160258_zahranicni_PAS>.

¹³ OVÁDEK, M.: "Popular Tribunes" and Their Agendas: Topic Modelling Slovak's Presidents' Speeches 1993-2020. In *East European Politics*, 2021, Vol. 37, No. 2, p. 221.

guarantee of an independent investigation.¹⁴ Tomáš Drucker was replaced by Denisa Saková and Tibor Gašpar left the post of Police President at the end of May 2018. Milan Lučanský became the new Police President. During his tenure, he also investigated an anonymously filed criminal complaint against the organisers of the For a Decent Slovakia protests and assessed that the information provided by the leadership of the National Criminal Agency (NAKA) was not true to the facts of the case.¹⁵ Peter Hraško, the then-director of NAKA, filed a request for release from service at the end of 2018 after a conversation with Milan Lučanský about a number of irregularities following the receipt of an anonymous criminal complaint. Milan Lučanský committed suicide in December 2020.

The changes that have taken place in important political positions have also affected the social acceptance and preferences of established political parties. While until 2018 SMER-SD, Robert Fico's political party, was a clear leader, after 2018 none of the winners in the municipal elections represented that party. Darina Malová claims that many tried to end their links to SMER-SD, and those who had been its nominees for a long time had their reputations damaged by the party's scandals. She also argues that the results of the local elections were proof of the changing political status of the country.¹⁶ The results of the 2022 municipal elections also represented society's position against the SMER-SD party, as no candidate from this party obtained a leading position in the regional cities.¹⁷ The presidential election in 2019 was won by Zuzana Čaputová. Zuzana Čaputová's political campaign also illustrated society's dissatisfaction with the investigation into the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, as she sits across from a figure who strikingly resembles Marián Kočner and openly rails against him in campaign videos. The idea of fighting corruption through the murder of a journalist and his fiancée was also used by OĽaNO party. In 2020, a film directed by Mariana Čengel Solčanská and Rudolf Biermann was released, based on the book of the same name by the investigative journalist and political commentator Arpád Soltézs. The plot of the film is about a teenage girl who is addicted to drugs. She disappears from a resocialization centre, but no one is looking for her and no one misses her. When her friend wants to tell the police about the scandals of the resocialization centre like forced sex and drugs, they send her away. She then seeks out a journalist and he sets out to investigate crime, the mafia and blackmailing. After publishing his investigative work, he is found dead with his girlfriend.¹⁸ Although the story is fictional, it was inspired by some of the events and alleged cases linked to the actors in the investigation of the murder of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová.

Tim Haughton, Marek Rybář and Kevin Deegan-Krause argue that the 2020 general election results were accelerated by "anti-corruption".¹⁹ Anti-corruption became the main pillar of the new government that came to power during the pandemic period. However, the problems that arose were not only related to Covid-19, but also existed within the government coalition, which

¹⁴ PRUŠOVSKÁ, V.: *Najvyšší súd potvrdil: Tibor Gašpar ide po roku z väzby na slobodu*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2597852/najvyssi-sud-potvrdil-tibor-gaspar-ide-po-roku-z-vazby-na-slobodu/>>. See also: BEŇOVÁ, Z.: *Odchádza najdlhšie úradujúci policajný prezident (Profil Tibora Gašpara)*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/466478-dchadza-najdlhsie-uradujuci-policajny-prezident/>>.

¹⁵ *Lučanský: Od NAKA som dostal nepresné informácie*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/492043-lucansky-su-nezrovnalosti-tykajuca-sa-oznamenania-na-organizatorov-protetov/>>.

¹⁶ *Political Analysts: Smer Defeated Without Single Regional Capital Mayor*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.tasr.sk/tasr-clanok/TASR:20181111TBA00968>>; *Výsledky komunálnych volieb 2018*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://volby.sme.sk/komunalne-volby/2018/vysledky>>.

¹⁷ *Výsledky komunálnych volieb 2022*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://volby.sme.sk/komunalne-volby/2022/vysledky>>.

¹⁸ *Sviňa*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.cine-max.sk/filmy/film/svina>>.

¹⁹ HAUGHTON, T., RYBÁŘ, M., DEEGAN-KRAUSE, K.: Corruption, Campaigning, and Novelty: The 2020 Parliamentary Elections and the Evolving Patterns of Party Politics in Slovakia. In *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 2022, Vol. 36, No. 3, p. 729.

consisted of OĽaNO, Za ľudí, Sloboda a Solidarita and Sme Rodina. During the governing period of the four-coalition government, a new Act on Media Services and an Act on Publications were adopted. The government committed to amending media laws in its 2020 programme statement: “*The Government of the Slovak Republic respects the indispensable role of the media and journalists in the control of public authority and governance. The Government of the Slovak Republic will therefore prepare a fundamental recodification of media law to ensure a functioning pluralistic media market with free, independent, transparent and competitive media, including fundamental guarantees for the independent exercise of the journalistic profession, in line with the values of civil society*”.²⁰

Reactions to the situation in Slovakia from abroad came immediately. The United States Mission to the OSCE and the Delegation of Canada to the OSCE sent a response letter confirming Robert Fico’s words that this is an “*unprecedented attack on freedom of the press and democracy in Slovakia*” and saying that journalists must be able to work “*safely and freely to safeguard open, democratic societies*”.²¹ The European Parliament also reacted to the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, with its members calling for an independent, international and thorough investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice, while also noting that it is time to improve laws at national and European levels to ensure the safety of journalists, bloggers and whistle-blowers.²² At the same time, an international investigative team was formed, consisting of Slovak and Italian investigators, to investigate the cases that had been dealt with by Ján Kuciak. Although the cooperation was successful and helped to investigate some cases, it did not have a lasting effect, as the team disbanded after the case was investigated.

3 Journalistic Environment in Slovakia

The murder significantly affected the perception of the journalistic profession and its practical performance. *The Reuters Institute’s Digital News Report 2023* found that up to 37% of people in Slovakia actively avoid news reporting. At the same time, only 27% trust the news.²³ This figure is not surprising, as the level of trust in the media in Slovakia has been low for a long time. Over the last seven years, the highest level of trust was in 2018 (34%), while the lowest was in 2022 (26%).²⁴ Among some of the common reasons people cite for distrust is the frequent interference in content by companies and political leaders. The public service broadcaster *Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS)* has the highest level of trust among all TV stations.²⁵ On the contrary, online media have lower levels of credibility.²⁶ An exception among the online media is the *Aktuality.sk* portal, for which Ján Kuciak also worked, as it achieved a higher level of trust in the survey compared to other digital media.

²⁰ Programové vyhlásenie Vlády Slovenskej republiky na roky 2020 – 2024. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.culture.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Programove_vyhlasenie_cele_zmenie_2020-2024.pdf>.

²¹ United States Mission to the OSCE Delegation of Canada to the OSCE: Statement on the Murder of Jan Kuciak. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/4/374860.pdf>>.

²² Murder of Ján Kuciak: MEPs Urge EU Investigation, Action to Protect Journalist. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180309IPR99421/murder-of-jan-kuciak-meps-urge-eu-investigation-actions-to-protect-journalists>>.

²³ NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf>.

²⁴ CHLEBICOVÁ HEČKOVÁ, A., SMITH, S.: *Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023/slovakia>>.

²⁵ Compare to: GLOWACKI, M.: Pasts, Presents and Futures of Public Service Media: The Challenges of Adaptation and Change in the Age of Data. In *Communication Today*, 2022, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 104-117.

²⁶ See: NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

The Slovak Republic, which was ranked 14th in the *RSF Press Freedom Index* in 2015, has dropped to 35th place in 2019. However, an improvement can be observed in 2023, as Slovakia is ranked 17th.²⁷ Based on semi-structured interviews with Slovak investigative journalists, Marina Urbániková and Lenka Haniková found that journalists' attitudes towards their own safety changed after the death of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, and that they often felt threatened in the course of their work. As part of their individual initiative, Slovak investigative journalists are trying to approach their work more cautiously. For example, they secure their phones, approach (confidential) sources of information with more caution or prefer face-to-face communication. On the other hand, the journalists themselves confirmed that these steps are not long-lasting and that they stopped using them after a while. The murder of the journalist marked the position of the Slovak Republic within the framework of press freedom, but it was also an accelerator in addressing the safety of journalists in Slovakia. Nevertheless, research has confirmed that the number of incidents has increased in the 5 years since the murder. The results of the survey, which included more than 400 Slovak journalists, point to interesting findings:

- 66.2% of journalists have experienced an attack or threat in the past 12 months;
- 47% of journalists think the number of attacks has increased, 22% think it is at the same level and 8% think there has been a decrease;
- the most common incident, according to 76%, was verbal assault in person or online;
- the intensity of verbal attacks increased by 78.6%;
- the attacker was most often an ordinary citizen (56.79%), a person posing as a supporter of a political party (22.22%) and (local) politicians, administrators or officials (18.52%);
- respondents saw the attack as an attack on journalism (73.46%) rather than an attack on their person (9.88%);
- 85% of journalists consider threats and intimidation a threat to freedom of speech;
- the most common reason journalists gave for not reporting an attack was low severity (61.54%), attacks are a normal part of a journalist's job (51.28%), or the belief that there would be no follow-up action to investigate the attack (20.51%);
- 16% of journalists have experienced self-censorship linked to potential or actual threats;
- 53% of journalists feel they are more careful in doing their job;
- 97% of journalists would welcome a system to help journalists facing attack, threat or legal action;
- 65% of journalists consider their employer's protection measures to be sufficient, 35% insufficient.²⁸

4 New Media Legislation

The five years since the murder have also introduced various legislative changes to the practice of journalism, which are intended to increase transparency in the media environment and positively influence the work in this sector. The *Media Plurality Monitor 2023* (MPM), which is a tool for identifying potential risks to media pluralism in the European Union member states and other candidate countries, has also produced interesting results. In the area of "fundamental protection", Slovakia was rated as low risk with 24%. However, critical results were found in "market pluralism" (68%).²⁹ At the time, when the research was conducted,

²⁷ *Index 2023 Global Score*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2023>>.

²⁸ *Výskum: Cítia sa slovenskí novinári bezpečne?* [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.icjk.sk/229/Vyskum-Citia-sa-slovenski-novinari-bezpecne>>.

²⁹ URBÁNIKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia & Turkey in the Year 2022. Country Report: Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/75737/slovakia_results_mpm_2023_cmpf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

the new Act requiring disclosure of information about media owners was not yet in effect. Ján Višňovský, Juliana Mináriková and Miroslav Kapec also point to the inaccessibility of more information and the lack of transparency in the portrayal of real media owners.³⁰ The change came about through the enactment of the new Publications Act and the Media Services Act, whereby today a publisher, broadcaster or provider of on-demand audiovisual media services must provide easy, direct and permanent access to information such as name, business name, registered office address, telephone number, ownership structure, whether the entity is subject to a self-regulatory mechanism and, if so, an indication of that self-regulatory body, etc.³¹ The implementation of the new media laws has potentially improved the Slovak Republic's scores in the area of "political independence". While in 2022, when the Acts were not in effect, political independence was still in the medium risk range with 57%, a year later we can see an improvement (52%).³²

With the introduction of Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services, the original regulatory body, the Broadcasting and Retransmission Council, ceased to exist and was replaced by the Media Services Council. It supervises compliance with the legislation governing broadcasting, retransmission, the provision of on-demand audiovisual media services and the provision of content-sharing platforms.³³ The explanatory memorandum to the law argued for the need to update media legislation in line with the 2018 Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on the coordination of measures in the member states relating to the provision of audiovisual media services in the light of changing market conditions.³⁴ The law has also clarified property and personnel relations related to the media, while source protection, the duty of confidentiality and the right of expression are equally important areas of regulation. After one year of the Act's implementation, the Ministry of Culture has drafted an amendment to the Act, again reflecting the new European Directive of October 2022, which is intended to improve the conditions for the provision of cross-border intermediary services, while also improving the position of consumers and strengthening the protection of users' rights in the online space.³⁵ When approved, oversight of the matter should be given to the National Digital Services Coordinator.

In August 2022, Act No. 265/2022 Coll. on Publications came into effect, which reflects current developments and requirements in the dissemination of information through the press, electronic publications and news web portals. The Act also includes the regulation of the obligations of publishers of periodical publications and press agencies in the dissemination of information, the obligations of operators of news web portals, the obligations of publishers of non-periodical publications in relation to the distribution of these publications, and the building of a preservation fund and a digital deposit fund.³⁶ At the same time, due to the law, the publisher is obliged to separate journalistic content from advertising. One of the main reasons

³⁰ VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., MINÁRIKOVÁ, J., KAPEC, M.: *Slovenský mediálny priemysel*. Prague : Wolters Kluwer, 2022, p. 33-34.

³¹ *Legal Act on Media Services No. 264/2022 Coll., from 22nd June 2022*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20220801.html>>.

³² URBÁNIKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia & Turkey in the Year 2022. Country report: Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/75737/slovakia_results_mpm_2023_cmpf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

³³ *Pôsobnosť Rady pre mediálne služby*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://rpms.sk/posobnost-rady-pre-medialne-sluzby>>.

³⁴ *Dôvodová správa k zákonu č. 264/2022 Z. z. o mediálnych službách a zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (zákon o mediálnych službách)*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.epi.sk/dovodova-sprava/dovodova-sprava-k-zakonu-c-264-2022-z-z.htm>>.

³⁵ *Ministerstvo kultúry pripravilo novelu o mediálnych službách*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/novela-stanovi-regulatora-v-online-pri/732007-clanok.html>>.

³⁶ *Dôvodová správa*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=507888>>.

for updating the law was the lack of adequate coverage of the dynamically evolving situation in the field of multiplatform publishing and digital journalism, and the fact that electronic publications and news web portals are currently the most widely used sources of information with a broad impact on society. The Act on Publications, among other things, replaced the institutes of the right of reply and the right of rectification with the right of expression.³⁷ The newly created institute establishes an obligation to publish a statement, if a public official, the chairman of a political party or a political movement, the vice-chairman of a political party or a political movement, or a legal entity requests its publication. It is criticised by the media and non-profit organisations. However, the explanatory memorandum to the draft law defined the right to make a statement in the case where the statement concerns a political official or other legal person only in the context of the exercise of his or her functions.³⁸ The right to be heard allows a person to deny, supplement, clarify or explain an evaluative judgment based on a disputed claim. Nevertheless, the right to be heard has been criticised both by journalists and by the President of the Slovak Republic, who signed the law. She argues that although the right to be heard for public officials and politicians is not unconstitutional, she will monitor whether it is being abused.³⁹ Among the critics is the journalist Filip Struhárik, who stated that although the new legislation is a step forward, the right to be heard is a protective measure for politicians, who have many other ways to communicate their views. He also adds that politicians who criticised the right of reply under the SMER-SD government have themselves adopted it a few years later.⁴⁰ The right to be heard was criticised back in 2019 when the then-government sought to include a legal mandatory right of reply for politicians. At that time, 465 journalists opposed it, as politicians have plenty of opportunities to express themselves on issues they cover in the media, while at the same time they themselves refuse this opportunity and do not answer the questions asked.⁴¹ Therefore, the right to be heard poses a certain threat to the impartiality of the media. It should not be used by political or public figures as a means of self-presentation or reputation enhancement through unjustified requests for comment whenever they disagree with the published content.

5 Conclusion

The murder of Ján Kuciak changed the media space in Slovakia and helped transform it into its current form. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the public have also made a significant contribution to the transformation of society, although being helped to do so by the media. One of the main consequences that occurred was a change in social sentiment towards the SMER-SD party, which changed from previously favourable to negative, that also resulted in the non-election of (potential) public officials to higher positions from that party. The murder had a major impact on the realignment of political power in Slovakia and triggered trials of prominent

³⁷ *Legal Act on Publications No. 265/2022 Coll., from 22nd June 2022.* [online]. [2023-09-19]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/265/20220801>>.

³⁸ *Dôvodová správa.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=507888>>.

³⁹ *Prezidentka odobrila mediálne zákony, no má voči nim vážne výhrady.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://strategie.hnonline.sk/news/media/96029937-prezidentka-odobrila-medialne-zakony-no-ma-vo-ci-nim-vazne-vyhrady>>.

⁴⁰ STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Nové mediálne zákony sú krokom vpred, zvýšia transparentnosť aj dezinformačných webov.* [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2907856/mediabriefing-nove-medialne-zakony-su-krokom-vpred-zvysia-transparentnost-aj-dezinformacnych-webov/>>.

⁴¹ *Politici by nemali rozhodovať o obsahu médií (Responses).* [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OCFPHediO3LmcQZ9kE01SsA74JXFw6edA4apxgQB9Tc/edit#gid=380100963>>. See also: *400 novinárov vo vyhlásení: Politici by nemali rozhodovať o obsahu médií.* [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1372732/politici-by-nemali-rozhodovat-o-obsahu-medii/>>.

defendants. Protests in the streets led to a change in government and in the leadership of the police. Prosecutors who brought charges in high-profile cases received sympathy and media coverage. Acts were also passed that tightened controls on judicial competence and made the election of the Attorney General more transparent. In August 2022, the Act on Publications and the Act on Media Services came into effect. Under the new Publications Act, modern regulatory elements, including self-regulation, came into force, bringing significant transparency to the ownership and financing of print and digital media. Their aim was to ensure plurality of media content and increased transparency in the disclosure of media ownership and funding. It also increased the protection of sources, since as a result of the new regulation a journalist cannot be forced by public institutions to reveal their source. Similarly, the Media Services Act, among other things, places emphasis on the transparency of ownership and funding arrangements. Slovakia, which dropped from the top of the *Freedom of the Press Index* after the murder of an investigative journalist and his fiancée, has risen to almost its original position in 2023. Although fear for safety among journalists has increased compared to the period before the murder, it has not deterred them from practicing the journalistic profession. Thus, it can be concluded that the murder of an investigative journalist and the massive public and media reaction have both contributed to a more efficient administration of justice and a more acceptable environment for the work of journalists. However, there is certainly room for improvement. Shortly after the murder, Slovak journalists and the media industry had to deal with numerous other problems brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.⁴² A pandemic of hoaxes and misinformation flooded the media space, whether in relation to the coronavirus or the armed conflict in Ukraine that broke out in February 2022.

Acknowledgement: The study was elaborated within the international research project supported by the European Union's research programme HORIZON 2020, entitled 'Research and Innovation Framework Programme: Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape' (MEDIADCOM).

Literature and Sources:

400 novinárov vo vyhlásení: Politici by nemali rozhodovať o obsahu médií. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1372732/politici-by-nemali-rozhodovat-o-obsahu-medii/>>.

BEŇOVÁ, Z.: *Odchádza najdlhšie úradujúci policajný prezident (Profil Tibora Gašpara)*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/466478-dchadza-najdlhsie-uradujuci-policajny-prezident/>>.

CSANYI, P.: Slovakia Political Briefing: Fight for Justice of Ján Kuciak Continues. In *China-CEE Institute*, 2021, Vol. 41, No. 1, p. 1-5. ISSN 2560-1601. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://china-cee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021p07_Slovakia.pdf>.

Death of Investigative Journalist Sparks Mass Protests in Slovakia. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/09/death-of-investigative-journalist-sparks-mass-protests-in-slovakia>>.

⁴² For more information see: GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Media Coverage and its Determinants in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Communication Today*, 2022, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 46-59; KRAJČOVIČ, P.: The Media in Times of the Pandemic – Comparing Viewing Figures and Interactions of Serious, Tabloid and Conspiracy Media on Facebook During the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 212-224; VRABEC, N., PIEŠ, L.: Popularisation of Science and Science Journalism on Slovak Media in Slovakia. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2023, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 206-226. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-01-12>>.

Deaths. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <https://ipi.media/deaths/?incident_type=0&years=0&country=europe&gender=0&search=&>.

Dôvodová správa k zákonu č. 264/2022 Z. z. o mediálnych službách a zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (zákon o mediálnych službách). [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.epi.sk/dovodova-sprava/dovodova-sprava-k-zakonu-c-264-2022-z-z.htm>>.

Dôvodová správa. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=507888>>.

GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Media Coverage and its Determinants in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Communication Today*, 2022, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 46-59. ISSN 1338-130X.

GLOWACKI, M.: Pasts, Presents and Futures of Public Service Media: The Challenges of Adaptation and Change in the Age of Data. In *Communication Today*, 2022, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 104-117. ISSN 1338-130X.

GRIFFEN, S.: *Background: Murder of Ján Kuciak*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Jan-Kuciak-Background.pdf>>.

GRIFFEN, S.: Covering up a Murder. In *British Journalism Review*, 2018, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 5-7. ISSN 1741-2668. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956474818816832>>.

HAUGHTON, T., RYBÁŘ, M., DEEGAN-KRAUSE, K.: Corruption, Campaigning, and Novelty: The 2020 Parliamentary Elections and the Evolving Patterns of Party Politics in Slovakia. In *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 2022, Vol. 36, No. 3, p. 728-752. ISSN 1533-8371. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/08883254211012765>>.

CHLEBCOVÁ HEČKOVÁ, A., SMITH, S.: *Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023/slovakia>>.

Index 2023 Global Score. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2023>>.

KRAJČOVIČ, P.: The Media in Times of the Pandemic – Comparing Viewing Figures and Interactions of Serious, Tabloid and Conspiracy media on Facebook During the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 212-224. ISSN 2585-9188.

Legal Act on Media Services No. 264/2022 Coll., from 22nd June 2022. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20220801.html>>.

Legal Act on Publications No. 265/2022 Coll., from 22nd June 2022. [online]. [2023-09-19]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/265/20220801>>.

Lučanský: Od NAKA som dostal nepresné informácie. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/492043-lucansky-su-nezrovnalosti-tykajúce-sa-oznamenia-na-organizatorov-protestov/>>.

MASSAYOVÁ, V.: *EXKLUZÍVNE Paľo Rýpal je nezvestný už 15 rokov: Pred zmiznutím písal o Kataríne Hrozányovej*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.startitup.sk/exkluzivne-palo-rypal-je-nezvestny-uz-15-rokov-pred-zmiznutim-pisal-o-katarine-hrozanyovej/>>.

Ministerstvo kultúry pripravilo novelu o mediálnych službách. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/novela-stanovi-regulatora-v-online-pri/732007-clanok.html>>.

Murder of Ján Kuciak: MEPs Urge EU Investigation, Action to Protect Journalist. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180309IPR99421/murder-of-jan-kuciak-meps-urge-eu-investigation-actions-to-protect-journalists>>.

NEWMAN, N. et al.: Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

Nezvestného novinára Paľa Rýpala stále nevyhlásili za mŕtveho: Takéto je vysvetlenie rodiny! [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www1.pluska.sk/regiony/stredne-slovensko/novinar-palo-rypal-je-nezvestny-13-rokov-rodina-otala-jeho-vyhlasenim-mrtveho>>.

- NICHOLSON, T.: *Slovakian Journalism's Darkest Day*. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.politico.eu/article/jan-kuciak-gorilla-slovakia-journalist-dead-darkest-day/>>.
- Obrazom: Tisíce demonštrantov opäť žiadali demisiu Kaliňáka*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://sita.sk/obrazom-tisice-demonstrantov-opat-ziadali-demisiu-kalinaka/>>.
- OVÁDEK, M.: "Popular Tribunes" and Their Agendas: Topic Modelling Slovak's Presidents' Speeches 1993-2020. In *East European Politics*, 2021, Vol. 37, No. 2, p. 214-238. ISSN 2159-9173. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1756785>>.
- PALKOVÁ, S., ŠKRANKOVA, P., VESELÁ, P.: *Kiska chce novou vládu alebo predčasné voľby. Fico to Rezolutne odmítl*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/andrej-kiska-jan-kuciak-reakce.A180304_160258_zahranicni_PAS_>.
- Political Analysts: Smer Defeated Without Single Regional Capital Mayor*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.tasr.sk/tasr-clanok/TASR:20181111TBA00968>>.
- Politici by nemali rozhodovať o obsahu médií (Responses)*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OCFPHediO3LmcQZ9kE01SsA74JXFw6edA4apxgQB9Tc/edit#gid=380100963>>.
- Pôsobnosť Rady pre mediálne služby*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://rpms.sk/posobnost-rady-pre-medialne-sluzby>>.
- Prezidentka odobrila mediálne zákony, no má voči nim vážne výhrady*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://strategie.hnonline.sk/news/media/96029937-prezidentka-odobrila-medialne-zakony-no-ma-voci-nim-vazne-vyhrady>>.
- Programové vyhlásenie Vlády Slovenskej republiky na roky 2020 – 2024*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.culture.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Programove_vyhlasenie_cele_zmenie_2020-2024.pdf>.
- PRUŠOVSKÁ, V.: *Najvyšší súd potvrdil: Tibor Gašpar ide po roku z väzby na slobodu*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2597852/najvyssi-sud-potvrdil-tibor-gaspar-ide-po-roku-z-vazby-na-slobodu/>>.
- STRUHÁRIK, F.: *MediaBrifing: Nové mediálne zákony sú krokom vpred, zvýšia transparentnosť aj dezinformačných webov*. [online]. [2023-09-18]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/2907856/mediabrifing-nove-medialne-zakony-su-krokom-vpred-zvysia-transparentnost-aj-dezinformacnych-webov/>>.
- Sviňa*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://www.cine-max.sk/filmy/film/svina>>.
- ŠKOLKAY, A.: What Does the Murder of Journalist, and Follow-up Events, Tell Us about Freedom of the Press and Politics in a European Country? In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2019, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 26-44. ISSN 1899-5101. [online]. [2023-09-26]. Available at: <[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.12.1\(22\).2](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.12.1(22).2)>.
- TÓDOVÁ, M.: *Madarič v pondelok podá demisiu: S vraždou Jána Kuciaka sa neviem vyrovnáť*. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/1043843/madarc-v-pondelok-poda-demisiu-s-vrazdou-jana-kuciaka-sa-neviem-vyrovnat/>>.
- United States Mission to the OSCE Delegation of Canada to the OSCE: Statement on the Murder of Jan Kuciak*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/4/374860.pdf>>.
- URBÁNIKOVÁ, M., HANIKOVÁ, L.: Coping with the Murder: The Impact of Ján Kuciak's Assassination on Slovak Investigative Journalists. In *Journalism Practice*, 2022, Vol. 16, No. 9, p. 1927-1947. ISSN 1751-2794. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1877179>>.
- URBÁNIKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia & Turkey in the Year 2022. Country report: Slovakia*. [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/75737/slovakia_results_mpm_2023_cmpf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., BIELIK, P.: Actual Trends in Investigative Journalism Methods and Techniques. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2022, Vol. 65, No. 1-2, p. 29-40. ISSN 0322-7049.

VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., MINÁRIKOVÁ, J., KAPEC, M.: *Slovenský mediálny priemysel*. Prague : Wolters Kluwer, 2022.

VRABEC, N., PIEŠ, L.: Popularisation of Science and Science Journalism on Slovak Media in Slovakia. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2023, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 206-226. ISSN 2585-9188. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-01-12>>.

Vražda Kuciaka a Kušnírovej bola úkladná a na objednávku. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/484456-live-prokurator-informuje-o-progrese-v-pripade-vrazdy-kuciaka-a-kusnirovej/>>.

Vyhlasenie šéfredaktorov k vražde Jána Kuciaka. [online]. [2023-09-04]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/567821/vyhlasenie-sefredaktorov-k-vrazde-jana-kuciaka/>>.

Výskum: Cítia sa slovenskí novinári bezpečne? [online]. [2023-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.icjk.sk/229/Vyskum-Citia-sa-slovenski-novinari-bezpecne>>.

Výsledky komunálnych volieb 2018. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://volby.sme.sk/komunalne-volby/2018/vysledky>>.

Výsledky komunálnych volieb 2022. [online]. [2023-09-13]. Available at: <<https://volby.sme.sk/komunalne-volby/2022/vysledky>>.

Authors



Mgr. Bianka Francistyová

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

Nám. J. Herdu 2

917 01 Trnava

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

francistyova1@ucm.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5865-0952>

Bianka Francistyová is currently pursuing a doctorate degree at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at UCM in Trnava. Bianka completed her bachelor's and master's degrees at the university. The main focus of her scientific research is Korean dramas and Korean popular music. Apart from Korean media production, her scholarly publications include topics such as feminism, digital media, globalization and multiplatform journalism. She is also a secretary of the editorial office of the European Journal of Media, Art & Photography.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ján Višňovský, PhD.

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

Nám. J. Herdu 2

917 01 Trnava

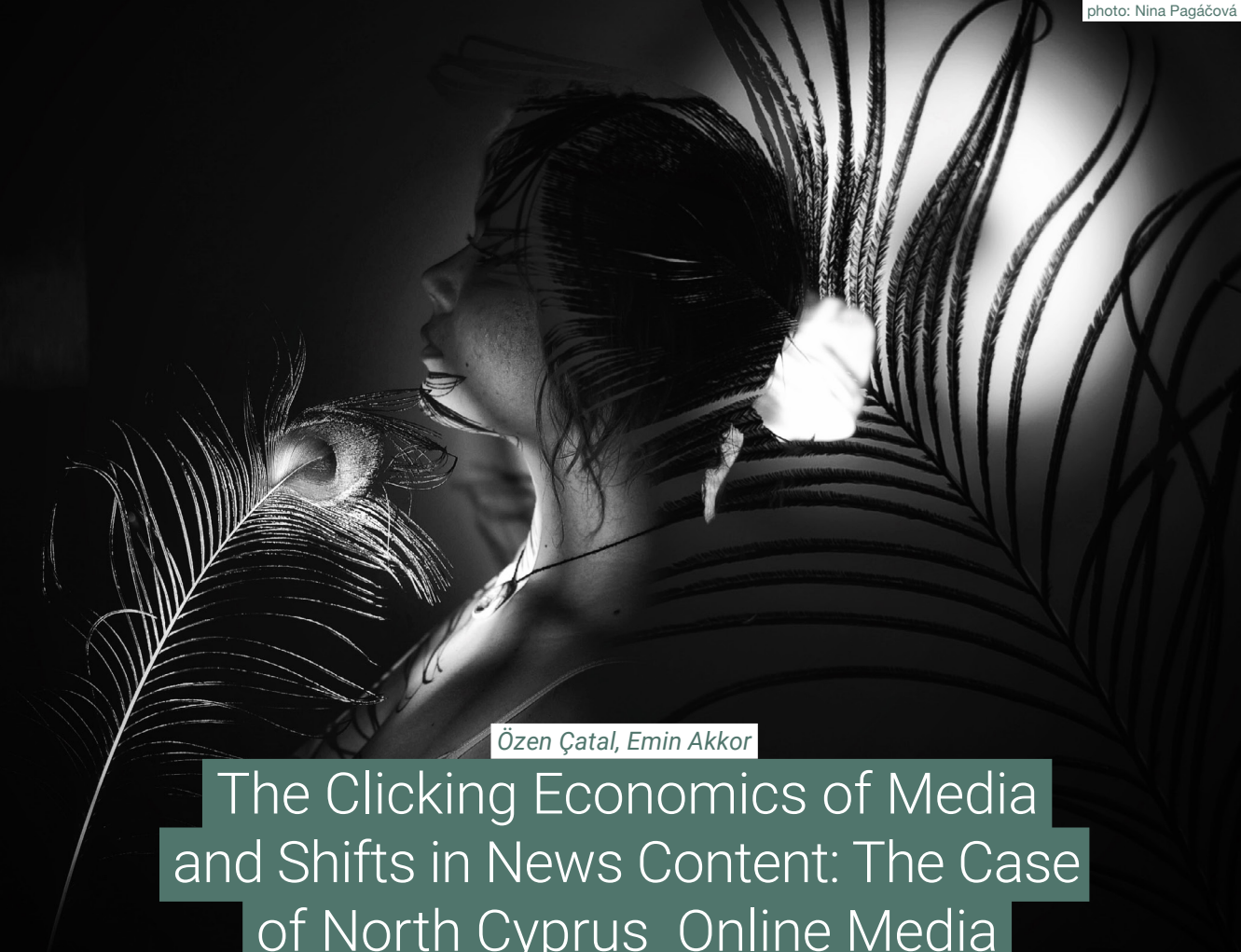
SLOVAK REPUBLIC

jan.visnovsky@ucm.sk

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1363-1683>



Ján Višňovský is a professor at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at UCM in Trnava, Head of the Department of Mass Media Communication and Head of the Academic Senate at UCM. He is particularly interested in problems and questions of journalism in the context of the development of information and communication technologies, and the history of television in Great Britain and the United States of America. Ján Višňovský is an author of scientific monographs, textbooks and over eighty scholarly articles and conference contributions.



Özen Çatal, Emin Akkor

The Clicking Economics of Media and Shifts in News Content: The Case of North Cyprus Online Media

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-08>

ABSTRACT

The new media ecology has resulted in shifts in news content. The audience metrics that provide data about the preferences, expectations, and habits of the audiences based on clicks bring about the creation of new strategies and business models to increase income. The theory of the political economy of media says that just as economic relationships shape the whole of society, they also affect the production, distribution, and consumption of media content, forming the theoretical infrastructure of this study. On this basis, the study aims to reveal how the news content of Northern Cyprus' internet newspapers is shaped according to the number of clicks. The social media pages of four online newspapers in North Cyprus were analyzed using the content analysis method. On this basis, the aim of this article is to reveal how shifts occur in news content depending on consumer participation, social media, and clicks that have emerged with the development of internet technology. Content analysis was conducted considering the multimedia infrastructure of Internet journalism, and the coding was done by taking different media formats such as news text, video, and photography. The results show that the production phase, topic, and content of the news are affected by audience interaction data.

KEY WORDS

Business Models. Clicking. Digital Journalism. North Cyprus. Political Economy of Media. Social Media.

1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to reveal how shifts occur in news contents, depending on consumer participation, social media and clicks, within the new media ecology that has emerged with the development of internet technology. In order to understand the core of this study, it is important to examine the political economy of new media, which provides a framework for understanding the business models of new media. Since the political economy of media is related to how media content is produced, dispersed and consumed within a society and the powers that affect these,¹ it must be stated that although this study focuses on the political economy of online newspapers, it focuses on new business models that are closely related to the forms of online newspaper audience metrics and digital traffic rather than commercial elements within the news. As the study assumes, news content and subjects in digital journalism change according to these relationship forms. As stated by Curran et al., market-focussed systems in many areas of the world prevent conscious citizenship by providing soft news instead of hard news.²

In this regard, this study examines the relationship between social media, interaction and multimedia to show how news subjects change as a result of the market focussed approach of internet newspapers in North Cyprus. In this context, the theory of the political economy of media was used as a basis to answer the question “How does news content change in Northern Cyprus’ digital newspapers in order to increase income and receive more clicks?” This theory enables the examination of the media business models on a multi-layered basis. The content analysis method was used both quantitatively and qualitatively, which provides a basis for the evaluation and interpretation of the systematic relationship between the number of clicks and news content. This study examined the interaction rates and methods used to increase these interaction rates (which is a primary criteria for publishing organisations to increase their income) of the *Kıbrıs Net Haber*, *Haber Kıbrıs*, *Ses Kıbrıs* and *Topuz* newspapers for a period of one month between 1st of August 2021 and 30th of August 2021. The findings of the study confirm that the content of news has changed as a result of online journalism that attempts to increase click rates due to economic concerns. Besides, results surprisingly show that the most popular content in North Cyprus online newspapers is “death notices”, which are more notices rather than news.

1.1 Political Economy, Digital Labour and New Business Models of New Media

Digitization is restructuring the media economy with a complex convergence movement that brings about the formation of certain production patterns in journalism, as in many other fields.

McChesney, who reviewed a large body of literature regarding digitalisation, states that there are two main views about the internet. While there are those who take a technological determinist approach like “celebrants”, who argue that internet technologies eliminate the monopoly of large companies and allow democracy to develop. He also states that there are “sceptics” who fear that internet technology reshapes people into the image of technology that is flattering our intellect and lessening our creativity.³ McChesney who stated that both situations are not sufficient to shed light on the situation, claims that the political economy approach can

¹ APUKE, O. D.: Another Look at the Political Economy of the Mainstream and New Media. In *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 2018, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 11-12.

² CURRAN, J., IYENGAR, S., LUND, A. B., SALOVAARA-MORING, I.: Media System, Public Knowledge and Democracy: A Comparative Study. In CURRAN, J. (ed.): *Media and Democracy*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2011, p. 47.

³ MCCHESENEY, R. W.: *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*. New York, NY : New Press, 2013, p. 12.

form a basis in evaluating the digital revolution. McChesney explains the reason for this by stating: “The way capitalism works and doesn’t work determine the role the internet can play in society. The profit motive, commercialization, public relations, marketing, and advertising – all defining features of contemporary corporate capitalism – are fundamental to any assessment of how the Internet has evolved and will likely evolve.”⁴

Mosco stated that the political economy of communication media is the study of relationships, particularly the power relationships between the production, distribution and consumption of resources.⁵ Murdock and Golding dwell on how the changing organization of the media with digitalization should be analysed, and discuss the necessity of discussing the changing organization of contemporary capitalism and the interactions between financialization, marketization, globalization and digitalization, which are the main drivers of change.⁶ Fuchs embodies this by saying that all social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter*, *Weibo*, *BlogSpot* and *LinkedIn* convert the data of users (content, profiles, social network and online behaviour) into a commodity. He stated that this is a business model that prioritises targeted advertising and that if this was not the case, the producers of social media would not be able to exist.⁷ Due to this, content creators such as journalists, web creators and blog creators produce content that will encourage readers and contain information that they can sell to these readers. In a way, media owners are in a position where they can control the information that will be both appealing to the interests of their readers and also not disturb the marketers.⁸

Fuchs, who has conducted multiple studies on the political economy of new media, invites us to look to the notion of the “audience commodity” mentioned by one of the pioneering figures of political economy, Dallas Smyth, and stated that Smyth’s concept option has evolved into the “internet prosumer commodity”.⁹ According to him, the audience commodity theory can be applied to the notion of “digital labour” used in social media platforms today.¹⁰ Gandini, who stated that Smyth’s concept of “audience commodity” is an important theoretical basis for the notion of “digital labour”, claimed that Smyth’s theory explains that the compulsory viewing practice of commercials that television audiences watch when subjected to advertising and marketing messages represents some form of unpaid work.¹¹

The term digital labour is defined by Scholz as capturing users with the free labour and surplus value of the communication activities and selling the data obtained from the users to advertisers.¹² Moreover, Fuchs stated that exploitation of digital labour consists of three aspects, coercion, alienation and appropriation.¹³ The notion of coercion is explained by him as ideological enforcement that tent to the users to engage in communication. They are persuaded that their

⁴ MCCHESENEY, R. W.: *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*. New York, NY : New Press, 2013, p. 13.

⁵ MOSCO, V.: *The Political Economy of Communication Rethinking and Renewal*. London : Sage Publications, 1998, p. 25.

⁶ MURDOCK, G., GOLDING, P.: Political Economy and Media Production: A Reply to Dwyer. In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2016, Vol. 38, No. 5, p. 766.

⁷ FUCHS, C.: Theorising and Analysing Digital Labour: From Global Value Chains to Modes of Production. In *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2013, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 19-20.

⁸ APUKE, O. D.: Another Look at the Political Economy of the Mainstream and New Media. In *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 2018, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 13.

⁹ FUCHS, C.: Theorising and Analysing Digital Labour: From Global Value Chains to Modes of Production. In *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2013, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 20.

¹⁰ FUCHS, C.: Dallas Smyth Today – The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. In *TripleC*, 2012, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 708.

¹¹ GANDINI, A.: Digital Labour: An Empty Signifier? In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2021, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 371.

¹² WITTEL, A.: Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory, In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2013, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 906.

¹³ FUCHS, C.: Dallas Smyth Today – The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. In *TripleC*, 2012, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 708.

lives would be less meaningful without sharing and the creation and maintenance of social relations. With the concept of alienation, he underlines that the owners of those platforms and profits are companies, not users. The concept of appropriation implies that users contribute to the success of corporate internet platforms by spending time on them, which in turn generates value through their unpaid digital labour. This labour includes creating social connections, making user-generated content, and generating data such as profile information and browsing behaviour. Such data is a valuable commodity that internet corporations can sell to advertisers, who can then use this data to target specific user groups. In essence, the users' digital labour serves as a form of capital accumulation for these platforms, with users contributing to the platform's success but receiving no financial compensation in return.¹⁴

This has resulted in the business models of traditional newspapers changing to new media models. Where the source of income was previously dependent on print circulation and advertising in traditional media, it only focusses on advertising in digital newspapers. Traditional business models focussed on keeping the content prices low to create an audience and then selling those audiences to advertisers who want access to them. This model was made easier by publishers who have virtual monopolies over production and distribution within certain geographical regions, which limits competition for both the viewers and advertisers. It is very difficult to continue these forms of monopolies in the current digital age.¹⁵ The main reason for this is the increase in the number of internet newspapers, which has reduced publication costs in comparison to traditional media and conduct global publications. Munger, who examined how the structure of the online media industry has developed throughout the life of the internet, stated that the reputation of the firm is a strong indication of the quality of information and that the social information such as the number of 'likes' and 'shares' of a post provide an alternative source of credibility.¹⁶ He also stated that each news item being distinctive and in competition with all other news to gain interest lies at the basis of this macro level phenomena and that the pressure of trying to attract attention changes the form and content of the stories.¹⁷ Lehtisaari et al. touched on the importance of social media platforms for media companies within this developing new business model and that it provides a potential source of new customers. He stated that the changes in advertising and media consumption behaviour play a key role in the two-sided business model of journalism companies that earn income from both the readers and the advertisers.¹⁸

1.2 Social Media, Personalized Journalism and Active Users

Social media is defined as "*a group of internet-based applications that build the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content*".¹⁹ Traditional media organisations or media organisations that only publish through the internet use social media actively in order to reach larger audiences with their

¹⁴ FUCHS, C.: Dallas Smythe Today – The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. In *TripleC*, 2012, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 708.

¹⁵ VILLI, M., PICARD, R. G.: Transformation and Innovation of Media Business Models. In DEUZE, M., PRENGER, M. (eds.): *Making Media. Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2018, p. 121.

¹⁶ MUNGER, K.: All the News That's Fit to Click: The Economics of Clickbait Media. In *Political Communication*, 2020, Vol. 38, p. 377.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 377.

¹⁸ LEHTISAARI, K. et al.: Comparing Innovation and Social Media Strategies in Scandinavian and US Newspapers. In *Digital Journalism*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 8, p. 1031.

¹⁹ KAPLAN, A. M., HAENLEIN, M.: Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. In *Business Horizons*, 2010, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 60.

content. Furthermore, social media is also an important resource for journalists regarding the creation of news content. Just as journalists use social media to ensure interaction with audiences, they also use it to observe and incorporate the information published by the accounts of internet users in their reports.²⁰ At the same time, social media and digital resources have become important journalism practices to ensure data verification. The research conducted by the *International Centre for Journalists* in 2019 shows that over half of journalists use digital resources for gathering data.²¹

On the other hand, the internet Technologies defined as Web 2.0 have made it easier for individuals to observe, select, filter, distribute and comment on situations.²² This forces media organisations to create user-generated content in the news gathering and distribution process in order to survive.²³ Tandoc states that this has resulted in the journalist being caught between editorial decisions and audience preferences.²⁴ In addition to communicating with the journalist directly on the internet, the user also has the opportunity to comment, share, like, etc. on the news. This allows communication between those in the newsroom and those outside, and shapes how news is gathered, processed and interpreted.²⁵ The most important success criterion of newsrooms has become the number of clicks that news articles receive through accessing their audience via social media, which most of the time randomly appear in front of the reader. According to *International Centre for Journalists'* data from January 2021, 4.2 billion people out of the 4.6 billion digital users in the world are active social media users.²⁶

Web analytic programs enable journalists to access the data that shows the news consumption of readers and which channels they follow the most via scanning numerous data. Algorithms can be defined as data interpreting systems that consist of different user data comprising coded audience behaviours (likes, shares, comments, search words, interactions and connection with others, etc.).²⁷ These programs provide journalists with information about the popularity of the news, the location of the viewer, how long they spent on the site and the website that directed the user to that information.²⁸ Additionally Lee and Tandoc state that “*Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook also provide lists of trending topics determined by algorithms tracking what people are posting and sharing, along with real-time data on a post’s number of likes, comments, and shares*”²⁹ showing what form of data social media platforms provide about the user.

²⁰ TANDOC JR., E. C., VOS, T. P.: The Journalist Is Marketing the News. In *Journalism Practice*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 8, p. 956.

²¹ See: OWEN, D., BAHJA, F., MOSHAVI, S.: *The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms*. Washington, D.C. : ICFJ, 2019. [online]. [2022-02-08]. Available at: <<https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2019%20Final%20Report.pdf>>.

²² HERMIDA, A.: Social Journalism: Exploring How Social Media Is Shaping Journalism. In SIAPER, E., VEGLIS, A. (eds.): *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*. Chichester : John Wiley & Sons, 2012, p. 309.

²³ See: SRISARACAM, S.: Ethical Use of Online and Social Media in News Reporting of Thai Newsroom. In *The Asian Conference on Media & Mass Communication 2014 MEDIASIA2014*. Nagoya : IAFOR, 2014, p. 273-286.

²⁴ TANDOC JR., E. C., VOS, T. P.: The Journalist Is Marketing the News. In *Journalism Practice*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 8, p. 950.

²⁵ LEE, E.-J., TANDOC, E.: When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption. In *Human Communication Research*, 2017, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 436-437.

²⁶ DIXON, S. J.: *Number of Worldwide Social Network Users 2018-2027*. [online]. [2022-05-24]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>>.

²⁷ NORSTRÖM, L., ISLIND, A. S., SNIS, U. M. L.: Algorithmic Work: The Impact of Algorithms on Work with Social Media. In *Proceedings of the 28th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS)*. Marrakech, presented on 15th-17th June 2020. [online]. [2022-05-24]. Available at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2020_rp/185>.

²⁸ LEE, E.-J., TANDOC, E.: When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption. In *Human Communication Research*, 2017, Vol. 43 No. 4, p. 438.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 438.

As seen in the study conducted by *Reuters* on newsrooms based in Europe and North America that aimed to show how editorial analytics affect news practices, today, new metrics such as social interaction, engagement time and loyalty, rather than old metrics such as page views or browser browsing, are increasingly becoming effective in editorial decision-making processes.³⁰ Another worldwide study conducted by the *International Centre for Journalism* shows that news centres value the number of clicks more than the reactions of the audiences towards the news.³¹ Arenberg and Lowrey state that this commodified news process encourages journalists to create easy content such as soft news, PR-oriented stories, and news based on viral content from social media, and stated that this was concerning.³²

In today's news world, where user requests greatly affect the content of news, it is undoubtedly important to be aware of the news consumption habits of audiences. The internet provides an unlimited number of options for audiences to access news. Audiences can access news content via Web 2.0 applications in many ways and follow the same news from many resources. Research shows that people increasingly find and access online news via various pathways including search engines and social media rather than finding access directly via news media organizations' own websites.³³

Readers have the freedom to select what news they will click on, but participation is not limited to this, thus making the user both a consumer and a producer. Users take part in the production of the news, not only by commenting on stories and sharing news via social networks, but also by sending tips or visual-audio materials, participating in instantaneous questionnaires and suggesting content.³⁴ Audiences who interact with news stories make stories more visible and some users add their own messages when sharing stories, thus personalising and shaping the news. Due to this, online newspapers are encouraged to share their control with audiences. They try to do this by ensuring increased communication among their readers, promoting reciprocal conversations and providing opportunities for personalised journalism.³⁵

1.3 Relations of Clicking and News Presentation

As stated above, the innovations brought about by Web 2.0 technology have also resulted in changes to the presentation and language of the news through the reshaping of requests and expectations of the user and the effects on the production, presentation and distribution phases of the news. Pavlik defines this new form of news as "contextualised journalism" and stated that this has five basic areas of multimedia communication, namely hypermedia, increased public participation, dynamic content and personalisation. He also states that contextualized journalism not only embodies the multimedia skills of digital platforms, but also the customization of addressable media and fluent, hypermedia and interactive aspects of online communication.³⁶

³⁰ CHERUBINI, F., NIELSEN, R. K.: *Editorial Analytics: How News Media Are Developing and Using Audience Data and Metrics*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016, p. 36. [online]. [2022-02-24]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/editorial-analytics-how-news-media-are-developing-and-using-audience-data-and-metrics>>.

³¹ OWEN, D.: *The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms*. Washington, D.C.: ICFJ, 2017. [online]. [2022-02-08]. Available at: <<https://www.icfj.org/our-work/2017-state-technology-global-newsrooms-survey>>.

³² ARENBERG, T., LOWREY, W.: The Impact of Web Metrics on Community News Decisions: A Resource Dependence Perspective. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2019, Vol. 96, No. 1, p. 132.

³³ See: NIELSEN, R. K., SCHRØDER, K. C.: The Relative Importance of Social Media for Accessing, Finding, and Engaging with News: An Eight-Country Cross-Media Comparison. In *Digital Journalism*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 472-489.

³⁴ See: TENENBOIM, O., COHEN, A. A.: What Prompts Users to Click and Comment: A Longitudinal Study of Online News. In *Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 198-217.

³⁵ CHUNG, D. S.: Interactive Features of Online Newspapers: Identifying Patterns and Predicting Use of Engaged Readers. In *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 658-659.

³⁶ PAVLIK, J.: *Journalism and New Media*. New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 2012, p. 218.

Rich emphasises that the most important changes in journalism practices as a result of the use of interactive aspects and the adoption of interaction in online journalism are: changes in the presentation, distribution and perception of the news. Studies have shown that online audience feedback affects subject selection, story placement and performance evaluation processes within news production.³⁷ As the methods by which journalists create news change with new technology, the resources that viewers use to follow the news also transfer to social media. Studies show that the number of readers that visit media websites through search engines are decreasing, whereas the number of readers who access news via social networks such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* have increased.³⁸

The study that Fürst conducted on the role that the audience preferences play in affecting the quality of the news resulted in the findings that audience metrics cause journalists to produce soft news, and that more clicks affect the topic selection of the news and breaking news being prepared.³⁹ As well as many studies showing that audience analytics are effective in selecting the topic of the news, Poell and Dijck drew attention to the fact that breaking news is created in an informal and conversational manner.⁴⁰ Aral and Zhao stated that the sharing of news on social media platforms changes the content of the news to some extent. According to them, the articles shared on social media include headlines and short passages that reduce the informational value of clicking on the original article and that if the user adds a personal summary when sharing the content, this is reduced even more.⁴¹ The study conducted by Duffy et al. on the increase in video usage in the news to meet the increased audience demands also shows that not only the content of the news but also the way in which it is presented has been affected.⁴² It can be said that the demands of the audiences who prefer to consume the news content in a short time and watch it instead of reading it, paved the way for this transformation.

1.4 Online Journalism and Social Media in North Cyprus

In order to understand the structure of internet journalism in North Cyprus, the history of the Turkish Cypriot press must first be examined. The island of Cyprus is divided, whereby two separate societies of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots live in different parts. The press has played an important role throughout the history of the island for the two communities who have frequently struggled for power and political gain to express themselves. Until 1974 when the island was physically divided, the main role that the press played was as a tool in the political fight of the Turkish Cypriots, and from this time onward, the press entered a time when politics was driven by the economy. A period of capitalist maturity then occurred until the 2000s.⁴³ The press, which played a role in the national struggle up to 2004, was used as a tool for the political sides who were both for and against the UN Annan Plan that was put to the people of North Cyprus in a referendum.⁴⁴

³⁷ LEE, E.-J., TANDOC, E.: When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption. In *Human Communication Research*, 2017, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 438.

³⁸ BAZACO, A., REDONDO, M., SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA, P.: Clickbait as a Strategy of Viral Journalism: Conceptualisation and Methods. In *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 2019, No. 74, p. 94.

³⁹ See: FÜRST, S.: In the Service of Good Journalism and Audience Interests? How Audience Metrics Affect News Quality. In *Media and Communication*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 270-280.

⁴⁰ POELL, T., VAN DIJCK, J.: Social Media and Journalistic Independence. In BENNET, J., STRANGE, N. (eds.): *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* London : Routledge, p. 193.

⁴¹ See: ARAL, S., ZHAO, M.: *Social Media Sharing and Online News Consumption*. [online]. [2023-11-04]. Available at: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3328864>>.

⁴² DUFFY, A., LING, R., TANDOC JR., E. C.: The People Have Spoken (The Bastards?): Finding a Legitimate Place for Feedback in the Journalistic Field. In *Journalism Practice*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 9, p. 1139.

⁴³ ERCAN, E. E.: KKTC'de Basınında Ekonomi ve Siyaset İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Saha Araştırması. In *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2021, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 331-333.

⁴⁴ HANÇER, E.: Kıbrıs Türk Basınında Sahiplik Yapısı ve Haber Üzerindeki Etkileri. In *Küresel İletişim Dergisi*, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 1-2.

When the recent structure of the Turkish Cypriot media is examined, it can be separated into the three groups of public broadcasting, newspapers associated with political parties and newspapers that belong to businessmen. Erçakıca states that due to North Cyprus having a small population, commercial publishing has never fully developed and that the newspapers other than those who publish with political aims are directed towards the economic benefits of their owners.⁴⁵ In this regard, it is possible to say that internet journalism in North Cyprus has also played a role in remodelling journalism from a political-oriented tool to an economic tool.

The internet began to be used in North Cyprus for journalism purposes towards the end of the 1990's in the same way that it was around the world, by sharing the news that is published in written publications via the internet. The first online newspaper in North Cyprus was the *Kimgazet* newspaper, which began publication in 1997 and stopped its services not long after that. The reason that this newspaper, which was established by a journalist, had a short life span was claimed by one of its founders, Süleyman Ergüçlü, to be due to the economic implications of the internet structure.⁴⁶ In a newspaper column, Ergüçlü wrote that at the end of the 1990's, the internet access in North Cyprus had not yet been enabled in a healthy manner, that the newspaper could not reach readers, and thus, the advertisers had no interest in the newspaper meaning that it could not continue due to economic difficulties.⁴⁷ The first traditional newspaper that began online publication in North Cyprus was *Kıbrıs Gazetesi*, which was the most popular published newspaper at that time. The newspaper began publishing its news that it produced in published form over the internet on a daily basis in 1997 and began online publications. The first online newspaper which pursued its service solely on digital platform that still continues its publications is the *Kıbrıs Postası*, founded under *Citypress Yayıncılık Ltd*. After this newspaper began publication, online versions of current newspapers appeared. Unlike the others, this newspaper first published on the internet, and then switched to simultaneous print publications. Today, many newspapers who have printed versions also have online versions where they post instant news in North Cyprus. It is not possible to say that all the online newspapers, of which it is impossible to know the exact number, conduct real journalism. There are many newspapers that share news that they obtain from agencies, where some are ideological and others only aim to receive advertising.

An examination of the Information Technologies and Communications Authority's data for September 2021 reveals that there are 250,211 fixed broadband internet (Wireless, xDSL, Hotspot, Fiber) subscribers and 682,433 registered active mobile subscribers in Northern Cyprus. The number of subscribers using mobile internet has determined that internet and data income makes up 27.3 percent of the total income of *K. K. Turkcell* and 12.8% of the total income of *Telsim*.⁴⁸ When this data is evaluated according to the North Cyprus population which is 382.000 in 2021,⁴⁹ it can be said that internet usage is in excess of the rates of North Cyprus population. On the other hand, according to research results of a study conducted in North Cyprus, 67.8% of users use the internet to communicate with each other, and 49.2% of users use it to follow the news on social media and the internet.⁵⁰ While nearly half of social media and internet users use digital media to follow the news, a large proportion of users access the news of online newspapers from social media instead of from the newspaper's website.

⁴⁵ See: ERÇAKICA, H.: Kıbrıs Türk Basınına Tarihsel Bir Bakış: ENOSİS'E Karşı Mücadeleden Kamuoyu Tacirliğine. In *The Journal of Academic Social Science*, 2019, Vol. 92, p. 339-350.

⁴⁶ ERGÜÇLÜ, S.: *Kim Gazet*. [online]. [2022-12-06]. Available at: <<http://www.erguclu.eu/>>.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ *Elektronik Haberleşme Sektörü 3 Aylık Veriler Raporu 2021 – 2. Çeyrek*. [online]. [2021-11-09]. Available at: <<https://www.bthk.org/Documents/raporlar/pazar-verileri-sektorel-raporlar/2021%20Q2%20Raporu.pdf>>.

⁴⁹ *Ekonomik Ve Sosyal Göstergeler. Economic and Social Indicators*. [online]. [2022-11-20]. Available at: <<https://www.devplan.org/Eco-sos/Book/SEG-2019.pdf>>.

⁵⁰ ÖZE, N.: Gündelik Yaşamda İnternet ve Sosyal Ağları Kullanım Pratikleri: Kuzey Kıbrıs Vaka İncelemesi. In *İntermedia International e-Journal*, 2016, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 295.

When all this data is evaluated, it reveals that social media networks are an important platform for online newspapers to reach readers. Due to this reason, online newspapers also share all news that they share on their website on social media and use eye-catching headlines that sometimes even twist the truth in order to draw readers to their websites.

2 Methodology

This study argues there has been a shift in news content after digital media started to be used more frequently as a tool to obtain news. Understanding that the main reason for this is because it is closely related to economic power relationships in society. In this sense, this study analyses the political economy of digital media and new business models. In this context, the research question of this study is “How has the news content in the digital newspapers of North Cyprus changed in order to increase income, and in connection, increase the number of clicks?” In order to answer this question, this study investigates whether multimedia options such as which content receives more interaction from videos, photographs etc. affect the number of clicks. Also examined, in online newspapers in North Cyprus that continue to publish only thanks to advertising income what the similarities and differences between the selected newspapers are in this regard. It is considered that users in the North Cyprus media access news through social media rather than the news web pages, and this data was collected over *Facebook*, which is the most commonly used social media platform in North Cyprus.

For the abovementioned investigation to be conducted, content analysis, which is a “research method for the subjective interpretation of text data”⁵¹, was used. Quantitative content analysis was used for the systematic grouping and significant comparisons of the data and the interpretation and contextualization were conducted qualitatively. Parveen and Showkat, who stated that content analysis can be done both qualitatively and quantitatively, claimed that content analysis helps the researcher understand the studied topics in accordance with the frequency and significance of its variables and helps interpret the subtext and contexts.⁵²

Based on the data of *Kibris OnAir*, which publishes statistics regarding the follow-up and interaction rates of news sites on a weekly basis, four internet newspapers that allow access to analytical data among the 20 most interactive online newspapers that also broadcast *WEB TV* on *Facebook* were included in the study. In this context, within the duration of the study, the researchers were appointed as managers of the social media (*Facebook*) pages of the *Haber Kibris*, *Kibris Net Haber*, *Ses Kibris* and *Topuz* newspapers to collect the data.

The reason that this study focusses only on newspapers in North Cyprus that publish through the internet rather than the web pages of traditional newspapers, is that unlike traditional newspapers, newspapers that publish online only gain income through advertisements. The fact that there are no paid memberships or paywalls practices for the internet newspapers in North Cyprus also provides a better setting to evaluate the clickbait economy. The mentioned newspapers also engage in internet television broadcasting. Contrary to the common application of internet television around the world, internet television broadcasting in North Cyprus is conducted through *Facebook* instead of *YouTube*. This helps provide faster news and enables the videos that receive more interactions to be shared. The fact that the four newspapers within the scope of this study used different methods to share videos is important with regard to examining which forms of videos receive the most interactions.

⁵¹ HSIEH, H.-F., SHANNON, S. E.: Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. In *Qualitative Health Research*, 2005, Vol. 15, No. 9, p. 1278.

⁵² See: PARVEEN, H., SHOWKAT, N.: *Modul 27: Content Analysis*. [online]. [2022-11-15]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318815342_Content_Analysis>.

The study was conducted over a one-month period beginning on the 1st of August 2021 and ending on the 30th of August 2021. A total of 400 news reports were examined out of the first 100 news reports of each newspaper that gained the most interactions (likes, shares, comments) in order to analyse how social media interaction affects news content. The mentioned news reports were separated into groups of news text, video and photographs in order for the multimedia characteristics to be defined. Additionally, the news reports were coded according to their topics for the main research argument to be tested. The news reports were separated into codes including “Current Affairs”, “Politics”, “World”, “Health”, “Crime”, “Economy”, “Exclusive Content”, “Education”, “Accidents”, and the most common in traditional and internet journalism in North Cyprus, “Death Notices”. Furthermore, in order to examine the reflection of multimedia use, which is one of the main aspects that separates internet journalism from traditional media,⁵³ has on the click rates, videos containing news in North Cyprus internet newspapers have been coded according to their source. These were then categorised according to the sites’ own news programs, news containing videos and non-original video content from the internet under the codes of “private”, “agenda”, “Internet” and “program”. The private category is formed from short news videos which are produced by online newspapers themselves, the agenda category is formed from live videos which are given from location by newspaper themselves, Internet category is formed from videos which is taken from the Internet and produced by other sources and finally the program category refers the long-term programs (news programmes, guest programmes, interviews, etc.). For the data obtained from the study to be significant, it is also beneficial to examine the number of followers for each newspaper that are included in the study. Although these numbers may seem low, considering the population is only 382,000, they are actually high. The number of current followers on the commercial *Facebook* page of *Haber Kibris*, which was established on the 10th of February 2011 is 199,000, and the *Kibris Net Haber Facebook* page, which was established on the 6th of December 2015, has current 34,000 followers. The *Topuz* newspaper established its commercial *Facebook* page on the 23rd of July 2020 and has 32,000 current followers. The *Ses* newspaper opened its *Facebook* page on the 6th of October 2020 and has 14,000 current followers.

3 Findings and Discussions

The 400 posts that received the most interaction during the one month follow up of online newspapers included in the study were first examined under the categories of news, videos and photographs. Although there are photographs, both from the archives or taken by themselves, used in the news evaluated under the news category, the posts examined under the photograph category are photographic/graphic posts that do not include a news text. In this context, 301 out of the 400 posts obtained from the four news sites were news, 88 were videos and 11 were photographs.

Newspaper	News	Video	Photographs
Haber Kibris	99	1	-
Net Haber	59	39	2
Ses Kibris	73	27	-
Topuz	70	21	9
Total	300	88	11

TABLE 1: Total Publication Distribution

Source: own processing, 2022

⁵³ See: PAVLIK, J.: *Journalism and New Media*. New York, NY : Colombia University Press, 2012.

This shows that news articles received the most shares at a rate of 75%, while videos were shared at 22% and photographs were shared at 3% out of the 300 posts that received the most interaction. The data indicates that *Haber Kibris* and *Ses Kibris* newspaper posts in the form of only images did not make it into the top 100 posts that received the most interaction whereas these types of posts shared by *Kibris Net Haber* and *Topuz* newspapers received the most interaction. Although the number of written news posts of the sites is higher than the number of posts containing videos, the fact that the latter have more interactions at a rate of ¼ directs news sites to post news containing videos.

When the type of sharing that received the most interaction was evaluated on the basis of newspapers, it was found that 99 of the 100 shares that received the most interaction in *Haber Kibris* online newspaper were news, while a video share entered the top 100. *Kibris Net Haber* for which the video category received the most interactions out of their 100 posts with the most interactions, had 39 videos, 59 news and 2 photograph posts on their list. For *Ses Kibris* newspaper, 73 news and 27 videos were among the 100 posts that received the most interaction. A total of 70 news and 21 video and 9 photograph posts were included in *Topuz* newspaper's 100 posts that received the most interaction. By publishing a single photograph, the *Topuz* newspaper highlighted a question related to the photograph and created a questionnaire. It can be said that one of the reasons why the *Topuz* newspaper has more photographic topics among the most interactive posts compared to other news sites is that the method frequently applied by the newspaper in question is effective.

While audio/video/text contents that are separate from each other in traditional media can be presented together on the internet, the audience has a wide choice in terms of deciding from which newspaper and in which format they will follow the news. Undoubtedly, media networks speed up the process of this content reaching the reader and they ensure that the audience can randomly access large amounts of news. Perceived audience demand for video, the perception that large platforms, especially *Facebook*, are encouraging and rewarding video, and the higher advertising rates associated with video motivate news organizations to pursue the opportunities offered by online news video.⁵⁴ In this context, grouping the news of the internet newspapers included in the research under news (depends on text), photo and video codes is relevant in terms of results. The results have worth in terms of both the weight of news containing videos among the most clicked news and the prevalence of internet newspapers using video content.

Due to their multimedia infrastructure, online newspapers have the opportunity to share videos as well as text and photographs and when these are examined according to their distribution of subjects, it is seen that special news is the video content that receives the most interaction. Within the scope of video content with which readers interact, there is no significant difference between live broadcasts related to the agenda, soft news content videos taken from various local/foreign websites and news programs and interviews made in the form of *Web TV* programs of online newspapers.

Video Contents	<i>Haber Kibris</i>	<i>Net Haber</i>	<i>Ses Kibris</i>	<i>Topuz</i>	Total
Private	-	11	-	13	24
Agenda	-	1	19	2	22
Internet	1	13	2	5	21
Program	-	14	6	1	21
					88

TABLE 2: Video Contents According to Their Topic

Source: own processing, 2022

⁵⁴ KALOGEROPOULOS, A., NIELSEN, R. K.: Investing in Online Video News. In *Journalism Studies*, 2018, Vol. 19, No. 15, p. 2208.

Therefore, when videos amongst the posts that received the most interaction are examined, it is seen that 24 of the special news, 22 of the videos about the agenda, 21 of the online videos and 21 of the videos made up of the newspapers' own programs are the posts that received the most interaction. The fact that there is no significant difference between these results leads us to the conclusion that the videos in internet newspapers are clicked on according to their content, regardless of their sources. Audiences do not consider about whether the video contents are produced by newspaper themselves or taken from another platform.

3.1 Contents with the Most Interactions

News content, which is the primary content of online newspapers, is examined under the ten main headings of death, world news, current affairs, health, crime, economy, exclusive news, politics, education and accidents. In this regard, it is interesting how the subject of news that attracts the most interaction is death. It is seen that the second topic is current affairs and that the other news topics received nearly half the interactions of these other two topics.

	Haber Kibris	Net Haber	Ses Kibris	Topuz	Total	Percentage	Haber Kibris	Net Haber	Ses Kibris	Topuz	Total
Total News Amount (written)	99	59	73	70	301	News Amount	99	59	73	70	301
Death	27	31	23	3	84	Death	27.3	52.5	31.5	3	27.9
World	24	1	-	20	45	Current Affairs	25	10.2	29	21	26.9
Current Affairs	25	6	29	21	81	World	24	1.7	-	20	19.9
Health	5	2	6	3	16	Exclusive	2	15.3	1	13	8.3
Crime	8	2	5	6	21	Crime	8	2	5	6	7.0
Economy	3	4	3	4	14	Health	5	2	6	3	5.3
Exclusive	2	9	1	13	25	Economy	3	4	3	4	4.6
Politics	1	2	2	-	5	Accidents	4	2	2	-	2.7
Education	-	-	2	-	2	Politics	1	2	2	-	1.7
Accidents	4	2	2	-	8	Education	-	-	2	-	0.7

TABLE 3: The News Topics That Received the Most Interaction as Number and Percentage

Source: own processing, 2022

According to the calculations conducted on the total news posts that received the most interactions, death news received the highest interaction with 27.9% and was followed by current affairs news with 26.9%. The third topic that received the most interaction with 19.9% was world news followed by exclusive news with 8.3%. When advertisements are considered, it is seen that they were mostly on news about death due to this topic gaining the most interactions from audiences as a result of North Cyprus being a small community. When the content of this news is examined, it is seen that it does not include details about the death itself and includes a limited amount of information pertaining to the death, at what date and time and where the deceased was from. Due to North Cyprus being a small community where everyone knows each other, this news topic received the most interaction and it can be said that the reason for the topic of current affairs being second is the need of the audience to obtain news about what is happening around them.

When the interaction rates are examined as a whole, although the table shows that the highest interaction was received on the news topic of death, the analysis conducted separately on each newspaper shows some differences in categories that obtained the most interaction.

Content	Haber Kibris
Death	27.3
Current Affairs	25
World	24
Crime	8
Health	5
Accidents	4
Economy	3
Exclusive	2
Politics	1
Education	-

TABLE 4: *Haber Kibris Newspaper Distribution of the Most Interactive Content by Categories*
Source: own processing, 2022

Content	Net Haber
Death	52.5
Current Affairs	10.2
Exclusive	15.3
Economy	4
Crime	2
Health	2
Accidents	2
Politics	2
World	1.7
Education	-

TABLE 5: *Net Haber Newspaper Distribution of the Most Interactive Content by Categories*
Source: own processing, 2022

Content	Ses Kibris
Death	31.5
Current Affairs	29
Health	6
Crime	5
Economy	3
Politics	2
Education	2
Accidents	2
Exclusive	1
World	-

TABLE 6: *Ses Kibris Newspaper Distribution of the Most Interactive Content by Categories*
Source: own processing, 2022

Content	Topuz Newspaper
Current Affairs	21
World	20
Exclusive	13
Crime	6
Economy	4
Health	3
Death	3
Accidents	-
Politics	-
Education	-

TABLE 7: *Topuzr Newspaper Distribution of the Most Interactive Content by Categories*

Source: own processing, 2022

The same as the general ranking is seen in *Haber Kıbrıs*, while more than half (52.5%) of the news that received the most interaction of *Kıbrıs Net Haber* was death news, and special news was the second category that received the most interaction. The topic that received the least interaction for *Kıbrıs Net Haber* was world news, whereas the second category that received the most interaction was exclusive news. While the ranking of death and current affairs news was parallel to the general ranking in *Ses Cyprus*, world news entered the top ten for this newspaper. In *Topuz* newspaper, in which death news only constituted 3%, the most interaction areas are seen in the form of current affairs, world news and exclusive news.

4 Summary

The video posts of the four newspapers that were examined show similarities. For example, 27% of the videos that ranked in the 100 posts that received the most interaction were exclusive news topics and 24% were live publications under the topic category of current affairs. Videos obtained from the internet and TV programs that are the own production of the *WEB TV* of the newspapers make up 24% of the posts in the first 100 that received the most interactions. Only one video that the *Haber Kıbrıs* newspaper obtained from the internet entered the first 100 posts that received the most interaction, whereas 70% of the videos that entered the rankings from the *Ses Kıbrıs* newspaper included videos related to current affairs. The TV programs of the *Kıbrıs Net Haber* newspaper came first, and exclusive news ranked the highest for the *Topuz* newspaper. For *Ses Kıbrıs*, which had no exclusive news among the news that received the most interaction, the highest interaction was for their current affairs news, then their TV programs and online publications. *Kıbrıs Haber Net*, whose topics all ranked close to each, other had the highest rankings for online publications and exclusive news. On the other hand, in the *Topuz* newspaper, 62% of the videos included in the 100 shares that receive the most interaction were exclusive news videos. This was followed by the videos obtained online.

There are also photographs within the top 100 posts that received the most interactions for the *Topuz* and *Kıbrıs Net Haber* newspapers. Other than news, *Kıbrıs Net Haber* also shared tables that were made into photographs on *Facebook* that showed statistical information, whereas the signs of the personalised publishing strategy of the *Topuz* newspaper can be seen in their photographs. The newspaper posts photographs with questions that trigger discussion and comments. For example, they post an image of a traditional Cypriot dish and ask what the name of that dish is or what the name of that image is compared to. Due to its sensitivity in terms of protecting cultural values, the comments on these photographs increase interaction.

5 Conclusion

In addition to traditional news sources, the internet, which is a common source of news today, has made the qualities of the news such as being read, followed, clicked and shared measurable. Online newspapers that are in competition with traditional media sources or with their own peers use the information that they obtain about the number of followers and the amount of interaction they receive via various algorithms and use these data to compete and to obtain more advertising. This study, was conducted over a one-month period in August 2021 and examined the social media accounts (*Facebook*) of the *Haber Kıbrıs*, *Kıbrıs Net Haber*, *Ses Kıbrıs* and *Topuz* online newspapers, which they use as a primary source to reach their readers/audience, presents data showing the news-click relationship in North Cyprus. When the 100 posts of these four newspapers that received the most interaction during the aforementioned period were analysed, it was seen that the social/cultural aspects of Cyprus also affect news selection and click rates. The most interesting conclusion of this study, which shows the difference between internet newspapers in North Cyprus and those in other countries, is that the most clicks were received for “death notices”. Therefore, newspapers post news of deaths on their social media pages in order to increase their click rates. These types of news items are preferred to increase the interaction according to the socio-cultural structure of Cyprus in order to strengthen the data presented to the advertisers.

The data presented in this study show that the *WEB TV* posts that online newspapers share on their *Facebook* page also increases interaction. *WEB TV* publications that are widely used in Cyprus are carried out in the form of live broadcast discussion programs, press conferences that that show current affairs, live activities and protests, special interviews and videos from the internet that include interesting news content. The fact that videos have an important place among the most interactive shares of newspapers stands out as a tool that online newspapers use to promote more interaction.

When the sharing and click data of the newspapers that are included in this study are examined, it is seen that each online newspaper has their own personalised methods and priorities to increase their rate of readers/audience and ensure more interaction. This shows that in addition to appealing to the general public, newspapers adopt different methods to create followers. It is seen that internet newspapers published in North Cyprus select most methods to increase their interaction rates and receive more advertisements. The fact that last minute news, which provides an overview of information rather than news that, contains announcing news, increasing the interaction rate of newspapers determines the content of the news and it can be said that internet newspapers select content that gains the most interaction on Facebook in order to increase their potential to gain advertisements.

Literature and Sources:

APUKE, O. D.: Another Look at the Political Economy of the Mainstream and New Media. In *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 2018, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 6-19. ISSN 2059-1845.

ARAL, S., ZHAO, M.: *Social Media Sharing and Online News Consumption*. [online]. [2023-11-04]. Available at: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3328864>>.

ARENBERG, T., LOWREY, W.: The Impact of Web Metrics on Community News Decisions: A Resource Dependence Perspective. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2019, Vol. 96, No. 1, p. 131-149. ISSN 1077-6990. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018801318>>.

BAZACO, A., REDONDO, M., SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA, P.: Clickbait as a Strategy of Viral Journalism: Conceptualisation and Methods. In *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 2019, No. 74, p. 94-115. ISSN 1138-5820. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1323>>.

- CHERUBINI, F., NIELSEN, R. K.: *Editorial Analytics: How News Media Are Developing and Using Audience Data and Metrics*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016. [online]. [2022-02-24]. Available at: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/editorial-analytics-how-news-media-are-developing-and-using-audience-data-and-metrics>>.
- CHUNG, D. S.: Interactive Features of Online Newspapers: Identifying Patterns and Predicting Use of Engaged Readers. In *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 658-679. ISSN 1083-6101. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2008.00414.x>>.
- CURRAN, J., IYENGAR, S., LUND, A. B., SALOVAARA-MORING, I.: Media System, Public Knowledge and Democracy: A Comparative Study. In CURRAN, J. (ed.): *Media and Democracy*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2011, p. 47-60. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203406878-10>>.
- DIXON, S. J.: *Number of Worldwide Social Network Users 2018-2027*. [online]. [2022-05-24]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>>.
- DUFFY, A., LING, R., TANDOC JR., E. C.: The People Have Spoken (The Bastards?): Finding a Legitimate Place for Feedback in the Journalistic Field. In *Journalism Practice*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 9, p. 11301147. ISSN 1751-2786. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1372696>>.
- Ekonomik Ve Sosyal Göstergeler. Economic and Social Indicators*. [online]. [2022-11-20]. Available at: <<https://www.devplan.org/Eco-sos/Book/SEG-2019.pdf>>.
- Elektronik Haberleşme Sektörü 3 Aylık Veriler Raporu 2021 – 2. Çeyrek*. [online]. [2021-11-09]. Available at: <<https://www.bthk.org/Documents/raporlar/pazar-verileri-sektorel-raporlar/2021%20Q2%20Raporu.pdf>>.
- ERCAN, E. E.: KKTC’de Basınında Ekonomi ve Siyaset İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Saha Araştırması. In *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2021, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 329-346. ISSN 2667-8683. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.18037/ausbd.959214>>.
- ERÇAKICA, H.: Kıbrıs Türk Basınına Tarihsel Bir Bakış: ENOSİS’E Karşı Mücadeleden Kamuoyu Tacirliğine. In *The Journal of Academic Social Science*, 2019, Vol. 92, p. 339-350. ISSN 2148-2489. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.16992/ASOS.14902>>.
- ERGÜÇLÜ, S.: *Kim Gazet*. [online]. [2022-12-06]. Available at: <<http://www.erguclu.eu/>>.
- FUCHS, C.: Dallas Smythe Today – The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. In *TripleC*, 2012, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 692-740. ISSN 1726-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v10i2.443>>.
- FUCHS, C.: Theorising and Analysing Digital Labour: From Global Value Chains to Modes of Production. In *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2013, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 3-27. ISSN 2357-1705.
- FÜRST, S.: In the Service of Good Journalism and Audience Interests? How Audience Metrics Affect News Quality. In *Media and Communication*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 270-280. ISSN 2183-2439. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3228>>.
- GANDINI, A.: Digital Labour: An Empty Signifier? In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2021, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 369-380. ISSN 0163-4437. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720948018>>.
- HANÇER, E.: Kıbrıs Türk Basınında Sahiplik Yapısı ve Haber Üzerindeki Etkileri. In *Küresel İletişim Dergisi*, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 1-13. ISSN 1450-4170.
- HERMIDA, A.: Social Journalism: Exploring How Social Media Is Shaping Journalism. In SIAPERA, E., VEGLIS, A. (eds.): *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*. Chichester : John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- HSIEH, H.-F., SHANNON, S. E.: Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. In *Qualitative Health Research*, 2005, Vol. 15, No. 9, p. 1277-1288. ISSN 1049-7323. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>>.
- KALOGEROPOULOS, A., NIELSEN, R. K.: Investing in Online Video News. In *Journalism Studies*, 2018, Vol. 19, No. 15, p. 2207-2224. ISSN 461-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1331709>>.

- KAPLAN, A. M., HAENLEIN, M.: Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. In *Business Horizons*, 2010, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 59-68. ISSN 0007-6813. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>>.
- LEE, E.-J., TANDOC, E.: When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption. In *Human Communication Research*, 2017, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 436-449. ISSN 0360-3989. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12123>>.
- LEHTISAARI, K. et al.: Comparing Innovation and Social Media Strategies in Scandinavian and US Newspapers. In *Digital Journalism*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 8, p. 1029-1040. ISSN 2167-0811. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1503061>>.
- MCCHESENEY, R. W.: *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*. New York, NY : New Press, 2013.
- MOSCO, V.: *The Political Economy of Communication Rethinking and Renewal*. London : Sage Publications, 1998.
- MUNGER, K.: All the News That's Fit to Click: The Economics of Clickbait Media. In *Political Communication*, 2020, Vol. 38, p. 376-397. ISSN 1058-4609. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1687626>>.
- MURDOCK, G., GOLDING, P.: Political Economy and Media Production: A Reply to Dwyer. In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2016, Vol. 38, No. 5, p. 763-769. ISSN 0163-4437. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716655094>>.
- NIELSEN, R. K., SCHRÖDER, K. C.: The Relative Importance of Social Media for Accessing, Finding, and Engaging with News: An Eight-Country Cross-Media Comparison. In *Digital Journalism*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 472-489. ISSN 2167-0811. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2013.872420>>.
- NORSTRÖM, L., ISLIND, A. S., SNIS, U. M. L.: Algorithmic Work: The Impact of Algorithms on Work with Social Media. In *Proceedings of the 28th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS)*. Marrakech, presented on 15th-17th June 2020. [online]. [2022-05-24]. Available at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2020_rp/185>.
- OWEN, D., BAHJA, F., MOSHAVI, S.: *The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms*. Washington, D.C. : ICFJ, 2019. [online]. [2022-02-08]. Available at: <<https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2019%20Final%20Report.pdf>>.
- OWEN, D.: *The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms*. Washington, D.C. : ICFJ, 2017. [online]. [2022-02-08]. Available at: <<https://www.icfj.org/our-work/2017-state-technology-global-newsrooms-survey>>.
- ÖZE, N.: Gündelik Yaşamda İnternet ve Sosyal Ağları Kullanım Pratikleri: Kuzey Kıbrıs Vaka İncelemesi. In *Intermedia International e-Journal*, 2016, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 278-300. ISSN 2149-3669.
- PARVEEN, H., SHOWKAT, N.: *Modul 27: Content Analysis*. [online]. [2022-11-15]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318815342_Content_Analysis>.
- PAVLIK, J.: *Journalism and New Media*. New York, NY : Colombia University Press, 2012.
- POELL, T., VAN DIJCK, J.: Social Media and Journalistic Independence. In BENNET, J., STRANGE, N. (eds.): *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* London : Routledge, p. 182-201.
- SRISARACAM, S.: Ethical Use of Online and Social Media in News Reporting of Thai Newsroom. In *The Asian Conference on Media & Mass Communication 2014 MEDIASIA2014*. Nagoya : IAFOR, 2014, p. 273-286.
- TANDOC JR., E. C., VOS, T. P.: The Journalist Is Marketing the News. In *Journalism Practice*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 8, p. 950-966. ISSN 1751-2786. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1087811>>.
- TENENBOIM, O., COHEN, A. A.: What Prompts Users to Click and Comment: A Longitudinal Study of Online News. In *Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 198-217. ISSN 1464-8849. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913513996>>.

VILLI, M., PICARD, R. G.: Transformation and Innovation of Media Business Models. In DEUZE, M., PRENGER, M. (eds.): *Making Media. Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2018, 121-132.

WITTEL, A.: Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2013, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 906-907. ISSN 1369-118X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.829512>>.

Authors



Assist. Prof. Özen Çatal, PhD.

Near East University
Faculty of Communication
Yakın Doğu Bulvarı PK: 99138
Lefkoşa/KKTC Mersin 10
TURKEY
ozen.catal@neu.edu.tr
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9227-4097>

Özen Çatal is an assistant professor at the Department of Journalism at Near East University in North Cyprus. She have completed her doctorate at Lefke European University. She has had experiences in various media instutions. She curently deals with new media, digital journalism subjects and immersive journalism. She is a member of Media Ethich Councille in North Cyprus.

Dr. Emin Akkor, PhD.

Eastern Mediterranean University
Faculty of Communication
99628, Gazimağusa/KKTC
Mersin 10
TURKEY
eminakkor@emu.edu.tr

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3867-3864>



Emin Akkor is the president of the Cyprus Turkish Journalists Association. He is actively works as a journalist and he is the editor-in-chief of the Kıbrıs Net Haber newspaper. He also teaches journalism part-time at Eastern Mediterranean University. He completed his doctoral education at the Near East University. He has had studies on journalism history in Cyprus and national identity. He has recently focused on digital journalism studies.



Dinko Jukić

Educational Values in Digital Games

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-09>

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to research, analyse and explain the media values and educational values of digital games. The work is based on the philosophy of education according to Vuk-Pavlović and the semiotics of the media according to Barthes' theory. The aspect of media pedagogy towards digital media is discussed, especially the context of adventures and interactive drama. It answers the question of what the hidden meanings of digital games are. The author starts from the hypothesis that digital games users receive media messages on a semiotic level, and by deconstructing symbols, educational values and media meanings are revealed. The context of media literacy was observed from the aspect of understanding the symbols of digital games in accordance with media competencies. Since digital games reflect social reality, at least in the context of messages, attitudes and values, media competences represent the ability to understand and compare cultural and media literacy. In this sense, digital games have a specific aesthetic, ideological, pedagogical, and symbolic impact on users, which results from the critical thinking of society. Kellner's theory of media culture will help us to understand the reasons why certain content, symbols and myths become popular and to raise awareness of the social environment of media culture from which digital games emerge. The research results of this study confirm that the observed digital games have educational values and that media meanings are deconstructed through semiotic analysis. This is especially true of the archetypal roles of parents and guardians.

KEY WORDS

Digital Game. Education Value. Media Literacy. Media Pedagogy. Media Semiotic.

1 Introduction

Over the last thirty years, digital game development technology has changed the understanding of the virtual world. Digital games have evolved from simple entertainment into media messages. They are determined by the term game studies¹ as an interdisciplinary field of research that includes medicine², psychology³, sociology⁴, pedagogy⁵, marketing⁶ and philosophy.⁷ Understanding the phenomenon of digital games requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Media culture produces a new form of culture⁸ and dominates contemporary life. Based on the content provided by media culture, users form attitudes, beliefs and analyse values. In this sense, the metaphorical understanding of the media as an “*extension of the body*”⁹ that amazes people in any material that is not the human body tells us how each such extension affects the psychological and social structure. In other words, culture, as we knew it before the appearance of digital culture, changed our understanding of the world¹⁰, society, and our experience.

It is this change, a new type of media,¹¹ that strongly influences the understanding and experience of aesthetic, ethical and educational values. The same content is perceived differently if the medium, through which we project it, changes. In this context, philosophically speaking, McLuhan is right when he claims the medium is the message.¹² This means that references from

¹ MÄYRÄ, F.: *An Introduction to Game Studies*. London : Sage, 2008, p. 13.

² BROWN, S. J., LIEBERMAN, D. A., GERMENY, B. A. et al.: Educational Video Game for Juvenile Diabetes: Results of a Controlled Trial. In *Medical Informatics*, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 87; BARTHOLOMEW, L. K., GOLD, R. S., PARCEL, G. S. et al.: Watch, Discover, Think, and Act: Evaluation of Computer-Assisted Instruction to Improve Asthma Self-Management in Inner-City Children. In *Patient Education and Counseling*, 2000, Vol. 39, No. 2-3, p. 275; GOLD, J. I., KIM, S. H., KANT, A. J. et al.: Effectiveness of Virtual Reality for Pediatric Pain Distraction during IV Placement. In *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 2006, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 210-211; OU, Y., MCGLONE, E. R., CAMM, C. F. et al.: Does Playing Video Games Improve Laparoscopic Skills? In *International Journal of Surgery*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 5, p. 368; HARRINGTON, C. M., CHAITANYA, V., DICKER, P. et al.: Playing to Your Skills: A Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluating a Dedicated Video Game for Minimally Invasive Surgery. In *Surgical Endoscopy*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 9, p. 3819.

³ See: SLEZÁKOVÁ, S.: Pathological Gambling and Co-Dependence. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 47-49. See also: BALÁŽIKOVÁ, M.: Real-Life Frustration from Virtual Worlds: The Motivational Potential of Frustration. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 64-66; MOSSELAER Van de N., CASELLIS, S.: The Narrative Effects and Value of Memory Discrepancies in Digital Games. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 38.

⁴ See: ROKOŠNÝ, I.: Digital Games as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Brief History and Current State. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 55-58. See also: JURCZYK-ROMANOWSKA, E., ZAKOWICZ, I.: Dominant Playing Styles in an Authorial Role-Playing Game in Different Age Groups. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 15-22.

⁵ See: MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-43. See also: MIŠKOV, J.: Motivation with Game Elements in Education Mediated by E-Learning Resources. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 28-30; JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19.

⁶ MAGO, Z.: The Concept of Timelessness Applied to Advergaming. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 28-29; ALFÖLDIOVÁ, A., TRNKA, A.: In-World Marketing in Second Life. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 68-69; JUKIĆ, D.: To Brand or Not to Brand: The Perception of Brand Image in the Digital Games Industry. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 27.

⁷ See: KŁOSIŃSKI, M.: Games and Utopia. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 7-8. See also: NTELIA, R. E.: Fortnite as Bildungsspiel? Battle Royale Games and Sacrificial Rites. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 91-92; JUKIĆ, D.: Why Do We Play Digital Games? Anthropological-Philosophical-Pedagogical Aspects. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 48.

⁸ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 5.

⁹ MCLUHAN, M.: *Razumijevanje medija*. Zagreb : Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁰ KAČINOVA, V.: From a Reductionist to a Holistic Model of Digital Competence and Media Education. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 19.

¹¹ BAUER, T. A.: *Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture*. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 48.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

literature, film and music are combined in digital games, but also vice versa: self-referentiality exists within digital games, just as there is intermediality and intertextuality.¹³

Of course, this does not mean that the use of new media will have the same effect, but for the effect of educational values¹⁴ to be the same, the level of the media competences and media literacy of the educators is crucial. According to Škripcová, digital games can develop players' media competence¹⁵, which can be decoded using the method of semiotics.¹⁶ Such deconstruction starts from Barthes' theory¹⁷ that interprets the meaning of messages.

The topic of this study is the analysis of media pedagogy¹⁸, i.e., educational values¹⁹ in the context of digital games. This study is partly inspired by a study in which Škripcová analyses digital games and confirms how they can teach. The study deepens the analysis of digital games from the aspect of media semiotics, and especially from the ludological context in which gamers are immersed in virtual reality²⁰ through their interaction. More precisely, we will try to answer the question of whether digital games influence the formation of educational values that shape new meanings at the connotational level.²¹ And, if they do, what are the values that digital games promote?

2 Theoretical Approaches

Media pedagogy (*Medienpädagogik*) is a concept that encompasses two key areas: education and media. However, it should be noted that the concepts of upbringing and education (*Erziehung und Bildung*) differ from the concept of education used in English language. Since the theory of media pedagogy in Slovak and Croatian pedagogy is based on common values²²

¹³ See: MAGO, Z.: Easter Eggs in Digital Games as a Form of Textual Transcendence (Case Study). In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 53-54; JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-533.

¹⁴ VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-73.

¹⁵ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

¹⁶ JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19.

¹⁷ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb: Pelago, 2009, p. 147.

¹⁸ See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34. See also: TULODZIECKI, G.: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung zentraler Begriffe bei der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Medien. In MOSER, H., GRELL, P., NIESYTO, H. (eds.): *Medienbildung und Medienkompetenz*. Munich : Kopaed, 2011, p. 22-24; SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.

¹⁹ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-99; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-56.

²⁰ See: ANDREWS, J.: Videogames as Literary Devices. In CLARKE, A., MITCHELL, G. (eds.): *Videogames and Art*. Bristol, Chicago : Intellect Book, 2007, p. 54-56. See also: MUKHERJEE, S.: *Video Games and Storytelling Reading Games and Playing Books*. Kolkata : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 177-181.

²¹ See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-151. See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-33.

²² See: VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Graditelji mostova hrvatsko-slovačkoga prijateljstva = Budovatelia mostov chorvatsko-slovenskeho priateljstva*. Zagreb : Društvo hrvatsko-slovačkog prijateljstva, 2000, p. 75-84. See also: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 72-76; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 125. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

and on the understanding of the philosophy of education, the study analyses educational values in the context of the German pedagogical theory²³, on which they are based.

What is specific in defining media pedagogy is its *universality* and interdisciplinary nature. Very often, the terms media pedagogy, media literacy and media education are equated. Kačínová warns that the mentioned terms are relevant for media pedagogy²⁴ (i.e., media education), and its most important dimensions are the cognitive, social-affective, and ethical dimensions of educators.²⁵ Balážová²⁶ states that the field of media studies is viewed from different perspectives, such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, pedagogy, and linguistics. It is also an introduction to media pedagogy as an interdisciplinary field of educational sciences, as it encompasses different influence areas of pedagogy.

In this sense, media pedagogy contains ethical, social, psychological, political and cultural analysis of the media. The development of media education is closely related to the development of communication. We observe the areas of media pedagogy through the constructs of media education, media culture, media didactics²⁷, media studies and media ethics. Media education (*Medienbildung*) consists of two constructs: media literacy and media competences. We will also look at the concept of media pedagogy from the aspect of media semiotics, which is like the sociological understanding of symbolic interactionism and Kellner's analysis of media culture.

However, an even bigger problem is that media pedagogy does not yet have typical methods²⁸ that would be characteristic of educational sciences. German authors warn against this²⁹, so that media pedagogy does not, over time, become a *critical theory*. Criticism of the media is normatively oriented and refers to value principles.³⁰ The very concept of competence is abstract in its essence.³¹ Media competences are not always related to educators, teachers, and users, but also to parents, who are part of the media world.³² Parents should also develop media competence.³³

²³ See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34-56; See also: HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-58; BAUER, T. A.: Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 54-67; BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 160-177; SCHORB, B.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.

²⁴ KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 39.

²⁵ See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 28-29; KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 28-49; BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 8.

²⁶ BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 20.

²⁷ KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 30.

²⁸ BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 159.

²⁹ See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 43. See also: BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 160.

³⁰ See: KÜBLER, H-D.: Prämissen und Paradigmen von Medienkritik. Ver-such einer Kategorisierung. In NIESYTO, H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 15; See also: NIESYTO, H.: Medienkritik – Entwicklungsphasen und aktuelle Herausforderungen. In NIESYTO, H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 59-61.

³¹ HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-58.

³² HOFFMANN, B.: Medien-Erziehungs-Kompetenz von Eltern im System Familie. In ANGENENT, H., HEIDKAMP, B., KERDEL, D. (eds.): *Digital Diversity. Diversität und Bildung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer, 2019, p. 103-107.

³³ See: HOFFMANN, B.: Anregungsmilieus mit digitalen Kommunikationsmedien - Herausforderungen für Medienbildung im System Familie. In LAUFFER, J., RÖLLECKE, R. (eds.): *Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute - Medienpädagogische Konzepte und Perspektiven*. Munich : Kopaed, 2014, p. 23-27.

Digital games represent an entertainment medium that we understand as a form of cultural pedagogy.³⁴ In this sense, the acquisition of media literacy and media competences³⁵ can help in the interpretation of cultural environments. Social reality is determined by the media and, as such, it includes all the consequences: there is no existence that would be free without the media.³⁶ What is crucial for media pedagogy is the observation and interpretation of media and constructs³⁷, such as those found in the studies of D. Jukić.³⁸ Digital games represent aesthetic pleasure and educational value.³⁹

This leads us to the conclusion that the goal of media pedagogy is not only to decode content but it should be based on the concept of media literacy, media education, media ethics and media competencies. One of the key goals of media pedagogy is to recognize the content, decode it⁴⁰ and make a deconstruction between content and form. In this sense, media, like digital games, require decoding, analysis and critical analysis. These are the so-called communicative competences⁴¹, which include all the abilities that an individual must acquire to use media products, exchange them and on them. Only such competences can be considered media competences that lead to education.

Media literacy is part of media education and can be understood as a narrower term for media competence⁴², i.e., the ability to critically analyse media content. The abilities that an individual needs to acquire (media competences) refer to building a critical reflection on media messages. This means that media competences include the ability to navigate the media world⁴³ in a critical and independent manner. Therefore, we view the dimensions of media competence as cognitive, which refers to knowledge; moral, which refers to the ethical dimension; and social, which refers to the social policy of society. An example of the cognitive dimensions of media

³⁴ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 7.

³⁵ See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34-47; See also: HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-59; HOFFMANN, B.: Anregungsmilieus mit digitalen Kommunikationsmedien - Herausforderungen für Medienbildung im System Familie. In LAUFFER, J., RÖLLECKE, R. (eds.): *Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute - Medienpädagogische Konzepte und Perspektiven*. Munich : Kopaed, 2014, p. 23-26; MOSER, H.: *Einführung in die Medienpädagogik Aufwachsen im Medienzeitalter*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006, p. 28-34; SCHORB, B.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-258.

³⁶ BAUER, T. A.: *Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture*. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 54.

³⁷ BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 12.

³⁸ See: JUKIĆ, D.: Brand Semiotics and Media Pedagogy. In ČÁBYOVÁ, L., BEZÁKOVÁ, Z., MADLEŇÁK, A. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: New Changes, New Challenges*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 290-291; See also: JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-533; JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-18.

³⁹ JUKIĆ, D.: Why Do We Play Digital Games? Anthropological-Philosophical-Pedagogical Aspects. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 41-43.

⁴⁰ BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 9.

⁴¹ BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34.

⁴² KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 35.

⁴³ See: PÖTTINGER, I., SCHILL, W., THIELE, G.: *Medienbildung im Doppelpack - Wie Schule und Jugendhilfe einander ergänzen können*. Bielefeld : GMK, 2004, p. 71; See also: KAČINOVÁ, V.: From a Reductionist to a Holistic Model of Digital Competence and Media Education. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 19.

competence can be found in the study by Kačínová⁴⁴, while an example of ethical values can be found in Magová's study.⁴⁵

Theunert observes media competences in the context of media knowledge⁴⁶, which can be understood as an understanding of communication skills. Schorb⁴⁷ observes the same concept of media knowledge (*Medienwissen*) through three groups as functional, structural and orientative knowledge.⁴⁸ For the purposes of this study, orientative knowledge is the most important because it enables the self-knowledge of digital games users. In other words, the critical analysis mentioned by Kellner is enabled. Therefore, we can connect the ethical context of media pedagogy, as well as educational values, with aesthetic values. Orientative knowledge is a precondition for developing critical reflection and educational values, and only in this context we can talk about media literacy. Also, we can understand such media competences as Kačínová does,⁴⁹ i.e., as a set of desirable qualities.

L. Škripcová observes media competence and media literacy in the context of critical thinking.⁵⁰ In this sense, knowledge, skills and abilities that help an individual to critically receive and analyse a game represent the user's media competence. This means that for every genre of digital game, there are media competencies that increase the analytical abilities of the player.⁵¹ However, a media literate player, who recognizes advertisements in digital games, may not always recognize the semiotic level of digital game myths. We recognize such a level of media content *ideology*⁵² in graphic adventure. In this sense, Škripcová is right when she says that such competences are inherent only in games and are not found in the mainstream media⁵³, which Baacke talks about in a similar way.⁵⁴ In other words, the event-creating function, when a gamer must interact with a character or a dialogue in the game in order to progress, represents immersion that indirectly affects the story, but also certain media messages. Specifically, in the fourth episode of *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*⁵⁵, Alvin Junior experiences a mental breakdown and rejects everything Clementine taught him and expresses a desire for revenge and aggression.

According to Kellner, we analyse media culture very similarly to the theory of media pedagogy, with one important difference: we decode the educational values of digital games. Such a point of view is identical to what the German pedagogue Baacke claims in the context

⁴⁴ See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 49-54.

⁴⁵ MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42.

⁴⁶ THEUNERT, H.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., ANFANG, G., DEMMLER, K. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik – Praxis*. Munich : Kopaed, 2009, p. 202.

⁴⁷ SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.

⁴⁸ See: TOLIĆ, M: Aktualnost medijskih kompetencija u suvremenoj pedagogiji. In *Acta Iadertina*, 2008, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 5-10; See also: SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259; KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 41-42.

⁴⁹ See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 26; See also: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 36.

⁵⁰ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 133. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 133.

⁵² KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102.

⁵³ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 134. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

⁵⁴ BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 56-58.

⁵⁵ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2018.

of the media which not only produce entertainment,⁵⁶ but also simulate it and promote its reality.⁵⁶ Therefore, digital games must be analysed, because only in such a discourse can educational values be revealed.⁵⁷ Such constructed realities are a key part of digital games and their virtual reality. Kellner observes such an understanding from a sociological aspect, and analyses such a deconstruction of symbols, images, and myths from the aspect of ideology.⁵⁸ According to him, ideology contains discourses, concepts, images, symbols, and myths.

Kellner includes the analysis of images, symbols, myths, and narratives in the repertoire of *ideological instruments*⁵⁹ that explain ideological messages by combining criticism, interpretation, semiotics, symbolic interactionism⁶⁰ and narrative analysis. This means that by ideologically reading a text, Kellner analyses and interprets politics, culture, and society. Such a *text*, i.e., film, music, digital game, literary work, represents the content of a certain meaning that makes up society and the individual who interprets the world. In this sense, ideology for Kellner is a way of presenting certain ideas, images, rhetoric, values, and symbols that shape reality. Media pedagogy is achieved through media culture, which Kellner calls critical media pedagogy that decodes messages and values⁶¹, and Baacke calls it critical media didactics.⁶²

Media pedagogy is not a luxury, but a necessary perspective⁶³ that analyses educational values. A detailed presentation of such a perspective, including epistemology, research methods that Kellner talks about in the form of critical and interpretive analysis of the meaning of media content⁶⁴ and analysis of media symbols that Barthes talks about⁶⁵, is decoded exclusively by critical semiotic analysis. In this sense, the *cultural biotope*⁶⁶, which Bauer talks about, implies the reproduction of media content in the living space, in which culture develops in the Eagletonian sense.⁶⁷ In other words, Škripcová is right when she analyses digital games and claims that they are a great tool for developing media competence⁶⁸, without gamers being aware not only of the content promoted by the media or ideologies⁶⁹, but also of the educational values that are marked on the connotational level.

According to Vuk-Pavlović's philosophy of education⁷⁰, education is an aesthetic experience⁷¹, because it crystallizes, i.e., it arises from a work of art. If we accept the fact that some digital games can be viewed in the context of a work of art⁷², then the content resulting from a digital game can be in the sphere of aesthetic pleasure. Digital games, such as graphic adventures, can be viewed as an extended context of interpretation of media content

⁵⁶ BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 44-45.

⁵⁸ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 103-108.

⁶⁰ See: MEAD, H., G.: *Um, osoba i društvo*. Zagreb : Jesenski i Turk, 2003, p. 67-77.

⁶¹ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 104.

⁶² BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 48.

⁶³ BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 79.

⁶⁴ See: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 92-97.

⁶⁵ See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 141-163; See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-39.

⁶⁶ BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 82.

⁶⁷ See: EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 87-94. See also: EAGLETON, T.: *Culture*. London : Yale University Press, 2016, p. 15-24.

⁶⁸ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

⁶⁹ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 158-159.

⁷⁰ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-46.

⁷¹ VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 33.

⁷² See: JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-534.

and meanings that promote ideas, worldviews, attitudes, and values. This highest pedagogical idea starts from the revival of values⁷³ that are decoded in the content.

3 Research Methodology

Analytical method⁷⁴, the method of semiotic analysis according to Barthes⁷⁵ and Kellner's theory of media culture⁷⁶ were used in the study. The mentioned methods are compared with the philosophy of education according to Vuk-Pavlović's theory⁷⁷, whose educational values are analysed according to the theory of German media pedagogy⁷⁸ and Škripcová's study of media literacy. The units of digital game analysis are *Life is Strange*⁷⁹, *Life is Strange 2*⁸⁰, *Life is Strange: Before the Storm*⁸¹, *Life is Strange: True Colors*⁸², *The Walking Dead*,⁸³ *The Walking Dead: Season Two*,⁸⁴ *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*⁸⁵ and *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*.⁸⁶

Based on recent research⁸⁷, we can conclude that digital games have educational values and an educational role because they influence user behaviour and attitude formation. However, there is little research on the role of parenting, guardianship and educational values of digital games using the semiotic method.⁸⁸ Therefore, we start from the hypothesis:

H₁: Digital games have educational value.

The goal is to research and identify educational values promoted in digital games that are grouped around graphic adventure. The set was chosen for its specific interactive content construction and user role that develop the user's media competencies and educate.⁸⁹ With

⁷³ VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 42.

⁷⁴ See: WILLIG, C.: *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead : Open University Press, 2013, p. 101-109.

⁷⁵ See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 141-173. See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-44.

⁷⁶ See: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 165-174.

⁷⁷ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

⁷⁸ See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 70-94. See also: TULODZIECKI, G.: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung zentraler Begriffe bei der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Medien. In MOSER, H., GRELL, P., NIESYTO, H. (eds.): *Medienbildung und Medienkompetenz*. Munich : Kopaed, 2011, p. 22-24; BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 161-184; SCHORB, B.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259; HOFFMANN, B.: Medien-Erziehungs-Kompetenz von Eltern im System Familie. In ANGENENT, H., HEIDKAMP, B., KERDEL, D. (eds.): *Digital Diversity. Diversität und Bildung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer, 2019, p. 103-107.

⁷⁹ DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life is Strange*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2015.

⁸⁰ DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life is Strange 2*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2018.

⁸¹ DECK NINE: *Life is Strange: Before the Storm*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2017.

⁸² DECK NINE: *Life is Strange: True Colors*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2021.

⁸³ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2014.

⁸⁴ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: Season Two*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2013.

⁸⁵ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2016.

⁸⁶ TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2018.

⁸⁷ See: MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42. See also: JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19; ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Compare hidden messages in digital games, for example: MAJERSKÝ, M., MAGALOVÁ, L.: Semiotická analýza traileru digitálnej hry – Death Stranding 2. In HLADÍKOVÁ, V., JONISOVÁ, E., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Zborník ŠVOaUK 2023*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2023, p. 108.

⁸⁹ See: ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 135-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

the stated hypothesis, we will research whether meanings of digital games can be analysed by applying media semiotics and whether educational values can be identified. Value principles were observed in accordance with the philosophy of pedagogy.

The model, according to which the semiotic meanings⁹⁰ of digital games are analysed, is based on Barthes' understanding of the linguistic sign at both the denotation and connotation level.⁹¹ According to the structuralist theory of myth⁹², myths generalize the experience of users to achieve a consensus of meaning. Mythic analysis, therefore, provides a decoding of meaning. Applying Barthes' semiotics of myth methodology to digital games⁹³, we view myths as cultural signs. Such cultural signs have default meanings that are encoded in digital games. The semiotic-discursive method implemented by Majerský and Magalová⁹⁴ on the example of the *Death Stranding 2* trailer starts from the level of observation and interpretation of individual symbols of the digital game but does not conduct an in-depth analysis of the myth, i.e., denotation.

A mythic statement arises from content that has already been reworked to make it suitable for a new presentation. From the semiotic aspect, the relationship between two members, one of which is the signifier (*signifiant*) and the other the signified (*signifié*), forms the basis of the sign. Every object can pass from a closed existence to a spoken state that opens the possibility of being accepted by society. In this sense, we will research digital games and their educational value. Table 1 shows the semiological structure of the digital game myth.

Signifier	Signified
The value or idea we evoke	An idea in the user's mind
Denotation (Sign)	
Denotative sign	
Connotative signifier	Connotative signified
The second level of the evoked idea or value	The second level of idea or value in the user's mind
Connotative sign (Myth)	
Decoded meaning	

TABLE 1: *Semiological structure of myth in digital game*

Source: own processing, 2023

The first level of meaning is the denotational level, which is understood as a sign, so that in the second reading (decoding) it is presented in the form of a connotative sign, that is, a myth. Denotation implies a literal meaning, and connotation an associative one. Myth is produced at the level of connotation. Therefore, the mythic statement is created from a reworked text. Such a text does not destroy the meaning of the digital game, media content, it *impoverishes* it and merges with the term into a new meaning, a new sign.⁹⁵ It is a concept that Kellner observes as a form of analysis of media ideology, and Barthes as a new connotative sign, i.e., myth.

⁹⁰ See: BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 16-26.

⁹¹ See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-151; See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-33.

⁹² See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-181.

⁹³ JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 13-14.

⁹⁴ See: MAJERSKÝ, M., MAGALOVÁ, L.: Semiotická analýza traileru digitálnej hry – Death Stranding 2. In HLADÍKOVÁ, V., JONISOVÁ, E., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Zborník ŠVOaUK 2023*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2023, p. 103-109.

⁹⁵ BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 150.

4 The Analysis of Educational Values in Digital Games

The educational values emphasized by Vuk-Pavlović⁹⁶, and later taken over by Vukasović, for the purposes of this study, will be presented in three categories: ethical, humane, and family values (see Table 2). Educational values represent spiritual goods and ideals for achieving educational goals. Education is engaged in values, and educational goals are achieved through educational values, such as kindness, love, altruism, sincerity, honesty, patience, trust, friendship and the like. Education is a value category that ennobles a person.⁹⁷ However, the concept of value is highly debatable, because it is difficult to define due to its comprehensiveness. Not all values are equal for all users: some give priority to family values, for some the material value is the goal, for some values are represented by justice, love, honesty, empathy and the like.⁹⁸ In this sense, we start from the premise that the values are relative constants of ideas, standards and concepts of *ideas of desirable virtues*.⁹⁹

Ethical values	Human values	Family values
Morality, honesty, tolerance, justice, altruism, appreciation, solidarity	Peace, sincerity, empathy, friendship, cooperation, dignity	Love, trust, respect, self-control, care, support, comfort

TABLE 2: *The educational values of digital games*

Source: own processing, 2023

In the graphic adventure series *The Walking Dead* (TWD), played from a third-person perspective, the protagonist is Clementine, although in the first part, the main character is Lee Everett. What is specific to this digital game, and the entire TWD series, is the possibility of choice that the game offers through different ethical, humane and family values. Specifically, in the first part of TWD, the player decides whether to save the life of Carley or Doug by choosing between ethical or humane values, i.e., tolerance and cooperation. Another example puts the player in a situation where they must decide whether to sacrifice another to save themselves, or to sacrifice a body part, specifically Parker's leg. The very concept of sacrificing a part of the body to save life is a motif that often appears in adventures, so we find the same example in *Life is Strange 2* (LiS2), i.e., losing an eye to save one's brother.

The symbol of sacrificing a part of the body represents a value component of digital games, which we understand as a form of player affirmation (see Table 3), because in this way the drama of the game,¹⁰⁰ the memorability of the story and the intensity of educational values are

⁹⁶ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83. See also: VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Pedagogija*. Zagreb : Hrvatski katolički zbor MI, 2001, p. 217-243.

⁹⁷ VUKASOVIĆ, A.: Teologijsko i aksiologijsko utemeljenje odgoja u ozračju hrvatske odgojne preobrazbe. In *Obnovljeni život*, 2008, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 37.

⁹⁸ MRNJAJUS, K.: *Pedagoška promišljanja o vrijednostima*. Rijeka : Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, 2008, p. 27.

⁹⁹ See: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektive*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 45-55. See also: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 126. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>; MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42; PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Contemporary Media Culture in the Coordinates of Game Principles. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 78-79. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/4_Hana-Pravdova%E2%95%A0u_Zora-Hudi%E2%95%A0ukova%E2%95%A0u.pdf>; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-51; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

¹⁰⁰ PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Contemporary Media Culture in the Coordinates of Game Principles. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 79. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/4_Hana-Pravdova%E2%95%A0u_Zora-Hudi%E2%95%A0ukova%E2%95%A0u.pdf>.

enhanced. Loss of a leg, arm, eye, sacrifice of a friend, loss of a loved one represent a hidden meaning that indicates the strengthening of the user’s personality. In particular, the loss of a leg not only slows down the player in the game but puts them at a disadvantage, compared to others, and thus teaches solidarity, empathy, cooperation, care and comfort. Their sacrifice is then no longer a handicap but a *stake* in which they build themselves up through sacrifice and suffering. This is confirmed by the protagonist Clementine, who, throughout the entire TWD series, develops from a scared, fragile and wounded girl into a young, strong and determined girl who takes on the role of an educator and a guardian.

Affirmation	Cooperation	Guild
Strengthening the user’s personality	Strengthening of social competences	Strengthening community affiliation

TABLE 3: Value components of digital games

Source: own processing, 2023

It is interesting to note that Lee, a history professor at the University of Georgia, assumes the role of an educator and a guardian. In this way, the digital game on the denotation level shows Lee as an educator who is destined to be a guardian and teach others, which is seen throughout the game and in all its scenes, for example, in the scene of the haircut,¹⁰¹ or the scene of the request to shorten his suffering.

From the semiotic point of view, Clementine’s development can be seen as a denotative sign of growing up and maturing, but what is most important refers to a connotative sign of such growing up, in which Clementine becomes a symbol and myth of educators and guardians. She assumes the role of a protector, guardian and, conditionally speaking, a comforting mother, who fights for others, justice, ethics, humanity, and family. She is aware of her protege’s flaws, which she accepts and respects, but she teaches him, despite the society he is in, how to be a good person. If we compare the two covers of TWD, i.e., the first and the last game, the semiotic roundness is clearly visible (see Figure 1).



FIGURE 1: The Walking Dead cover

Source: *The Walking Dead*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.amazon.com/Walking-Dead-Game-Year-PlayStation-3/dp/B00EPIG606?th=1>>.

¹⁰¹ JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth’s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 18.

Lee is shown as a strong, determined, and protective guardian holding an axe in his right hand, and next to him is a frightened little girl who has turned her whole body from the terror that haunts her. Her view is not directed towards the camera, but lowered, while Lee is looking decisively and insolently at the camera. The sunrise is shown in such a way that the sun's rays touch the tip of the red fire axe, thus denoting brutality and strength that conceals naturalness and calmness. Clementine's hands are raised to her face, suggesting vulnerability and fear of the metaphorical darkness she is in and does not want to look at. On a mythic level¹⁰², two meanings are decoded here: guardianship and uncertainty. Guardianship is shown in the character of Lee who raises Clementine and uses her experience, wisdom and strength to fight her way through the hordes, while throughout the game there is uncertainty as to whether she will succeed. This is the uncertainty about the future that Vuk-Pavlović is talking about.¹⁰³In the second example (see Figure 2), a semiotically rounded whole of upbringing and guardianship can be clearly seen, which completely take over all motifs and symbols, such as the axe and the position of the body, which is identical to Lee's. However, the key difference is that Clementine is holding the protege's hand, symbolizing an educator in the full sense of the word, denoting motherhood, as she assumes the guardianship of him from the very beginning.¹⁰⁴ Also, the role of light is now shown differently: the picture shows that it is dawn, and the position of the sun and the level of dark colours are reduced to a minimum, suggesting that the series ends happily. Her role as guardian, educator, friend, and survivor has been fully realized. Clementine symbolizes the rounded whole of a student and a teacher, a child and a man.



FIGURE 2: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season* cover

Source: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.playstation.com/en-hr/games/the-walking-dead-the-final-season/>>.

¹⁰² BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 24.

¹⁰³ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53.

¹⁰⁴ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 58-62.

According to Vuk-Pavlović's philosophy of upbringing, we understand Clementine's authority as a valuable experience, and the deuteragonist Alvin Junior is determined freely¹⁰⁵ based on the pedagogical bond of friendship, family and humane trust. This is the same family value that Clementine adopts from Lee. Such a relationship of complete *balance* is broken in the final season, the episode *Take Us Back*, where Alvin questions educational, ethical, moral, family and humane values, resisting educational ideals. This very scene is an excellent example of a means of education, as the protagonist Clementine explains to him that there is a difference between living and surviving. Clementine represents the ideal educator because her goal is to instil humanity in her protege, and that is exactly why she is holding his hand.

The second component of the value of the digital game (see Table 3) refers to cooperation, strengthening social dimensions, learning tolerance, acceptance of others and cooperation. Only after social acceptance does the strength of belonging to the community develop. In this sense, the transcoding¹⁰⁶ of the meaning of the TWD series reveals to us the relationships and communication between the text, users, society and the media industry. Accordingly, we interpret digital game media literacy in the context of critical social theory, as well as the phenomenon of education. More precisely, according to Kellner,¹⁰⁷ ideological criticism of the media implies an image, symbol, narrative and myth that become a value system. Comparing *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*, the same haircut motif appears as a connotative link between growing up and accepting responsibility between Javier García and Clementine, just like the scene in *The Walking Dead Season 2*, when Clementine meets her old friend Kenny and has the choice to hug him.

When we compare the *Life is Strange* series with the TWD series, similar patterns of symbols, denotations and connotations emerge that create new media meanings. This is especially highlighted in the content analysis, where the social and dramatic dimension of the LIS game is strongly emphasized, which, just like TWD, has a certain choice, i.e., puts the user in ethical, social, psychological, and pedagogical choices that affect the overall gaming experience. In this sense, the games in the series LIS represent an excellent example for the analysis of the philosophy of education,¹⁰⁸ and the meta-theory of media culture,¹⁰⁹ because they show the problems of depression, parental separation, dying, bullying, racism and suicide. An example is the relationship between protagonist Max Caulfield and her rival Victoria Chase, who is portrayed as an arrogant rich snob whom Max envies, although beneath that arrogance, repulsion and mockery lies vulnerability and insecurity.

The same goes for all the protagonists in the series LIS and TWD because the characters are complex and allow for different analyses, such as questioning whether Alvin Junior from the TWD series is a product of educational values, or is he Clementine's way of expressing respect for Lee and his educational values? Also, in a semiotic sense¹¹⁰, does Alvin represent a substitute for a lost childhood as Clementine represented a daughter figure to Lee? Or is the relationship between the Diaz brothers in LIS a representation of the educational values of togetherness, family, love, kindness and patience, a myth about a child (an older brother) growing up into a protector and guardian? From the above, it follows that the complete series TWD and LIS are representations of the same myth (see Figure 3).

¹⁰⁵ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 100. See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 95.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, p. 102.

¹⁰⁸ See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53.

¹⁰⁹ See also: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102-131.

¹¹⁰ BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 16-17.

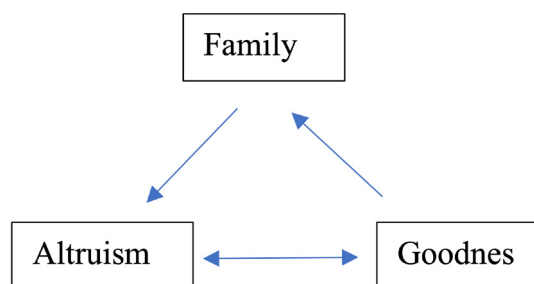


FIGURE 3: Universal values of graphic adventure

Source: own processing, 2023

The key media construction within the graphic adventure of the digital games stems from family values, regardless of whether it is an unhappy, separated, abandoned or rejected family. In this sense, a family tragedy can be a picture of a neglected family, like the hidden scenes in *Life is Strange: Before the Storm* (LiS: BtS), or the scene when a mother leaves her children to find their own identity in LiS2. In any case, the denotative level is a family value because the LiS scene shows a family during dinner, just as in TWD the mythic structure of the family is shown in the photo of Lee's family. Decoding the symbols that appear in digital games that are equal in genre, as Škripcová¹¹¹ points out, it can be found out that the common denotation of the sign is a lost family value that manifests itself through the search for humanism, kindness, altruism and tolerance. These are educational values that teach users of digital games through their options to choose narrative, action or continue playing.

It is important to note the semiotic level of the construction of the mother that appears in the LiS series. It is an aestheticized ethical value that allows the user to build different attitudes and beliefs around the concept of motherhood and family. The relationship that exists between Chloe Price and her mother in LiS: BtS can be connected through semiotic analysis to the complex relationship between the Diaz brothers and their mother in LiS2. At the same time, the loss of a father is a binary representation of the collapse of family happiness, family values and harmony. Both mothers symbolize the *continuation of life* as they take on another surname and continue to live after a tragic loss, or leave a husband and continue to live without him. The key paradigm and hidden meaning are revealed in the *transmission* of educational values to children who accept fate and face it differently. Because of this, there is the same motive with Clementine in the TWD series, who takes on the role of Alvin Jr.'s educator, as well as the older brother Sean, who takes on the role of a protector.

Therefore, Škripcová's theory of how digital games can teach is correct and we can supplement it that adventures like the series TWD, LiS, as well as interactive dramas, like *Heavy Rain*¹¹², *Beyond: Two Souls*¹¹³ and *Detroit: Become Human*¹¹⁴, action adventures, like *A Plague Tale: Innocence*¹¹⁵, *A Plague Tale: Requiem*¹¹⁶ and *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*¹¹⁷ do have educational values that teach their users. From the above comes the conclusion that educational values are an ideal construct found in digital games that have elements of

¹¹¹ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

¹¹² QUANTIC DREAMS: *Heavy Rain*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2010.

¹¹³ QUANTIC DREAMS: *Beyond: Two Souls*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2013.

¹¹⁴ QUANTIC DREAMS: *Detroit: Become Human*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

¹¹⁵ ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Innocence*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2019.

¹¹⁶ ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Requiem*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2022.

¹¹⁷ NINJA THEORY : *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. [digital game]. Cambridge : Ninja Theory, 2018.

the adventure genre. This can also relate to the very concept of myth as an epic genre that allows the reader, viewer, and gamer to immerse themselves in an adventurous and mysterious world that is the ideal basis for the narrative.

Through a semiotic analysis of that world and its protagonists, as well as a focus on the choice of gender, race and status, we decode a deeper meaning. This is why the protagonists are not limited by social, geographical, or religious status, but represent universal archetypes. As examples, we take Alexandra Chen from *Life is Strange: True Colors* who is a young Asian-American woman, or father Esteban Diaz, a Hispanic American from *LiS2*, or Lee Everett, an African American as the ideal guardian archetype from *TWD*. This is exactly what is in the very subtext of German media pedagogy, which systematically and theoretically describes the connection between culture and society. This is what media pedagogy portrays as an anticyclical movement of consciousness towards educational and cultural topics in media culture¹¹⁸ and the desire for one's own interpretation of oneself and the world.

These are values that the user does not have to be aware of while playing the game, but these media messages strongly influence their decisions, attitudes, and ultimately, their behaviour. Kellner claims similarly¹¹⁹ when he says that the analysis of such constructions should not be stopped at the limit of one text (digital game) but should be expanded in the context of their influence on other media messages. Such transcoding leads us to universal educational values and a common understanding of the denotative level of the sign, which turns into a new signifier, i.e., into the construction of the myth of the ideal family. Only then do we see how the cultural content of the family is broken and through the virtual world it is shown in fragments, in photography, parenting, guardianship, brotherhood and friends. These are the true colours of family values where, regardless of gender, race or religion, digital games construct the reality and images around us.

5 Conclusion

According to Bauer¹²⁰, the media bring people into relationships with reality that objectify them. This means that the use of media represents a construction of reality that changes us during immersion in adventure digital games. Such a change can be involuntary¹²¹, which teaches users educational values hidden at the denotation and connotation level. This means that the analysis of media literacy requires an understanding of media semiotics and media criticism of society. In this sense, the interpretation of media signs is not found in the media, but in the cultural environment, and according to Kellner, the ideology of society; or according to Barthes, the myth of society. In other words, the ability and authorization of media pedagogy and media competence sets the reference values of socially desirable media use.

Since media pedagogy focuses its ambitions on educational values, we observe media communication in accordance with media culture. Such cultural values are intertwined with communication values in which the role of sender (producer), digital game (media) and receiver (gamer) represent the educational triangle of teacher, student, and education. In the context of the philosophy of education, it is the relationship between humane, ethical and family values

¹¹⁸ See: HEPP, A.: *Netzwerke der Medien: Netzwerke des Alltags: Medienalltag in der Netzwerkgesellschaft*. In THOMAS, T. (ed): *Medienkultur und soziales Handeln*. Wiesbaden : Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008, p. 81. See also: BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 192; BAUER, T. A.: *Kommunikation wissenschaftlich denken: perspektiven einer kontextuellen theorie gesellschaftlicher Verständigung*. Wien : Böhlau, 2014, p. 33.

¹¹⁹ KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 48.

¹²⁰ BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 157.

¹²¹ ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

that arise from being.¹²² With such an understanding¹²³, the social values of the archetype of family, upbringing, parents and guardians that we have researched and analysed in digital games gain meaning only in the change of symbols, denotation, narrative and associations, but only in the context of the observed phenomena.

Observing media literacy in the broader sense of the word, the meaning of the symbols that appear in digital games decodes the destruction of family and the depressing image of an unhappy childhood. The hypothesis was confirmed, so we can conclude that the observed digital games educate and have educational values that can be decoded. Also, educational values, as well as the symbols hidden in the mythical structure of the protagonist, have a deeper anthropological and sociological meaning. The values that are shown can be direct and indirect. In other words, through digital games, we are enabled to interpret ourselves and the world, and society as such is mediated by communication that represents symbolic mediated interaction. It is precisely because of this fluctuation of signs, symbols and hidden meanings that media literacy is necessary. In this sense, media pedagogy is the foundation of the subject and society. Observing upbringing as love through which all values are realized, the future is what Vuk-Pavlović is talking about, because the future is not outside of us, it is within us.

Literature and Sources:

ALFÖLDIOVÁ, A., TRNKA, A.: In-World Marketing in Second Life. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 58-71. ISSN 2585-8599.

ANDREWS, J.: Videogames as Literary Devices. In CLARKE, A., MITCHELL, G. (eds.): *Videogames and Art*. Bristol, Chicago : Intellect Book, 2007, p. 54-59.

BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997.

BALÁŽIKOVÁ, M.: Real-Life Frustration from Virtual Worlds: The Motivational Potential of Frustration. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 56-68. ISSN 2585-8599.

BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012.

BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009.

BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015.

BARTHOLOMEW, L. K., GOLD, R. S., PARCEL, G. S. et al.: Watch, Discover, Think, and Act: Evaluation of Computer-Assisted Instruction to Improve Asthma Self-Management in Inner-City Children. In *Patient Education and Counseling*, 2000, Vol. 39, No. 2-3, p. 269-280. ISSN 0738-3991. DOI: <[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0738-3991\(99\)00046-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0738-3991(99)00046-4)>.

BAUER, T. A.: Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 45-77.

BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007.

¹²² See: HURAJOVÁ, A., HLADÍKOVÁ, V.: Educating for Good Character: From Critical Thinking to Intellectual Character Virtues. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 187. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/10_Anna-Hurajova-Vladimira-Hladikova.pdf>; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagogie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 45-55; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 126. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>.

¹²³ Author's note: The term "ars docendi" – the virtue of teaching used by S. Gálíková Tolnaiová is like the term "personality" used by P. Vuk-Pavlović. Both concepts have their own deeper, philosophical meaning that stems from the understanding of moral values. In fact, Gálíková associates this term with the art of teaching, and Vuk-Pavlović views pedagogy as "the art of education". See: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagogie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 72-76. See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-44.

- BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002.
- BROWN, S. J., LIEBERMAN, D. A., GERMENY, B. A. et al.: Educational Video Game for Juvenile Diabetes: Results of a Controlled Trial. In *Medical Informatics*, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 77-89. ISSN 2291-9694. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.3109/14639239709089835>>.
- EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
- EAGLETON, T.: *Culture*. London : Yale University Press, 2016.
- GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014.
- GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 118-133. ISSN 2585-9188. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>.
- GOLD, J. I., KIM, S. H., KANT, A. J. et al.: Effectiveness of Virtual Reality for Pediatric Pain Distraction during IV Placement. In *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 2006, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 207-212. ISSN 2152-2715. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2006.9.207>>.
- HARRINGTON, C. M., CHAITANYA, V., DICKER, P. et al.: Playing to Your Skills: A Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluating a Dedicated Video Game for Minimally Invasive Surgery. In *Surgical Endoscopy*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 9, p. 3813-3821. ISSN 1432-2218. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00464-018-6107-2>>.
- HEPP, A.: Netzwerke der Medien: Netzwerke des Alltags: Medienalltag in der Netzwerkgesellschaft. In THOMAS, T. (ed.): *Medienkultur und soziales Handeln*. Wiesbaden : Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008, p. 63-89.
- HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-69.
- HOFFMANN, B.: Anregungsmilieus mit digitalen Kommunikationsmedien - Herausforderungen für Medienbildung im System Familie. In LAUFFER, J., RÖLLECKE, R. (eds.): *Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute - Medienpädagogische Konzepte und Perspektiven*. Munich : Kopaed, 2014, p. 22-31.
- HOFFMANN, B.: Medien-Erziehungs-Kompetenz von Eltern im System Familie. In ANGENENT, H., HEIDKAMP, B., KERDEL, D. (eds.): *Digital Diversity. Diversität und Bildung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer, 2019, p. 103-117.
- HURAJOVÁ, A., HLADÍKOVÁ, V.: Educating for Good Character: From Critical Thinking to Intellectual Character Virtues. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 178-191. ISSN 2585-9188. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/10_Anna-Hurajova-Vladimira-Hladikova.pdf>.
- JUKIĆ, D.: To Brand or Not to Brand: The Perception of Brand Image in the Digital Games Industry. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 22-35. ISSN 2585-8599.
- JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 528-543.
- JUKIĆ, D.: Brand Semiotics and Media Pedagogy. In ČÁBYOVÁ, L., BEŽÁKOVÁ, Z., MADLEŇÁK, A. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: New Changes, New Challenges*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 284-294.
- JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth's Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 4-30. ISSN 2585-8599.
- JUKIĆ, D.: Why Do We Play Digital Games? Anthropological-Philosophical-Pedagogical Aspects. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 30-56. ISSN 2585-8599.
- JURCZYK-ROMANOWSKA, E., ZAKOWICZ, I.: Dominant Playing Styles in an Authorial Role-Playing Game in Different Age Groups. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 4-25. ISSN 2585-8599.

- KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 24-39. ISSN 1338-130X.
- KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015.
- KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 38-57. ISSN 1338-130X.
- KAČINOVÁ, V.: From a Reductionist to a Holistic Model of Digital Competence and Media Education. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 16-27. ISSN 1338-130X.
- KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004.
- KŁOSIŃSKI, M.: Games and Utopia. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 4-14. ISSN 2585-8599.
- KÜBLER, H-D.: Prämissen und Paradigmen von Medienkritik. Versuch einer Kategorisierung. In NIESYTO, H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 15-31.
- MAGO, Z.: The Concept of Timelessness Applied to Advergaming. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 18-33. ISSN 2585-8599.
- MAGO, Z.: Easter Eggs in Digital Games as a Form of Textual Transcendence (Case Study). In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 48-57. ISSN 2585-8599.
- MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 32-45. ISSN 2585-8599.
- MAJERSKÝ, M., MAGALOVÁ, L.: Semiotická analýza traileru digitálnej hry – Death Stranding 2. In HLADÍKOVÁ, V., JONISOVÁ, E., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Zborník ŠVOaUK 2023*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2023, p. 101-110.
- MÄYRÄ, F.: *An Introduction to Game Studies*. London : Sage, 2008.
- MCLUHAN, M.: *Razumijevanje medija*. Zagreb : Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2008.
- MEAD, H., G.: *Um, osoba i društvo*. Zagreb : Jesenski i Turk, 2003.
- MIŠKOV, J.: Motivation with Game Elements in Education Mediated by E-Learning Resources. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 24-51. ISSN 2585-8599.
- MOSELAER Van de, N., CASELLIS, S.: The Narrative Effects and Value of Memory Discrepancies in Digital Games. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 24-41. ISSN 2585-8599.
- MOSER, H.: *Einführung in die Medienpädagogik Aufwachsen im Medienzeitalter*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006.
- MRNJAUŠ, K.: *Pedagoška promišljanja o vrijednostima*. Rijeka : Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, 2008.
- MUKHERJEE, S.: *Video Games and Storytelling Reading Games and Playing Books*. Kolkata : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- NIESYTO, H.: Medienkritik – Entwicklungsphasen und aktuelle Herausforderungen. In NIESYTO H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 59-75.
- NTELIA, R. E.: Fortnite as Bildungsspiel? Battle Royale Games and Sacrificial Rites. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 80-100. ISSN 2585-8599.
- OU, Y., MCGLONE, E. R., CAMM, C. F., KHAN, O. A.: Does Playing Video Games Improve Laparoscopic Skills? In *International Journal of Surgery*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 5, p. 365-369. ISSN 1743-9159. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijssu.2013.02.020>>.
- PÖTTINGER, I., SCHILL, W., THIELE, G.: *Medienbildung im Doppelpack - Wie Schule und Jugendhilfe einander ergänzen können*. Bielefeld : GMK, 2004.
- PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Contemporary Media Culture in the Coordinates of Game Principles. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 71-81. ISSN 2585-9188. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/4_Hana-Pravdova%E2%95%A0u_Zora-Hudi%E2%95%A0ukova%E2%95%A0u.pdf>.
- ROKOŠNÝ, I.: Digital Games as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Brief History and Current State. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 48-61. ISSN 2585-8599.
- SCHORB, B.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 254-262.

- SLEZÁKOVÁ, S.: Pathological Gambling and Co-Dependence. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 40-51. ISSN 2585-8599.
- ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 131-140. ISSN 2585-9188. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.
- THEUNERT, H.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., ANFANG, G., DEMMLER, K. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik – Praxis*. Munich : Kopaed, 2009.
- The Walking Dead Cover*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.amazon.com/Walking-Dead-Game-Year-PlayStation3/dp/B00EPIG606?th=1>>.
- The Walking Dead: The Final Season Cover*. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <<https://www.playstation.com/en-hr/games/the-walking-dead-the-final-season/>>.
- TOLIĆ, M: Aktualnost medijskih kompetencija u suvremenoj pedagogiji. In *Acta Iadertina*, 2008, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 1-13. ISSN 1845-3392.
- TULODZIECKI, G.: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung zentraler Begriffe bei der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Medien. In MOSER, H., GRELL, P., NIESYTO, H. (eds.): *Medienbildung und Medienkompetenz*. Munich : Kopaed, 2011, p. 11-40.
- VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Pedagogija*. Zagreb : Hrvatski katolički zbor MI, 2001.
- VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Graditelji mostova hrvatsko-slovačkoga prijateljstva = Budovatelia mostov chorvatsko-slovenskeho priateljstva*. Zagreb : Društvo hrvatsko-slovačkog prijateljstva, 2000.
- VUKASOVIĆ, A.: Teologijsko i aksiologijsko utemeljenje odgoja u ozračju hrvatske odgojne preobrazbe. In *Obnovljeni život*, 2008, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 35-46. ISSN 0351-3947.
- VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008.
- VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016.
- WILLIG, C.: *Introducing Qualitative Research In Psychology*. Maidenhead : Open University Press, 2013.

Digital Games

- ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Innocence*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2019.
- ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Requiem*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2022.
- DECK NINE: *Life is Strange: Before the Storm*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2017.
- DECK NINE: *Life is Strange: True Colors*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2021.
- DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life is Strange*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2015.
- DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life is Strange 2*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2018.
- NINJA THEORY : *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. [digital game]. Cambridge: Ninja Theory, 2018.
- QUANTIC DREAMS: *Heavy Rain*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2010.
- QUANTIC DREAMS: *Beyond: Two Souls*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2013.
- QUANTIC DREAMS: *Detroit: Become Human*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.
- TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2014.
- TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: Season Two*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2013.
- TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead a New Frontier*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2016.
- TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2018.

Author



Dr. sc. Dinko Jukić, MPA, MLIS, MA

Trade and Commercial School “Davor Milas”

Ivana Gundulića 38

31 000 Osijek

CROATIA

dinkojukic.phd@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5595-4245>

Dr. sc. Dinko Jukić is a professor at the Trade and Commercial School “Davor Milas”, Osijek, Croatia. He holds the title of an interdisciplinary scientist of social sciences, the field of economics and pedagogy. He obtained a doctorate in science at the Faculty of Economics, in the field of marketing, specializing in brand theory. He has two master’s degrees in social sciences and humanities. He completed MPA studies. His areas of scientific interest are brand theory, brand semiotics, media semiotics, school management, media pedagogy and game studies. He has participated in 30 international scientific conferences and is an active member of the *Croatian Marketing Association* and the *Croatian Pedagogical-Literary Society*. He is fascinated by media pedagogy and ludology.



Emine Şahin, Habibe Akçay Bekiroğlu

The Emotional Intelligence and Social Media Addiction in Communication Undergraduate Students in Turkey: The Impact of Emotional Intelligence, Demographic Variables and Social Media Use Habits on Social Media Addiction

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-10>

ABSTRACT

This study's aim is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and social media addiction (SMA) in Communication undergraduate students in Turkey. In addition to EI, the impact of demographic variables and social media use habits on SMA were investigated. For the study, quantitative method was chosen, and an online questionnaire was conducted on 317 Communication undergraduate students in Turkey with 301 participants being the final sample from different cities in Turkey. As a result of the study, analyses indicated that EI and SMA were related at medium and low levels. The EI partly predicted SMA. It was determined with Path analysis that intrapersonal skills, dealing with stress and adaptability could be statistically significant predictors of SMA sub-dimensions virtual tolerance and virtual communication at a negative level, and time spent on social media, number of posts on social media could have a significant impact on students' SMA at a positive level. This research differs from other research conducted in Turkey in terms of SMA being examined with the focus of EI.

KEY WORDS

Communication Undergraduate Students. Emotional Intelligence. Social Media Addiction. Virtual Communication. Virtual Tolerance.

1 Introduction

People with higher EI are socially compatible and self-aware individuals, and they are more satisfied with their lives¹ and individuals with self-awareness, emotion management, self-motivation, social awareness (recognizing emotions in Others) and relationship management are more successful in social and business life.² On the other hand EI means perception and expression of emotions, assimilating emotion in thought, awareness, understanding and analysing emotion, plus finally reflective regulation of emotion.³ Moreover, high EI is seen in persons who are successful in controlling impulses or managing stress.⁴

Although there are studies revealing the relationship between social media addiction and emotional intelligence level, the number of studies on this topic is limited in Turkey⁵, and there are no studies for the same type of sample group. Communication undergraduate students are a crucial sample group because of their training in interpersonal communication, media literacy and use of social media. In this study, it is assumed that intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability (adapting to new situations), stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control), and general mood (happiness and optimism) at Bar-On's EI parameter are related to SMA. The main goal of this study is to demonstrate the effect of EI on SMA and the predictor relationships between these two variables. It was investigated how in addition to EI, demographic variables and social media use habits affect SMA.

2 The Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Addiction as Behavioural Disorder

Communication practices in social media and social networks are gaining more and more functionality especially among young people. The percentage of social media use in Turkey is around 70.3%⁶ (data updated in 2023 September). We are Social has disclosed the data that shows this duration is increasing with each passing year. Young people and adolescents in particular are using social networks more and more in order to communicate with others⁷,

¹ BAR-ON, R.: The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI). In *Psicothema*, 2006, Vol. 18, p. 13. See also: PETRIDES, K. V., FURNHAM, A.: Trait Emotional Intelligence: Psychometric Investigation with Reference to Established Trait Taxonomies. In *European Journal of Personality*, 2001, Vol. 15, No. 6, p. 451.

² See: GOLEMAN, D.: *Duygusal Zeka*. Istanbul : Varlik Publications, 2018.

³ See: MAYER, J. D., SALOVEY, P.: What Is Emotional Intelligence? In SALOVEY, P., SLUYTER, D. J. (eds.): *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educators*. New York : Basic Books, 1997, p. 3-31.

⁴ PARKER, J. D. A., SUMMERFELDT, L. J., HOGAN, M. J. et al.: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to University. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 165; See also: HILL, E. M., MAGGI, S.: Emotional Intelligence and Smoking: Protective and Risk Factors Among Canadian Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 45.

⁵ See: KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, D. M., BILLIEUX, J.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Online Behaviours Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness, Rumination, and Depression. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2019, Vol. 139, p. 208-213. See also: SÜRAL, I., GRIFFITHS, D. M., KIRCABURUN, K. et al.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Social Media Use Among Adults: The Mediating Role of Social Media Use Motives. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 336-345.

⁶ *We Are Social*. [online]. [2023-09-30]. Available at: <<https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021>>.

⁷ KELES, B., MCCRAE, N., GREALISH, A.: A Systematic Review: The Influence of Social Media on Depression, Anxiety and Psychological Distress in Adolescents. In *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 2020, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 90; See also: ORBEN, A., DIENLIN, T., PRZYBYLSKI, K. A.: Social Media's Enduring Effect on Adolescent Life Satisfaction. In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 116, No. 21, p. 2.

and they form a higher risk group in SMA⁸, which is considered as a behavioural disorder.⁹ Adolescence is considered a period of difficulties and inconsistencies in emotional, mental and interpersonal relationships.

Findings of the research based on SMA were positively associated with negative personality traits such as narcissism¹⁰ and negatively associated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and self-liking.¹¹ SMA increases in relation to loneliness¹², psychological problem, low self-esteem¹³, avoiding negative emotions and reality¹⁴, desire to establish virtual relationships.¹⁵ In addition, there is a positive significant relationship between SMA and factors such as the frequency of updating profile information, number of friends¹⁶ form of interaction on social media¹⁷ and time spent on social media.¹⁸

- ⁸ WARTBERG, L., THOMASIU, R., PASCHKE, K.: The Relevance of Emotion Regulation, Procrastination, and Perceived Stress for Problematic Social Media Use in a Representative Sample of Children and Adolescents. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2021, Vol. 121, No. 12. No pagination.
- ⁹ DINC, M., TOPCU, F.: The Relation Between Resilience and Problematic Internet Use among Youth. In *Düşünen Adam: The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences*, 2021, Vol. 36, No. 34, p. 342. See also: JIANG, Q., HUANG, X., TAO, R.: Examining Factors Influencing Internet Addiction and Adolescent Risk Behaviors among Excessive Internet Users. In *Health Communication*, 2018, Vol. 33, No. 12, p. 1442.
- ¹⁰ ANDREASSEN, C. S., PALLESEN, S., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: The Relationship Between Addictive Use of Social Media, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem: Findings from a Large National Survey. In *Addictive Behaviors*, 2017, Vol. 64, p. 291. See also: KARADAĞ, A., AKÇINAR, B.: The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Psychological Symptoms in University Students. In *Journal of Dependence*, 2019, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 163-164. [online]. [2023-10-10]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/bagimli/issue/45814/599296>>; BRAILOVSKAIA, J., ROHMANN, E., RAEDER, F. et al.: The Relationship Between Narcissism, Intensity of Facebook Use, Facebook Flow and Facebook Addiction. In *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 276, p. 1-7.
- ¹¹ See: KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: Instagram Addiction and the Big Five of Personality: The Mediating Role of Self-Liking. In *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 158-170.
- ¹² CEYHAN, A. A., CEYHAN, E.: Loneliness, Depression, and Computer Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Problematic Internet Use. In *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 2008, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 701.
- ¹³ EŞKISU, M. et al.: Trait Mindfulness as a Protective Factor in Connections Between Psychological Issues and Facebook Addiction among Turkish University Students. In *Studia Psychologica*, 2020, Vol. 62, No. 3, p. 225. [online]. [2023-09-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.31577/sp.2020.03.801>>. See also: MAMUN, M. A., HOSSAIN, M. S., MOONAJILIN, M. S. et al.: Does Loneliness, Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress Correlate with Problematic Internet Use? A Bangladeshi Survey Study. In *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 2020, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ TUTGUN ÜNAL, A.: A Comparative Study of Social Media Addiction among Turkish and Korean University Students. In *Journal of Economy Culture and Society*, 2020, Vol. 62, p. 318-319. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.26650/JECS2020-0064>>. See also: KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: Problematic Instagram Use: The Role of Perceived Feeling of Presence and Escapism. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 4, p. 918.
- ¹⁵ YOUNG, N. L., KUSS, D. J., GRIFFITHS, M. D. et al.: Passive Facebook Use, Facebook Addiction, and Associations with Escapism: An Experimental Vignette Study. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 71, p. 29-30.
- ¹⁶ ÇÖMLEKÇİ, M. F., BAŞOL, O.: Analysis of Relationship Between Youths' Social Media Usage Motives and Social Media Addiction. In *Manisa Celal Bayar University Journal of Social Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 4, p. 183-184. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.18026/cbayarsos.525652>>. See also: HAWI, N., SAMAHA, M.: Identifying Commonalities and Differences in Personality Characteristics of Internet and Social Media Addiction Profiles: Traits, Self-Esteem, and Self-Construal. In *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 116.
- ¹⁷ BOOKER, C. L., KELLY, Y. J., SACKER, A.: Gender Differences in the Associations Between Age Trends of Social Media Interaction and Well-Being Among 10-15 Year Olds in the UK. In *BMC Public Health*, 2018, Vol. 18, No. 361, p. 11.
- ¹⁸ HUANG, C.: Time Spent on Social Network Sites and Psychological Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. In *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 2017, Vol. 20, No. 6, p. 353.

The desire to spend more time on social media can become more and more irresistible.¹⁹ Inability to control the impulses creates problematic behaviour; thus, the tolerance threshold rises.²⁰ As individuals feel alone in real social life and frequency of contact with social network members, the time they spend on social media increases, which increases their level of addiction.²¹ On the other hand the level of social media addiction increases once social satisfaction is fulfilled through meeting social and psychological needs with the friendships virtual communication provides²², and relationship maintenance motives were found to be associated with interaction in the fake world, more frequent social media use is desired. Thus, happiness of being on social media turns into unhappiness.

We explored the hypotheses based on literature on SMA that:

H1: The (a) age, (b) gender and (c) time spent on social media and (d) number of posts on social media are significant predictors of SMA virtual tolerance (VT) level of Communication undergraduate students in Turkey.

H2: The (a) age, (b) gender and (c) time spent on social media and (d) number of posts on social media are significant predictors of SMA virtual communication (VC) level of Communication undergraduate students in Turkey.

3 Emotional Intelligence

EI research has expanded significantly over the past decade. Data from children, adolescents, and adult samples demonstrates that EI scores are associated with a variety of variables. The people's EI can be associated with their personal trait²³ or demographic variables. The previous studies have reported higher adaptability, but lower stress management or females²⁴, and higher trait EI for males.²⁵ Moreover, it was determined that professional and academic success²⁶ are

¹⁹ GRIFFITHS, M.: A 'Components' Model of Addiction Within a Biopsychosocial Framework. In *Journal of Substance Use*, 2005, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 194.

²⁰ See: ANDREASSEN, C. S.: Online Social Network Site Addiction: A Comprehensive Review. In *Current Addiction Reports*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 175-184.

²¹ ZHANG, K., KIM, K., SONG, Q. et al.: Social Media Communication and Loneliness Among Older Adults: The Mediating Roles of Social Support and Social Contact. In *The Gerontologist*, 2021, Vol. 61, No. 6, p. 890. See also: BALCI, Ş., BALOĞLU, E.: The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Depression: "A Survey Among University Youth". In *İletişim*, 2018, No. 29, p. 221. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.16878/gsuilet.500860>>.

²² KIM, C., SHEN, C.: Connecting Activities on Social Network Sites and Life Satisfaction: A Comparison of Older and Younger Users. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 105, p. 5. See also: ORBEN, A., DIENLIN, T., PRZYBYLSKI, A. K.: Social Media's Enduring Effect on Adolescent Life Satisfaction. In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 116, No. 21, p. 10226.; PUNYANUNT-CARTER, N. M., DE LA CRUZ, J. J., WRENCH, J. S.: Investigating the Relationships Among College Students' Satisfaction, Addiction, Needs, Communication Apprehension, Motives, and Uses & Gratifications with Snapchat. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 75, p. 874.

²³ KESZEI, D. C.: *Social Media and Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Analysis of the Relationship Between Social Media Utilization and Over the Post-Millennial's Emotional Intelligence*. [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. California : Pepperdine University, 2021, p. 91. See also: DENZ, M. E., ÖZER, E., İŞİK, E.: Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form: Validity and Reliability Studies. In *Education and Science*, 2013, Vol. 38, No. 169, p. 407-419. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://toad.halileksi.net/olcek/duygusal-zeka-ozelligi-olcegi-kisa-formu-dzoo-kf>>.

²⁴ HILL, E. M., MAGGI, S.: Emotional Intelligence and Smoking: Protective and Risk Factors Among Canadian Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 49.

²⁵ KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, M. D., BILLIEUX, J.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Online Behaviors Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness, Rumination, and Depression. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2019, Vol. 139, p. 209.; FURNHAM, A., BUCHANAN, T.: Personality, Gender, and Self-Perceived Intelligence. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 548.

²⁶ PARKER, J. D. A., SUMMERFELDT, L. J., HOGAN, M. J. et al.: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to University. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 170.

connected to EI. The several studies have suggested that there is a positive relationship between EI with dealing with problems²⁷ and well-being, life satisfaction²⁸, and a negative relationship between EI and depression and anxiety.²⁹ Optimism, stress management are positively related to the level of EI of individuals.³⁰

Many users of social media are motivated by social interaction and self-presentation.³¹ The frequent smartphone users tend to seek social support and lack a certain degree of emotional and social skills.³² Individuals who do not use Facebook have higher interpersonal relationship management than individuals who use Facebook and Instagram³³, and self-awareness, lower self-esteem and EI are the predictors of social media use.³⁴ The individuals with lower EI increase their use of social media as a way of coping with their real-life problems and stress³⁵, and this relationship is explained by increased perceived stress, and subsequently, more depressive symptoms. According to a finding of a study conducted in Turkey, it has been shown that creating a more popular impression of individuals as a motivation for using social media and spending time on social media has a mediating effect on EI and SMA.³⁶ In another study, it has been shown that there is a relationship between EI with problematic social media use and problematic online gaming.³⁷

²⁷ MIKOLAJCZAK, M., LUMINET, O.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and the Cognitive Appraisal of Stressful Events: An Exploratory Study. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2008, Vol. 44, No. 7, p. 1450-1453.

²⁸ DENIZ, M. E., ERUS, S. M., BÜYÜKCEBECİ, A.: Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence. In *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 2017, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 17. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tpdrd/issue/42743/515880>>. See also: KONG, F., ZHAO, J.: Affective Mediators of the Relationship Between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2013, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 199.; PLATSIDOU, M.: Trait Emotional Intelligence Predicts Happiness, But How? An Empirical Study in Adolescents and Young Adults. In *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 206. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/223>>.

²⁹ RESURRECCIÓN, D. M., SALGUERO, J. M., RUIZ-ARANDA, D.: Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Maladjustment in Adolescence: A Systematic Review. In *Journal of Adolescence*, 2014, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 470.

³⁰ GOHM, C. L., CORSER, G. C., DALSKY, D. J.: Emotional Intelligence under Stress: Useful, Unnecessary, or Irrelevant? In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 6, p. 1023.

³¹ GAO, W., LIU, Z., LI, J.: How Does Social Presence Influence SNS Addiction? A Belongingness Theory Perspective. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 350. See also: WEI, X., XU, G., WANG, H. et al.: Sensing Users' Emotional Intelligence in Social Networks. In *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 108.

³² WANG, S., ZHANG, D.: The Impact of Perceived Social Support on Students' Pathological Internet Use: The Mediating Effect of Perceived Personal Discrimination and Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 106, p. 6.

³³ PANDITHARADHYULA, R., KUMAR, P. K.: Impact of Biographical Variables and Social Networking Platforms on Emotional Intelligence Among Adolescents. In *International Journal of Science and Research*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 1323-1324. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v7i5/ART20182834.pdf>>.

³⁴ CHANDEL, P. K., GUPTA, N.: The Impact of Time Spent on Social Media On Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents. In *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 9, p. 582. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.jetir.org/view?paper=JETIR1809729>>.

³⁵ ASLAN, Ş., GÜZEL, Ş.: The Relationships Between the Emotional Intelligence, Coping with Problem-Focused Stress, Recovery and Emotional Exhaustion. In *Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 2018, Vol. 16, No. 31, p. 76. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/698548>>. See also: BARBAR, S., HADDAD, CH., SACRE, H. et al.: Factors Associated with Problematic Social Media Use Among a Sample of Lebanese Adults: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence. In *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 2020, Vol. 57, No. 3, p. 1313-1322.

³⁶ See: SÜRAL, I., GRIFFITHS, D. M., KIRCABURUN, K. et al.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Social Media Use Among Adults: The Mediating Role of Social Media Use Motives. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 336-345.

³⁷ See: KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, D. M., BILLIEUX, J.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Online Behaviours Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness, Rumination, and Depression. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2019, Vol. 139, p. 208-213.

We explored the hypotheses based on the literature on EI that:

H3: The (a) intrapersonal skills, (b) interpersonal skills, (c) adaptability, (d) dealing with stress, and (e) general mood are a significant predictors of the SMA virtual tolerance (VT) level of Communication undergraduate students in Turkey.

H4: The (a) intrapersonal skills, (b) interpersonal skills, (c) adaptability, (d) dealing with stress, and (e) general mood are a significant predictor of the SMA virtual communication (VC) level of Communication undergraduate students in Turkey.

4 Methodology

4.1 The Aim of the Study

The literature review has shown that social media addiction which is a behavioural disorder, is seen as a result or a cause of factors like social media use habits, personal traits, avoiding stress, depression, anxiety, stress, mood modification and interaction. The level of emotional intelligence which constitutes intrapersonal traits, social behaviour skills, adapting to society and environment, and dealing with stress shapes the individual's attitudes and behaviours. Within this context, the main problem of this study is the predictor impact of emotional intelligence on social media addiction and the relationships between these two variables. Furthermore, with the study it is researched if gender and age etc., demographic variables, social media use habits and emotional intelligence affects social media addiction.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this study comprise communication undergraduate students who use social media in Turkey. The sample of the study was determined with the purposeful convenience sampling method according to their educational status and the traits of being between the ages of 18 and 35 and being social media users. Communication undergraduate students were a sample that needed to be examined and expected to be controlled users because of their training in interpersonal communication, media literacy, use of social media etc. Moreover, with the snowball method, larger groups were reached. The participants are Communication undergraduate students, and people from 56 out of 81 cities in Turkey participated in the study. Participants who answered the questionnaire were 68.1% (n= 205) female, and 31.9% male (n=96). The average age of the respondents is 22.40, and the average monthly income is 951.39 ₺.

4.3 Procedure

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic an online questionnaire was designed, and social media users answered the questionnaire. The necessary questionnaire data for the research were collected between April 29 and May 27, 2021. The questions were uploaded to www.surveeey.com website and shared on social networks. First of all, the participants were asked to tick the informative consent box to show that they participate in the survey voluntarily. The anonymity was ensured by not including any personal information. The questionnaire was filled out by 317 people, but those who did not comply with the age limit and those who marked "I strongly disagree" for the statement "I answered the above statements sincerely" were not included in the analysis. Thus, 301 participants comprised the final sample.

4.4 Data Collection

In the questionnaire prepared for the study, there were items to determine the demographic features of the participants such as gender, age and income, to measure their social media use habits, to measure their EI level and their SMA level. The questionnaire consisted of 90 items in total.³⁸

Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-10 EQ-i): In 1988, Reuvaen Bar-On³⁹ brought a different perspective. A short version of the inventory that was created by Çarıkçı et al.⁴⁰ was used in the study. The scale included 59 items measuring 5 dimensions that explain EI. It consisted of 20 items for intrapersonal skills (IntraPS), 12 items for interpersonal skills (IPS), 11 items for adaptability (AD), 7 items for dealing with stress (DWS), and 9 items for measuring general mood (GM). The scale used in the study is a 5 Likert scale. For each item, the individuals were asked to choose an option from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The authors found the reliability of scale between 0.86 and 0.58 (Cronbach's Alpha).

Social Media Addiction Scale- Adult Form (SMAS-AF): SMAS-AF was created by Şahin & Yağcı.⁴¹ The scale also includes 2 sub-dimensions (virtual tolerance-VB and virtual communication- VC). 5-point Likert 20 items which are I don't agree (1) and I strongly agree (5) were used. After the analysis for construct validity, the model was found to be efficient ($X^2/df=3.05$; $sd=190$, $p=000$; $RMSA=.059$; $SRMR=.60$; $NFI=.59$; $CFI=.96$; $GFI=.90$; $AGFI=.88$). The reliability coefficients were found as .91 for virtual tolerance subscale, and 0.90 for virtual communication subscale by Şahin and Yağcı.

4.5 Data Analysis

Since the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of EI and SMA questionnaire scores were between +1 and -1 while EI and SMA figures range normally⁴², parametric methods were used in the analysis. The analysis of the data was conducted with SPSS 26.0, AMOS 21.0 applications. For categorical variables, descriptive analysis results were given. Reliability coefficients of the scales were calculated with Cronbach's Alpha. To determine if the variables showed any difference according to demographic features or social media use habits, independent samples, T-Test and one-way ANOVA were performed. Pearson Correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between variables, and multiple regression analysis was implemented to determine the effective factors on dependent variables. As a result of testing the model, SEM-Path analysis results for goodness of fit are examined.

³⁸ Authors' note: The design of this study was approved by Social and Human Sciences Ethic Review Board which was the institution of researchers.

³⁹ BAR-ON, R.: The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI). In *Psicothema*, 2006, Vol. 18, p. 21.

⁴⁰ See: ÇARIKÇI, İ., KANTEN, S., KANTEN, P.: A Research on Determining the Relationships Among Personality, Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours. In *Journal of Süleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 51-54. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/sbe/issue/23191/247722>>.

⁴¹ See: ŞAHİN, C., YAĞCI, M.: Social Media Addiction Scale – Adult Form: The Reliability and Validity Study. In *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2017, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 523-538. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322037237>>.

⁴² See: HOPKINS, K. D., WEEKS, D. L.: Tests for Normality and Measures of Skewness and Kurtosis: Their Place in Research Reporting. In *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1990, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 717-729.

5 Results

In the findings part of the study, participants' emotional and SMA levels, and social media use habits, the relationship between dependent and independent variables and other variables affecting the dependent variable are presented.

Among the people who answered the questionnaire, 99.3% of them connect to social media mostly on their mobile phones, and 72.1% use social media for entertainment. 96% of the participants have been using social media for more than 7 years, Instagram is the most used at 94.4%. 53.2% of them spend 1 to 3 hours on social media while 44.2% of them have never shared a post (see Table 1).

		n	%
Gender	Female	205	68.1
	Male	96	31.9
The device used to log in social media	Mobile phone	299	99.3
	Tablet	22	7.3
	Computer	97	32.2
The aim of using social media	Entertainment	217	72.1
	Message	196	65.1
	Being informed and education	203	67.4
	Receive information	212	70.4
	Avoid problems	55	18.3
	Socializing / Interaction	184	61.1
	Update personal page	48	15.9
Used social media websites	Other	33	11.0
	Facebook	97	32.2
	Twitter	197	65.4
	Instagram	284	94.4
	YouTube	256	85.0
	Pinterest	75	24.9
Time used social media in years	Other	37	12.3
	None	3	1.0
	1-3 years	3	1.0
	4-6 years	6	2.0
Average time spent on social media daily	More than 7	289	96.0
	0 - 59 minutes	33	11.0
	1-3 hours	160	53.2
	4-6 hours	89	29.6
Number of posts on social media	More than 7 hours	19	6.3
	None	133	44.2
	1	108	35.9
	2-3	23	7.6
	3 and more	37	12.3

TABLE 1: Social media use habits of communication undergraduate students in Turkey

Source: own processing, 2023

5.1 Validity and Reliability of the Scales

The adaptation of Bar-10 EQ-i and SMAS-AF scale to Turkish was done previously, so Cronbach's Alpha test and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were applied in order to determine the internal consistency and construct validity of scales of the study. The analysis results of Bar-10 EQ-i and SMAS-AF subscales are given in Table 2.

Index	Acceptable Fit	SMA	IntraPS	IPS	AD	DWS	GM
X ²	x	357.027	217.263	100.309	79.320	22.281	59.756
sd	x	124	113	50	30	7	16
X ² /sd	≤ 5	2.879	1.923	2.006	2.644	3.183	3.735
RMR	≤ 0.08	0.089	0.059	0.036	0.079	0.082	0.065
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.908	0.923	0.947	0.951	0.976	0.955
AGFI	≥ 0.85	0.855	0.896	0.917	0.910	0.928	0.898
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.902	0.939	0.963	0.954	0.972	0.954
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.079	0.055	0.058	0.074	0.085	0.085
Number of Items		VT:9-VC:9	17	12	10	6	8
Cronbach's Alpha		VT:0.869 VC:0.866	0.845	0.870	0.720	0.756	0.814

VT: Virtual tolerance dimension, VS: virtual communication dimension

TABLE 2: SMA and EI scale CFA fit indexes

Source: own processing, 2023

For intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills and adaptability scales, second level CFA was used, and for dealing with stress and general mood scales first level CFA was used. The indexes are provided with item extraction and modifications. Some items (6 item) were excluded since their factor load was low ($\beta < .300$). Scale validity was achieved. According to calculated reliability co-efficient, the item reliabilities of intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, dealing with stress and general mood were found to be high (Cronbach's Alpha: between .72 and .87).

In the SMAS-AF scale, first level CFA is used. With item extraction and modifications, indexes were provided. Some items (SMA_ VT7 and SMA_ VT11) were excluded since their factor load was low ($\beta < .300$), and scale validity was achieved (Table 2). It was found that the reliability of scales and subscales are high (Cronbach Alfa for virtual tolerance dimension: .86; for virtual communication dimension: .86).

5.2 Comparing in Term of Socio-Demographic Variables of SMA and EI

The minimum and maximum points from the scales, medium and standard deviations, levels and percentages of scales are given (see Table 3 for justification).

	Min.	Max.	Med.	Sd.	Frequency %	Skewness	Kurtosis
Virtual Tolerance (VT)	9	45	25.13	8.09	33.2	0,12	-0,49
Virtual Communication (VC)	9	45	22.65	7.59	20.9	0,38	-0,03
Intrapersonal Skills (IntraPS)	38	85	67.60	9.19	60	-0,57	0,44
Interpersonal Skills (IPS)	29	60	51.03	6.57	54.5	-0,92	1,16
Adaptability (AD)	12	50	35.93	6.01	48.8	-0,61	0,69
Dealing with Stress (DWS)	7	30	19.53	4.77	36.2	-0,12	-0,30
General Mood (GM)	8	40	29.99	5.99	39.9	-0,62	0,27

TABLE 3: SMA and EI level of communication undergraduate students in Turkey

Source: own processing, 2023

Independent groups t-Test and one-way ANOVA tests are applied on the data gathered from the study, and whether SMA and EI differ according to demographic data and social media use habits was determined.

According to the data, in terms of SMA level, gender is not a determining variable. There is no significant difference between women and men ($p > .05$). There is a statistically significant difference between different age groups in terms of virtual tolerance score ($F(3; 300)_{4 < 1 < 3} = 5.363, p < .05$). The virtual tolerance level is higher between ages 24-26. There is a statistically significant difference between women and men in terms of interpersonal skills and general mood scores. Women have higher scores on interpersonal skills ($M = 51.78, SD = 6.13, p < .05$), and general mood ($M = 30.69, SD = 5.8, p < .05$).

When the time spent on social media increases, virtual communication ($F(2; 300)_{1 < 2 < 3} = 15.814, p < .05$), and virtual tolerance increase ($F(2; 300)_{1 < 2 < 3} = 19.835, p < .05$). There is a statistically significant difference between levels of the time spent on social media in terms of general mood ($F(2; 300)_{3 < 2 < 1} = 5.135, p < .05$). Participants who spend between 0-59 minutes have the highest general mood.

People who post more than three times have the highest virtual communication level ($F(3; 300)_{3 < 1 < 2 < 0} = 3.292, p > .05$). However, the virtual tolerance level does not change according to the number of shares. There is a statistically significant difference between the number of shared posts on different social networks in terms of dealing with stress ($F(3; 300)_{4 < 2 < 1} = 3.292, p < .05$). People who post once or twice a day have higher dealing with stress levels while people who post more than three times have the lowest.

5.3 The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Media Addiction

In the study, firstly the relationship between EI and SMA sub-dimensions was examined (see Table 4). According to a Pearson correlation analysis, there is a moderately negative statistically significant correlation between virtual tolerance and personal skills ($r = -.337$), and adaptability ($r = -.341$) negative, albeit a low level of negative, statistically significant correlation between interpersonal skills ($r = -.139$), dealing with stress ($r = -.276$), general mood ($r = -.233$) ($p < 0.05$). It was found that virtual communication has a low level of negative statistically significant relationship with personal skills ($r = -.271$), interpersonal skills ($r = -.148$), compatibility ($r = -.187$), dealing with stress ($r = -.255$), general mood ($r = -.178$) ($p < 0.05$).

		Virtual Tolerance	Virtual Communication
IntraPS	r	-.337**	-.271**
	p	0.000	0.000
IPS	r	-.139*	-.148*
	p	0.016	0.010
AD	r	-.341**	-.187**
	p	0.000	0.001
SWS	r	-.276**	-.255**
	p	0.000	0.000
GM	r	-.233**	-.178**
	p	0.000	0.002

**p<. 01, *p<. 05 meaningful relationship, p>. 05 no meaningful relationship. coefficient of correlation power level; 0<r<0.299 weak, 0.300<r<0.599 medium, 0.600<r<0.799 strong, 0.800<r<0.999 very strong; Pearson Correlation

TABLE 4: The relationship between EI and SMA scores

Source: own processing, 2023

In the study, gender, age, time spent on social media, and number of posts are included in the model, and an SEM analysis was conducted. SEM fit indexes of the model created to determine the effects on SMA dimensions are presented. SEM fit indexes were obtained as χ^2 : 54.945, sd: 25, χ^2 /sd: 2.198, RMR : 0.064, GFR : 0.968, AGFI : 0.916, CFI : 0.962, RMSEA : 0.063. All of the calculated indices were within acceptable fit.⁴³ Accordingly, the model and the data are coherent and valid (Figure 1).

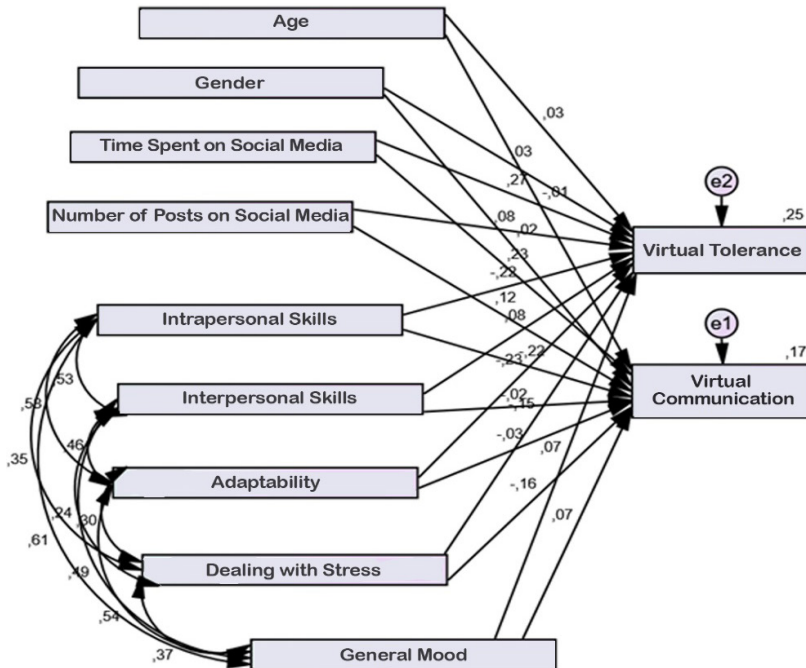


FIGURE 1: Final model of the significant path coefficients between age, gender, time spent on social media, number of posts on social media, EI subscale and SMA.

Source: own processing, 2023

⁴³ GÜRBÜZ, S., ŞAHİN, F.: *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri*. 3rd Edition. Ankara : Seçkin Publications, 2016, p. 336-337.

The direction and level of variables that have an effect on virtual tolerance and virtual communication of communication faculty students were tested with a hierarchical regression analysis (as can be seen in Table 5). The effects of age, gender, number of shares on social media from social media use habits, interpersonal skills from EI sub-dimensions and general mood were not significant on virtual tolerance ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1d, H3b and H3e were not supported. However, time spent on social media was positively statistically significantly effective on virtual tolerance ($\beta = .273$, $p = .000$) while intrapersonal skills ($\beta = -.223$, $p = .002$), adaptability ($\beta = -.229$, $p = .000$), dealing with stress ($\beta = -.150$, $p = .006$) have a negative statistically significant effect on virtual tolerance ($p < 0.05$). Among the hypotheses created, H1c, H3a, H3c and H3d were supported.

Age, gender, EI sub-dimensions, interpersonal skills, adaptability and general mood have no significant effect on virtual communication ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypotheses H2a, H2b, H4b, H4c and H4e were not supported. However, among the social media usage habits on virtual communication, the time spent on social media ($\beta = .233$, $p = .000$), and the number of posts on social media ($\beta = .118$, $p = .029$) positive personal skills ($\beta = -.218$, $p = .004$), dealing with stress ($\beta = -.165$, $p = .004$) have a negative, statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$). Among the research hypotheses, H2c and H2d, H4a and H4d were confirmed. The independent variables explain 24% of the virtual tolerance variance and 17% of the virtual communication variance.

Dependent	Independent	β	sh.	t	p	R ²
Virtual Tolerance	Age	0.029	0.049	0.586	0.558	0.249
	Gender	0.028	0.049	0.566	0.571	
	Time spent on social media	0.273	0.051	5.322	0.000*	
	Number of posts on social media	0.079	0.051	1.551	0.121	
	Intrapersonal skills	-0.223	0.071	-3.122	0.002*	
	Interpersonal skills	0.080	0.061	1.292	0.196	
	Adaptability	-0.229	0.064	-3.513	0.000*	
	Dealing with stress	-0.150	0.054	-2.739	0.006*	
	General mood	0.075	0.068	1.089	0.276	
Virtual Communication	Age	-0.009	0.052	-0.17	0.865	0.171
	Gender	-0.02	0.052	-0.383	0.702	
	Time spent on social media	0.233	0.054	4.326	0.000*	
	Number of posts on social media	0.118	0.054	2.184	0.029*	
	Intrapersonal Skills	-0.218	0.075	-2.901	0.004*	
	Interpersonal Skills	-0.018	0.065	-0.272	0.786	
	Adaptability	-0.027	0.068	-0.389	0.697	
	Dealing With Stress	-0.165	0.057	-2.865	0.004*	
	General Mood	0.069	0.072	0.959	0.338	

* $p < 0.05$ meaningful difference, $p > 0.05$ no meaningful difference; SEM

TABLE 5: Hierarchical regression SEM analysis of the factors effective on SMA

Source: own processing, 2023

6 Discussion

This study aims to reveal the relationship between EI and SMA and the predictive effect of EI on SMA. Moreover, this study evaluates whether EI and SMA differ according to demographic variables and social media use habits. Young people and adolescents constitute a risky group in terms of social media use. Communication undergraduate students are expected to be conscious social media users and individuals controlling impulses because of their training. For this reason, the sample of this study consists of young people majoring in Communication in Turkey between the ages of 18 and 35.

In this study, the SMA virtual tolerance sub-dimension is moderate, and SMA virtual communication sub-dimension is low. The intrapersonal sub-dimension of the EI scale is high, and interpersonal skills sub-dimension is at the highest level. The adaptability sub-dimension is high. The sub-dimension of dealing with stress is moderate. The general mood is high. The based-on gender variable, females have higher interpersonal skills and higher general mood⁴⁴ for communication students. General mood is calculated by optimism and happiness level, and it is found that positive emotions and optimism bring success in social, academic and business life, and decrease future-based stress.⁴⁵ Females with high levels of interpersonal skills, skills of making friends easily, establishing good relationships, developing empathy and social responsibility⁴⁶, achieve success in business, and social life. In addition, they control their impulses and are better at dealing with stress.⁴⁷ When SMA level was examined, there are no significant differences between men and women.⁴⁸

According to ANOVA in our study, when the time spent on social media increases⁴⁹, virtual communication and virtual tolerance increase, and general mood decreases. The participants who post more than three times a day have the lowest EI dealing with stress, and the highest virtual communication. Social media can provide several interpersonal needs as social support.⁵⁰ Within this context, it can be stated that social media is considered as a tool to deal with stress, escape

⁴⁴ KESZEI, D. C.: *Social Media and Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Analysis of the Relationship between Social Media Utilization and Over the Post-Millennial's Emotional Intelligence*. [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. California : Pepperdine University, 2021, p. 91. See also: HILL, E. M., MAGGI, S.: Emotional Intelligence and Smoking: Protective and Risk Factors Among Canadian Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 47.

⁴⁵ PARKER, J. D. A., SUMMERFELDT, L. J., HOGAN, M. J. et al.: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to University. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 170.

⁴⁶ See: GÜRBÜZ, S., YÜKSEL, M.: Emotional Intelligence in Workplace: Its Relation with Job Performance, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Some Demographic Factors. In *Journal of Doğuş University*, 2008, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 174-190. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/doujournal/issue/66659/1042942>>; See also: PANDITHARADHYULA, R., KUMAR, P. K.: Impact of Biographical Variables and Social Networking Platforms on Emotional Intelligence Among Adolescents. In *International Journal of Science and Research*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 1320-1326. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v7i5/ART20182834.pdf>>.

⁴⁷ KONG, F., ZHAO, J.: Affective Mediators of the Relationship Between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2013, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 199. See also: KIRCABURUN, K. et al.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Online Behaviors Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness, Rumination, And Depression. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2019, Vol. 139, p. 208-213.

⁴⁸ See: BALCI, Ş., BALOĞLU, E.: The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Depression: "A Survey Among University Youth". In *İletişim*, 2018, No. 29, p. 209-233. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.16878/gsuilet.500860>>. See also: JIANG, Q. CH., HUANG, X., TAO. R.: Examining Factors Influencing Internet Addiction and Adolescent Risk Behaviors Among Excessive Internet Users. In *Health Communication*, 2018, Vol. 33, No. 12, p. 1443-1444.

⁴⁹ HUANG, C.: Time Spent on Social Network Sites and Psychological Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. In *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 2017, Vol. 20, No. 6, p. 353.

⁵⁰ KIM, C., SHEN, C.: Connecting Activities on Social Network Sites and Life Satisfaction: A Comparison of Older and Younger Users. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 105, p. 5.

and a coping style for individuals.⁵¹ In addition the individuals can turn to “hanging out on social media” to change their moods, and after a while, social media use can reach an uncontrollable level.⁵² According to the results of the path analyses, time spent on social media is a significant positive predictor of virtual tolerance sub-dimension, and number of posts on social media and time spent on social media are significant positive predictors of virtual communication sub-dimension.

According to the results of the path analyses intrapersonal skills, adaptability, dealing with stress have negative statistical significance effects on virtual tolerance. In addition, intrapersonal skills and dealing with stress have statistical significance on virtual communication. According to similar studies, many users can be motivated by social interaction and self-presenting.⁵³ They can easily communicate and interact with their peers in the virtual world, and the desire to spend more time on social media can become irresistible, stronger each time than before. This narcissism is a kind of self-presentation in the virtual world. The findings focus on the impact of the personality disorder narcissism on SMA.⁵⁴ The need to feed the ego (narcissism) supports the idea of addictive social media use.⁵⁵ Individuals with low intrapersonal skills (self-esteem, self-confidence, self-actualization) may want to take advantage of the magic of the virtual world for their ego, and social media use may turn into SMA for the ego's sake. In other words, individuals who respect themselves and accept themselves as they are, have high self-confidence, self-esteem and who are aware of one's emotions, spend less time on social media and use social media less for social relationships and communication.⁵⁶

In our study, dealing with stress was associated with social media tolerance and virtual communication. In similar studies, people with low EI turned out to have high stress, depression and anxiety⁵⁷ and EI has a positive relationship with problem-solving strategies, while low-stress management can increase social media use to avoid problems. Individuals can use social media as an escape in order to avoid their state of mind, feel better through fake satisfaction and improve their mood. Young peoples' life satisfaction while spending time on social media (coping strategy) might cause more frequent and sustained social media use desire, and well as tolerance of social media use and virtual communication level as a feature of addiction.

⁵¹ YOUNG, N. L., KUSS, D. J., GRIFFITHS, M. D. et al.: Passive Facebook Use, Facebook Addiction, and Associations with Escapism: An Experimental Vignette Study. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 71, p. 29-30; See also: ANDREASSEN, C. S.: Online Social Network Site Addiction: A Comprehensive Review. In *Current Addiction Reports*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 179.

⁵² WARTBERG, L., THOMASIU, R., PASCHKE, K.: The Relevance of Emotion Regulation, Procrastination, and Perceived Stress for Problematic Social Media Use in a Representative Sample of Children and Adolescents. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2021, Vol. 121, No. 12. No pagination.

⁵³ GAO, W., LIU, Z., LI, J.: How Does Social Presence Influence SNS Addiction? A Belongingness Theory Perspective. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 350; See also: SÜRAL, I., GRIFFITHS, D. M., KIRCABURUN, K. et al.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Social Media Use Among Adults: The Mediating Role of Social Media Use Motives. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 336-345.

⁵⁴ ANDREASSEN, C. S., PALLESEN, S., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: The Relationship Between Addictive Use of Social Media, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem: Findings from a Large National Survey. In *Addictive Behaviors*, 2017, Vol. 64, p. 291.

⁵⁵ BRAILOVSKAIA, J., ROHMANN, E., RAEDER, F. et al.: The Relationship Between Narcissism, Intensity of Facebook Use, Facebook Flow and Facebook Addiction. In *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 276, p. 2.

⁵⁶ HAWI, N., SAMAHA, M.: Identifying Commonalities and Differences in Personality Characteristics of Internet and Social Media Addiction Profiles: Traits, Self-Esteem, and Self-Conceptual. In *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 116. See also: EŞKİSÜ, M., ÇAM, Z., GELİBOLU, S. et al.: Trait Mindfulness as a Protective Factor in Connections between Psychological Issues and Facebook Addiction Among Turkish University Students. In *Studia Psychologica*, 2020, Vol. 62, No. 3, p. 225. [online]. [2023-09-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.31577/sp.2020.03.801>>.

⁵⁷ See: GOHM, C. L., CORSER, G. C., DALSKY, D. J.: Emotional Intelligence under Stress: Useful, Unnecessary, or Irrelevant? In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 6, p. 1017-1028. See also: RESURRECCIÓN, D. M., SALGUERO, J. M., RUIZ-ARANDA, D.: Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Maladjustment in Adolescence: A Systematic Review. In *Journal of Adolescence*, 2014, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 461-472.

7 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although our study revealed important results about the relationship between EI and SMA, it has a number of limitations. Firstly, the sample, chosen by a purposive convenience sampling method (from 18 to 35 age), was mostly recruited online and through social networks from undergraduate students majoring in communication in Turkey. Thus, results cannot be generalized and cannot represent the attitudes of the general public (low representative). The study is a descriptive one, and our study did not aim to establish causal or theoretical relationships. The effect and relationship between dependent and independent variables were investigated. Future studies require more in-depth analysis using qualitative or mixed methods.

The sample can also consist of only small groups of women or adolescents. In our study, a scale measuring SMA in virtual tolerance and virtual communication sub-dimensions was used. However, SMA is still based on many emotional and cognitive motivations. This scale met the number and content of items suitable for the purpose of sampling and research. For future studies, the focus should be on mediator variables between EI and problematic social media use. Finally, education campaigns including scanning procedures are suggested for high-risk group people who experience many emotional conflicts for example women, young people and teenagers. In this way, their impulse control and levels of dealing with stress can be increased, and their addiction tendency can be decreased.

8 Conclusion

In the study, it was found that SMA, virtual tolerance and virtual communication and sub-dimensions of EI were negatively related at medium and low levels. Furthermore, according to the results of the path analyses, intrapersonal skills, adaptability, coping with stress are negatively, and time spent on social media is positively, statistically significant predictors of virtual tolerance. Intrapersonal skills and coping with stress negatively and time spent on social media and number of posts on social media positively statistically significant predicted virtual communication. This study not only expands the relationship between EI and SMA, but also measures the level of difference between SMA and EI according to demographic traits and social media use habits. This study will make an important contribution to the literature in terms of the topic of addiction. In addition, this manuscript is important in terms of revealing the relationship between intrapersonal skills, adaptability, dealing with stress and SMA of communication undergraduate students in Turkey.

Literature and Sources:

ANDREASSEN, C. S.: Online Social Network Site Addiction: A Comprehensive Review. In *Current Addiction Reports*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 175-184. ISSN 2196-2952. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-015-0056-9>>.

ANDREASSEN, C. S., PALLESEN, S., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: The Relationship Between Addictive Use of Social Media, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem: Findings from a Large National Survey. In *Addictive Behaviors*, 2017, Vol. 64, p. 287-293. ISSN 0306-4603. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.03.006>>.

ASLAN, Ş., GÜZEL, Ş.: The Relationships Between the Emotional Intelligence, Coping with Problem-Focused Stress, Recovery and Emotional Exhaustion. In *Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 2018, Vol. 16, No. 31, p. 59-82. ISSN 2786-1929. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/698548>>.

- BALCI, Ş., BALOĞLU, E.: The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Depression: "A Survey Among University Youth". In *İletişim*, 2018, No. 29, p. 209-234. ISSN 2548-124X. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.16878/gsuilet.500860>>.
- BARBAR, S., HADDAD, CH., SACRE, H. et al.: Factors Associated with Problematic Social Media Use Among a Sample of Lebanese Adults: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence. In *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 2020, Vol. 57, No. 3, p. 1313-1322. ISSN 0031-5990. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ppc.12692>>.
- BAR-ON, R.: The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI). In *Psicothema*, 2006, Vol. 18, p. 13-25. ISSN 0214-9915.
- BOOKER, C. L., KELLY, Y. J., SACKER, A.: Gender Differences in the Associations Between Age Trends of Social Media Interaction and Well-Being Among 10-15 Year Olds in the UK. In *BMC Public Health*, 2018, Vol. 18, No. 361, p. 1-12. ISSN 1471-2458. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5220-4>>.
- BRAILOVSKAIA, J., ROHMANN, E., RAEDER, F. et al.: The Relationship Between Narcissism, Intensity of Facebook Use, Facebook Flow and Facebook Addiction. In *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 276, p. 1-7. ISSN 2352-8532. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2020.100265>>.
- CEYHAN, A. A., CEYHAN, E.: Loneliness, Depression, and Computer Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Problematic Internet Use. In *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 2008, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 699-701. ISSN 1094-9313. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0255>>.
- CHANDEL, P. K., GUPTA, N.: The Impact of Time Spent on Social Media on Emotional Intelligence of Adolescents. In *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 9, p. 577-597. ISSN 2349-5162. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.jetir.org/view?paper=JETIR1809729>>.
- ÇARIKÇI, İ., KANTEN, S., KANTEN, P.: A Research on Determining the Relationships Among Personality, Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours. In *Journal of Süleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 41-65. ISSN 1304-6373. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/sbe/issue/23191/247722>>.
- ÇÖMLEKÇİ, M. F., BAŞOL, O.: Analysis of Relationship Between Youths' Social Media Usage Motives and Social Media Addiction. In *Manisa Celal Bayar University Journal of Social Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 4, p. 173-188. ISSN 1304-4796. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.18026/cbayarsos.525652>>.
- DENİZ, M. E., ERUS, S. M., BÜYÜKCEBECİ, A.: Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence. In *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 2017, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 17-31. ISSN 1302-1370. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tpdrd/issue/42743/515880>>.
- DENZ, M. E., ÖZER, E., İŞİK, E.: Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form: Validity and Reliability Studies. In *Education and Science*, 2013, Vol. 38, No. 169, p. 407-419. ISSN 1300-1337. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://toad.halileksi.net/olcek/duygusal-zeka-ozelligi-olcegi-kisa-formu-dzoo-kf>>.
- DINC, M., TOPCU, F.: The Relation Between Resilience and Problematic Internet Use Among Youth. In *Düşünen Adam: The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences*, 2021, Vol. 36, No. 34, p. 337-345. ISSN 1018-8681. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.14744/DAJPNS.2021.00156>>.
- EŞKİSU, M. et al.: Trait Mindfulness as a Protective Factor in Connections Between Psychological Issues and Facebook Addiction Among Turkish University Students. In *Studia Psychologica*, 2020, Vol. 62, No. 3, p. 213-231. ISSN 0039-3320. [online]. [2023-09-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.31577/sp.2020.03.801>>.
- FURNHAM, A., BUCHANAN, T.: Personality, Gender, and Self-Perceived Intelligence. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 543-555. ISSN 0191-886. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.02.011>>.

- GAO, W., LIU, Z., LI, J.: How Does Social Presence Influence SNS Addiction? A Belongingness Theory Perspective. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 347-355. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.002>>.
- GOHM, C. L., CORSER, G. C., DALSKY, D. J.: Emotional Intelligence under Stress: Useful, Unnecessary, or Irrelevant? In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 6, p. 1017-1028. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.03.018>>.
- GOLEMAN, D.: *Duygusal Zeka*. Istanbul : Varlık Publications, 2018.
- GRIFFITHS, M.: A 'Components' Model of Addiction within a Biopsychosocial Framework. In *Journal of Substance Use*, 2005, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 191-197. ISSN 1475-9942. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14659890500114359>>.
- GÜRBÜZ, S., ŞAHİN, F.: *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri*. 3rd Edition. Ankara : Seçkin Publications, 2016.
- GÜRBÜZ, S., YÜKSEL, M.: Emotional Intelligence in Workplace: Its Relation with Job Performance, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Some Demographic Factors. In *Journal of Doğuş University*, 2008, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 174-190. ISSN 1308-6979. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/doujournal/issue/66659/1042942>>.
- HAWI, N., SAMAHA, M.: Identifying Commonalities and Differences in Personality Characteristics of Internet and Social Media Addiction Profiles: Traits, Self-Esteem, and Self-Constual. In *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 110-119. ISSN 0144-929X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1515984>>.
- HILL, E. M., MAGGI, S.: Emotional Intelligence and Smoking: Protective and Risk Factors Among Canadian Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 45-50. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.03.008>>.
- HOPKINS, K. D., WEEKS, D. L.: Tests for Normality and Measures of Skewness and Kurtosis: Their Place in Research Reporting. In *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1990, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 717-729. ISSN 0013-1644. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164490504001>>.
- HUANG, C.: Time Spent on Social Network Sites and Psychological Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. In *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 2017, Vol. 20, No. 6, p. 346-354. ISSN 2152-2715. DOI: <<http://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0758>>.
- JIANG, Q., HUANG, X., TAO, R.: Examining Factors Influencing Internet Addiction and Adolescent Risk Behaviors Among Excessive Internet Users. In *Health Communication*, 2018, Vol. 33, No. 12, p. 1434-1444. ISSN 1041-0236. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2017.1358241>>.
- KARADAĞ, A., AKÇINAR, B.: The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Psychological Symptoms in University Students. In *Journal of Dependence*, 2019, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 154-166. [online]. [2023-10-10]. Available at: <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/bagimli/issue/45814/599296>>.
- KELES, B., MCCRAE, N., GREALISH, A.: A Systematic Review: The Influence of Social Media on Depression, Anxiety and Psychological Distress in Adolescents. In *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 2020, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 79-93. ISSN 2164-4527. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>>.
- KESZEI, D. C.: *Social Media and Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Analysis of the Relationship Between Social Media Utilization and over the Post-Millennial's Emotional Intelligence*. [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. California : Pepperdine University, 2021.
- KIM, C., SHEN, C.: Connecting Activities on Social Network Sites and Life Satisfaction: A Comparison of Older and Younger Users. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 105, p. 1-8. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106222>>.
- KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: Instagram Addiction and the Big Five of Personality: The Mediating Role of Self-Liking. In *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 158-170. ISSN 2062-5871. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.15>>.

KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, D. M., BILLIEUX, J.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Online Behaviours Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness, Rumination, and Depression. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2019, Vol. 139, p. 208-213. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.11.024>>.

KIRCABURUN, K., GRIFFITHS, M. D.: Problematic Instagram Use: The Role of Perceived Feeling of Presence and Escapism. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 4, p. 909-921. ISSN 1557-1874. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9895-7>>.

KONG, F., ZHAO, J.: Affective Mediators of the Relationship Between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Young Adults. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2013, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 197-201. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.08.028>>.

MAMUN, M. A., HOSSAIN, M. S., MOONAJILIN, M. S. et al.: Does Loneliness, Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress Correlate with Problematic Internet Use? A Bangladeshi Survey Study. In *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 2020, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 1-8. ISSN 1758-5864. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/appy.12386>>.

MAYER, J. D., SALOVEY, P.: What Is Emotional Intelligence? In SALOVEY, P., SLUYTER, D. J. (eds.): *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educators*. New York : Basic Books, 1997, p. 3-31.

MIKOLAJCZAK, M., LUMINET, O.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and the Cognitive Appraisal of Stressful Events: An Exploratory Study. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2008, Vol. 44, No. 7, p. 1445-1453. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.12.012>>.

ORBEN, A., DIENLIN, T., PRZYBYLSKI, A. K.: Social Media's Enduring Effect on Adolescent Life Satisfaction. In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 116, No. 21, p. 10226-10228. ISSN 0027-8424. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1902058116>>.

PANDITHARADHYULA, R., KUMAR, P. K.: Impact of Biographical Variables and Social Networking Platforms on Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents. In *International Journal of Science and Research*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 1320-1326. ISSN 2319-7064. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v7i5/ART20182834.pdf>>.

PARKER, J. D. A., SUMMERFELDT, L. J., HOGAN, M. J. et al.: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to University. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 165-172. ISSN 0191-8869. DOI: <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00076-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00076-X)>.

PETRIDES, K. V., FURNHAM, A.: Trait Emotional Intelligence: Psychometric Investigation with Reference to Established Trait Taxonomies. In *European Journal of Personality*, 2001, Vol. 15, No. 6, p. 425-448. ISSN 0890-2070. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/per.416>>.

PLATSIDOU, M.: Trait Emotional Intelligence Predicts Happiness, But How? An Empirical Study in Adolescents and Young Adults. In *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 197-209. ISSN 2011-9999. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/223>>.

PUNYANUNT-CARTER, N. M., DE LA CRUZ, J. J., WRENCH, J. S.: Investigating the Relationships Among College Students' Satisfaction, Addiction, Needs, Communication Apprehension, Motives, and Uses & Gratifications with Snapchat. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 75, p. 870-875. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.06.034>>.

RESURRECCIÓN, D. M., SALGUERO, J. M., RUIZ-ARANDA, D.: Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Maladjustment in Adolescence: A Systematic Review. In *Journal of Adolescence*, 2014, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 461-472. ISSN 0140-1971. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.03.012>>.

SÜRAL, I., GRIFFITHS, D. M., KIRCABURUN, K. et al.: Trait Emotional Intelligence and Problematic Social Media Use Among Adults: The Mediating Role of Social Media Use Motives. In *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 2019, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 336-345. ISSN 1557-1874. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-0022-6>>.

ŞAHİN, C., YAĞCI, M.: Social Media Addiction Scale – Adult Form: The Reliability and Validity Study. In *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2017, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 523-538. ISSN 2147-1037. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322037237>>.

TUTGUN ÜNAL, A.: A Comparative Study of Social Media Addiction Among Turkish and Korean University Students. In *Journal of Economy Culture and Society*, 2020, Vol. 62, p. 307-322. ISSN 2645-8772. [online]. [2023-10-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.26650/JECS2020-0064>>.

WANG, S., ZHANG, D.: The Impact of Perceived Social Support on Students' Pathological Internet Use: The Mediating Effect of Perceived Personal Discrimination and Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2020, Vol. 106, p. 1-7. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106247>>.

WARTBERG, L., THOMASIU, R., PASCHKE, K.: The Relevance of Emotion Regulation, Procrastination, and Perceived Stress for Problematic Social Media Use in a Representative Sample of Children and Adolescents. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2021, Vol. 121, No. 12. No pagination. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106788>>.

We Are Social. [online]. [2023-09-30]. Available at: <<https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021>>.

WEI, X., XU, G., WANG, H. et al.: Sensing Users' Emotional Intelligence in Social Networks. In *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 103-112. ISSN 2329-924X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1109/TCSS.2019.2944687>>.

YOUNG, N. L., KUSS, D. J., GRIFFITHS, M. D. et al.: Passive Facebook Use, Facebook Addiction, and Associations with Escapism: An Experimental Vignette Study. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 71, p. 24-31. ISSN 0747-5632. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.039>>.

ZHANG, K., KIM, K., SONG, Q. et al.: Social Media Communication and Loneliness Among Older Adults: The Mediating Roles of Social Support and Social Contact. In *The Gerontologist*, 2021, Vol. 61, No. 6, p. 888-896. ISSN 0016-9013. DOI: <<http://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnaa197>>.

Authors



Emine Şahin, PhD.

University of Gaziantep
Faculty of Communication
Flor: 2, No: 030, 273 10 Üniversite Bulvarı
Şehitkamil - Gaziantep
TURKEY
emines@gantep.edu.tr
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7269-0923>

She was born in Germany in 1977. After completing her secondary education in Kayseri, she graduated from the Department of Journalism at Selçuk University Faculty of Communication in 1999. She completed her master's and doctoral degree at Selçuk University in the Social Sciences Institution's Department of Public Relation and Publicity, in the advertising discipline, she has been studying as associate professor Gaziantep University, Faculty of Communication in the Department of Advertising. She studies in subjects such as advertising attitude, cross-culturality, and social media. She loves nature and animals.

Mgr. Habibe Akçay Bekiroğlu, PhD.

Giresun University
Faculty of Communication
Demirci Mh. Osmanağa Cad.
No: 100 Tirebolu-Giresun
TURKEY
habibe.bekiroglu@giresun.edu.tr
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9521-915X>



She was born in 1984 in Trabzon. She was graduated from Ankara University Communication Faculty in 2006. Bekiroğlu completed her PhD at Gazi University in 2015. Her PhD thesis topic was "*Framing of Social Movements at Social Media: A Discourse Framing Analysis Regarding Environment Oriented NGOs*". She still works at Giresun University Faculty of Communication. Her academic interests are social media, digital culture, digital communication, digital society, semiotics, discourse analysis and communication studies. She lives in Istanbul.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Media Literacy and Academic Research accept theoretical and research studies in the extent of 21,600-54,000 signs (12-30 author pages).

LANGUAGE OF THE SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS

- all manuscripts must be written in English language

Text format (unless specified otherwise in guidelines):

- Font type: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 pt
- Alignment: justified
- Spacing: 1
- All margins: 2,5 cm
- Do not divide words

A study should contain the following parts:

1. Title
2. Author's name, or authors' names without academic titles.
3. Abstract and Key words
4. Main chapters of the paper. A paper can also contain other chapters and subchapters. However, the stated main chapters are compulsory parts of all papers. Their numbering can be changed according to author's needs.
 - a) 1 Introduction
 - b) 2 Methodology
 - c) 3 Results
 - d) 4 Discussion
 - e) 5 Conclusion
5. Acknowledgement – if it is relevant.
6. Bibliography – processed in accordance with the quotation rules.
7. Contact Data of the author/authors, profile of the author/authors and photography – see the template for the format of contact data.

The template of a study can be found on the website: <https://www.mlar.sk/templates-to-download/>

We strictly follow the APA Style 7 citation system when creating a study for MLAR. Please, see our Citation Manual at <https://www.mlar.sk/guidelines-for-authors/>.

Please e-mail your study to: mlar@ucm.sk in the Microsoft Word text editor. We accept most word processing formats, but MS Word is preferred. Please use templates available at <https://www.mlar.sk/templates-to-download/>.

Each received study will undergo a double-blind peer review process and the editorial board will decide whether to accept or reject the text for publication on the basis of the elaborated reviews. The Editorial Board may accept the text conditionally and require correction of the text by author(s) according to the remarks or suggestions of the reviewers

EDITORIAL POLICY

Media Literacy and Academic Research is a scientific journal focused on the academic reflection of media and information literacy issues, media education, critical thinking, digital media and new trends in related areas of media and communication studies. The journal is devoted to addressing contemporary issues and future developments related to the interdisciplinary academic discussion, the results of empirical research and the mutual interaction of expertise in media and information studies, media education as well as their sociological, psychological, political, linguistic and technological aspects.

Media Literacy and Academic Research is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal published twice a year by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM). The journal is international and interdisciplinary, inviting contributions from across the globe and from various academic disciplines of social sciences. It focuses on theoretical and empirical studies. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence.

The authors and co-authors publishing their work in Media Literacy and Academic Research are, as a general rule, academics, scholars, researchers and media professionals. The author(s) of the texts – yet unpublished but already approved and prepared for publication in Media Literacy and Academic Research – have the right to present their findings or other related research outcomes by attending domestic, foreign and international scientific conferences and workshops as well as within their pedagogical or artistic activities. The editorial board expects authors to submit the final to-be-published texts with regard to the set formal criteria, i.e. consistent and correct spelling, grammar, stylistics and formalities in accordance with Guidelines for Authors and Citation Rules. It is necessary to use the template available on the journal's website: <https://www.mlar.sk/>.

If a published text (or manuscript intended for publication) violates the ethical principles or, eventually, if the entire texts or their parts are proven to be plagiarisms or consist of texts already published in the past or simultaneously in several other specialised publications, the authors and co-authors take on full responsibility. However, the authors are given opportunity to react to such allegations.

Any fundamental changes to authorship of already submitted final texts (e.g. amendment of co-authors, change in the order of authors, copyright interests in the text) are liable to the prior consent of the editorial board. The author(s) or co-author(s) must ask for a change in the copyright data or modification of their order on the basis of a formal, written request sent to the following e-mail address: mlar@ucm.sk.

The complete version of Media Literacy and Academic Research's Editorial Policy is available online at: <https://www.mlar.sk/editorial-policy/>.

SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS



Communication Today

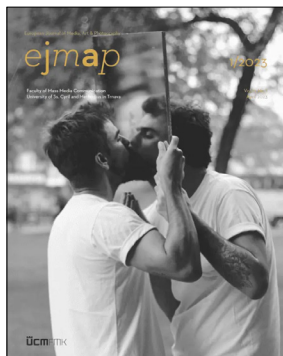
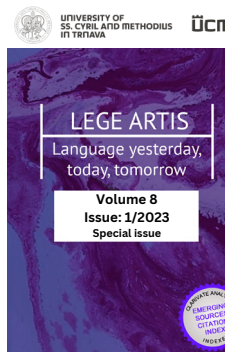
Scientific journal of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia

Communication Today is a scientific journal from the mass media and marketing communication field. The journal contains professional scientific reflections on the media, media competencies; it also offers academic discourses on the limits of reality, media thinking, new media, marketing and media relations, new trends in marketing including their types and specifics, psychology and sociology of marketing communication, as well as new knowledge about the structure of media contents, marketing strategies and communication sciences. The professional public is offered an interdisciplinary, focused, targeted discussion in these pages. Communication Today is a double-blind peer reviewed journal published twice a year. It focuses on theoretical studies, theoretical and empirical studies, research results and their implementation into practice, as well as professional publication reviews. The members of the journal's editorial board are members of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). Communication

Today is indexed in these databases: Cabell's Directories, CEJSH, EBSCO, CEEOL, ProQuest, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, Index Copernicus, ERIH PLUS, SCOPUS and (ESCI) – Web of Science Core Collection.

Lege Artis Language yesterday, today, tomorrow

Journal „Lege artis. Language yesterday, today, tomorrow” is a scholarly journal issued periodically by De Gruyter Open twice a year, in June and December. Contributors are invited to the mainstream linguistic studies and secondary subfields of linguistics included: *Cognitive linguistics, Cognitive poetics, Comparative-historical linguistics, Culture studies, Discourse analysis, Folklore studies, Grammar History of the language, Historical phonology and morphology, Historical semantics, Lexicology, Phonetics/Phonology, Psycholinguistics, Stylistics, Text linguistics and Cognitive semiotics*. „Lege artis. Language yesterday, today, tomorrow” is indexed in these databases: Web of Science, EBSCO, Clarivate Analytics – Emerging Sources Citation Index – Web of Science Core Collection, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory/ulrichsweb.

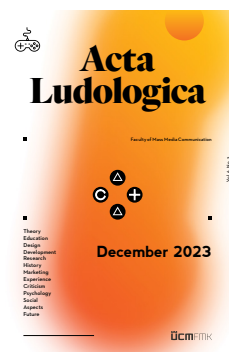


European Journal of Media, Art & Photography

European Journal of Media, Art & Photography (EJMAP) is an academic journal published biannually by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM). The journal is dedicated to publishing photographic collections, works of art and scholarly texts which deal with professional scientific reflection on media, culture, journalism photography, philosophy, literature and theatrical art. European Journal of Media, Art & Photography is indexed in CEEOL and Web of Sciences ESCI.

Acta Ludologica

Acta Ludologica is a scientific journal in the field of digital games. The journal contains professional scientific reflections on digital games; it also offers academic discourses on games, especially media and digital competencies, creation, design, marketing, research, development, psychology, sociology, history and the future of digital games. Acta Ludologica is a double-blind peer reviewed journal published twice a year. It focuses on theoretical studies, theoretical and empirical studies, research results and their implementation into practice, as well as professional publication reviews. The members of the journal's editorial board are members of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, the only faculty in Central Europe which has registered three scientific journals in Clarivate Analytics (formerly Thomson Reuters) Web of Science.



Media
Literacy *and*
Academic
Research

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

Vol. 6 || No. 2 || December 2023

E-ISSN: 2585-9188