

The Level of Credibility of Traditional and New Media in Reporting on Human Rights Issues

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ABSTRACT

Attempting to find an answer to the question in the focus of this paper – are new mass media in Croatia more credible and socially responsible than traditional ones? – the authors explore several key aspects regarding the monitoring and processing of human rights issues in selected media. In addition to the theoretical foundation, several qualitative and quantitative research methods have been applied. These are primarily the comparative method and content analysis (of the texts themselves, but also the type of their graphic equipment) of three most popular daily newspapers (24 sata, Jutarnji list and Večernji list) and three most popular daily news portals (Index.hr, Net.hr and Tportal.hr) in the period from 15 February to 15 April 2016. The way in which the selected newspapers and Internet portals reported on issues related to human rights – with emphasis on the rights of religious, national, racial and other minorities – was compared. In parallel, between 10 and 20 March 2016, a survey among citizens was conducted by combining face-to-face and online survey questionnaires. All the above was realized to prove the hypothesis that traditional, especially printed media in Croatia are still more credible, and the results of this research confirm it. Although readership or following has for years now been on the side of Internet portals, the newspapers still clearly ensure greater credibility in the Croatian public with their approach and the way they process a topic, especially when serious topics such as human rights issues are concerned.

Key words: credibility, traditional media, new media, human rights, Croatia

Introduction

New information and communication technologies have brought about revolutionary shifts in the context of interactivity and multimedia communication and information. At the same time, many controversies and debates have already emerged – a trend expected to continue – in both the professional and general public about the issue of credibility and social responsibility towards readers/viewers/audience in the relationship between content in new content and traditional or conventional media.

The topic is precisely the focus of this paper. Are new or traditional mass media more credible and more accountable (above all to their audience or the public), is what the authors attempt to answer by exploring several key aspects regarding the monitoring and processing of human rights issues in selected media. The theoretical foundation is based on the most important features of the following concepts: traditional and new media, credibility and social responsibility of media and human rights, minority groups and forms of their discrimination in the media, as well as

potential ways of protecting their rights through valid legal and ethical regulations in Croatia and the European Union. Namely, as shown by research in this paper, certain minorities and the discrimination of their members regularly appear as separate topics in terms of media treatment of human rights.

Furthermore, based on the results of the last available official research on the habits of consumption and exposure of Croatian citizens to the media, from the second half of 2015, as well as official data on readership of individual print media and Internet portals in Croatia, several qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to make relevant conclusions on this topic. These are primarily the comparative method and content analysis (of the texts themselves, but also the type of their graphic equipment) of the most popular daily newspapers and daily news portals in Croatia. The research covered a continuous period of two months in 2016, comparing the ways in which the selected newspapers and Internet portals reported on topics and issues related to human rights, with an emphasis on religious, national, racial and other minority issues.

In parallel, during ten days in March 2016, a survey was conducted among citizen to obtain feedback from the targeted audience about credibility, social responsibility, and media practices. All the above has been realized to prove the hypothesis that traditional, especially printed media are still more credible because new media multimediality is inclined towards images/videos, creating a simulacral-entertainment framework that usually only lasts one day.

Traditional and New Media

Media is a much broader term than the one used in everyday life. The multitude of meanings of the concept is emphasized by Inglis, for example, claiming that the media is a communication tool that transmits or »mediates« a message¹. However, for the purposes of this paper, the concept of media is observed solely in its most widespread meaning, that is mass media, from which »we can learn a lot, provided we learn how to watch, listen and read«². In addition, »mass media play an important role in shaping our personal perceptions and beliefs, especially those related to events and topics we do not know much about«^{3,4}. The authors agree with this statement, so the research covers precisely mass traditional and new media.

On the topic of traditional mass media, Bertrand notes that they are commonly newspapers and magazines, radio and (analogue) television⁵. Malović, much like Bennett, adds sound carriers to the afore-mentioned, and expectedly notes as new media – the Internet⁶. According to Manovich, the categories popularly considered to be new media are websites, multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs, DVDs and virtual reality, and this in the wider sense includes digital television, 3-D animation, and contemporary graphic design⁷. Turow is of the opinion it is worth adding numerous digital mass media: social networks, MP3 players and documents, blogs, mobile phones and multimedia streams, as well as their convergence, i.e. their interconnection and merging, both within new media and between them and traditional mass media, such as newspapers, magazines and analogue television⁸. The popularity and diffusion of both traditional and new mass media largely depends on the credibility they have gained in the public, as well as on the social responsibility they express.

Media credibility and social responsibility

Merriam-Webster Dictionary simply defines the term »credibility« as »the quality of being believed or accepted as true, real, or honest«⁹. Concerning media credibility, for Bauer, it is an evaluation measure between the expected roles and the actual roles of producer and consumer, and ultimately it is measured by the relevance and truthfulness of the information provided by a particular media^{10,11}. The above-mentioned definitions are covered by the research for this paper.

The level of media credibility, however, is strongly correlated with the term and level of social responsibility of media. Almost all media theorists whose work was consulted for this paper, generally referred to the need to

ensure the freedom of expression of media professionals. But, at the same time, Malović points out that »standards of professional journalism are a prerequisite for objective, truthful and fair reporting«⁶, which in practice often does not exist. Bertrand, who at the beginning of the 1990s, went farthest and devised the concept for ensuring social responsibility (of the media), called the Media Accountability System (MAS). It includes any non-state mode or means used to make the media responsible to the public, such as education, work evaluation and systematic monitoring of the work of media workers, and the creation of feedback between journalists and media audiences. The MAS protagonists are all »wheels« in the media system – media owners, editors, journalists, and even users themselves (audiences). Bertrand notes that »under normal circumstances MAS acts only under moral pressure, but action can be enhanced by the authority of media managers or existing legal provisions«⁷.

What Bertrand exactly implied was explained by several Croatian theorists and practitioners. Zgrabljic Rotar¹² cites Aftab¹³ when noting that the so-called »paternalists« believe that the media should be limited in cases when they are harmful to certain groups of society, such as children. More specifically, Vilović agrees with Bertrand stating that, to strengthen the media's social responsibility, »journalism as a specific profession must develop different, combined systems of media responsibility«¹⁴. She, therefore, emphasized back in 2007 the need for media self-regulation, and noted that as the main potential levers of conservation and application of this system, the editorial staff of each media outlet should adopt ethical codes and oblige journalists and editors to uphold accepted work standards. This is directly linked to Bertrand, who points out that »the media can inflict severe damage without violating the law at all«⁵, and Quinn openly warns of a similar problem, regarding human rights¹⁵.

Meanwhile, many media outlets in Croatia, such as Croatian Radio and Television and Novi list, have adopted the mentioned codes, and the leading national journalist organization, Croatian Journalists' Association (CJA), constantly adopts amendments to the Code of Conduct for Croatian Journalists. Unfortunately, in recent years, it was demonstrated that the provisions of these ordinances in practice often remain »dead letters«, even regarding the protection of human rights and the prevention of minority discrimination in the media.

Human Rights and Their Legal Regulation

There are many international and Croatian documents and legal and ethical regulations that define fundamental and special human rights. They are meant to publicly protect the rights of citizens, especially minorities, as the most vulnerable groups of citizens, but in practice, as well as in the media, they are often violated. Since a more detailed list, as well as case studies of their violation, surpasses the scope of this topic, the authors –specifying the concepts of human rights, minorities and discrimination – only mention such documents and list their most important provisions relevant to this paper.

As fundamental documents of international law, which deal with human rights issues in the narrow and broader sense, Lulić and Muhvić¹⁶ chronologically cite: the United Nations Charter (and the Statute of the International Tribunal) of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966¹⁷, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, followed by a number of United Nations conventions, documents protecting special groups and documents by the Council of Europe, also mentioned by Peruško Čulek¹⁸. The Republic of Croatia, as a member of several international associations, is a signatory to most important international acts. However, the authors have chosen to focus on a central document, analyzing how the selected media are addressing the issues of more than 30 different human rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights^{16,19}. It was particularly noted how the media treated those human rights set as basic: the right of all citizens to life, freedom and security (Article 3), prohibition of discrimination (Article 7), prohibition of arbitrary arrest, detention or persecution (Article 9), the right to freedom of movement (Article 13), the right to choose citizenship (Article 15), the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18), the right to freedom of thought and expression (Article 19), the right to social security (Article 22), the right to work (Article 23), the right to a decent living standard (Article 25) and the right to education (Article 26).

The fundamental legislation and by-laws of the Republic of Croatia, which directly or indirectly regulate these issues, are: The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia²⁰, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia²¹ and certainly, when it comes to this issue, the Media Act²² and the Electronic Media Act²³. Among ethical regulations, the most important is the Code of Conduct for Croatian Journalists, which states in Article 13: „Journalists respect, protect and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms, especially the principle of equality of all citizens. Special responsibility is expected when reporting or commenting on the rights, needs, problems and demands of minority social groups. Information on race, color, religious or national affiliation, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, any physical or mental trait or illness, marital status, lifestyle, social status, property status or level of education, is only stated by the journalist only if extremely relevant in the context in which it is presented. It is inadmissible to use stereotypes, pejorative expressions, humiliating rendering, as well as any other form of direct or indirect encouragement or support of discrimination“²⁴. In other words, media workers should especially be careful when reporting on events that, in any form, involve members of certain minority groups.

Minorities

Many world and domestic experts point out that it is difficult to set a universally valid definition of the concept of minority. Tatalović had warned two decades ago that »according to the existing literature, there is no generally accepted definition of minority, and some that are most

respected are only operative, made to be used only in a particular context or study«²⁵. Disputes about the exact definition of the concept of minority persists even, as emphasized by Vukas²⁶, in official international legal documents.

As a precondition for successful research, however, authors had to define this concept more precisely. They decided to use the definition of Frances Capotorti, a former long-time Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Horvatić²⁷, for example, draws on the same definition, and in its current official documents dedicated to human rights, it is also quoted by the prominent United Nations (UN) as a comprehensive description of the term »minority«. It reads: »Minority is a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious, sexual or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language«²⁸.

Thus, Capotorti's definition is universal, but it is directed to minority groups that the public generally perceives to fit under the concept – national, religious, linguistic and sexual minorities – whose representation was also part of the analysis of Croatian media content in this paper. In addition to the mentioned legal regulations, it is worth pointing out several of the most important ones that create a regulatory framework for the protection of minorities in the Republic of Croatia, such as the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities²⁹, the Same Sex Life-Partnership Act in 2003 and the Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities in 2013. As far as media coverage of minorities is concerned, the current Media Act is explicit in Article 3: »It is forbidden in the broadcasting of program content in the media to promote or glorify national, racial, religious, gender or other inequality or inequality based on sexual orientation, as well as ideologies and states created on such grounds, or to provoke national, racial, religious, sexual or other hostility or intolerance or intolerance based on sexual orientation, incite violence and war«²².

Attempting to legally prevent different forms of discrimination, not just of minorities, several UN documents are in force in Croatia, primarily the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief from 1981 and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities from 1992²⁶, and recently, some of the legal regulations of the European Union. Šimonović Einwalter and Petričušić³⁰ also note the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination from 1965.

Discrimination

Judging by the theoretical sources studied by the authors of this paper, unlike minorities, there is much less disagreement around the definition of »discrimination«.

Conclusions by several experts are sublimated by Uzelac in the claim that »discrimination is an unfair way of treating a person or group based on unequal criteria, influenced by prejudices or intentional denial of rights to another person or group«. He refers to the above mentioned 1981 UN Declaration, where discrimination means „any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference of something or someone based on faith or belief, with the aim or effect of contesting or violating human rights and freedoms“. Based on this, he concludes that „depending on the cause of the dispute on a right, privilege or choice, there is racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, generational and social discrimination“³¹, and the Croatian Ombudsman is guided by an identical approach in attempting to suppress cases of public discrimination³². Therefore, as discrimination is not limited to minorities, the topic was monitored by the authors in selected media.

Methodological Framework and Research Goals

The methodological research framework encompasses several qualitative and quantitative research methods – comparative method, content analysis of selected media and surveys questionnaire – carried out at the national level. The comparative method is often applied in social sciences, and allows for the recognition of similarities, common features or differences between two events, phenomena or objects^{34,35}. In this case, the contents of precisely defined traditional and new media were compared.

Content analysis and comparison of daily newspapers and Internet portals

Content analysis, notes Krippendorff, is a widespread and widely used way of researching and analyzing information published in certain media³⁶, and is most often used in mass media analysis. Neuendorf defines it as „an in-depth analysis used in quantitative and qualitative techniques of messages, using the scientific method (considering objectivity, reliability, validity, generalization, substitution and hypothesis testing) and is not limited to the types of variables that could be measured or the context in which messages created or presented“³⁷.

The authors agree with this stance, thus creating and applying a content analysis for this paper. The research covered the continuous period of two months in 2016, and compared the most widely read Croatian newspapers and Internet portals in that time range, reporting on human rights issues, focusing on religious, national, racial and other minorities. Content analysis was carried out using pre-structured analytical matrices, and the analysis units were newspaper and Internet articles dealing with the human rights topics. Much like Benković and Balabanić (2010)³⁸, the authors did not include content that does not really belong to the group of classical journalistic articles in the analysis, namely: adverts, games, sponsored contributions, less serious sections such as »Girl and Man of the Day«, horoscopes, polls, photos of the day, weather forecasts, guides, crossword puzzles and comments by newspaper readers and portal visitors.

The matrix contained a total of 15 classification categories, used to collect data necessary to confirm or deny the basic hypothesis. The general template for identifying the classification categories in the research was the analytical matrix created and used by Benković and Balabanić³⁸ for their media content analysis (in their case, of Internet portals). Of course, necessary modifications and adaptations were made in accordance with this topic and research. Thus, the following categories were used: media publication, date of publication of articles, total number of articles in certain media, number of articles by date of publication, article elements, type and form of articles, representativeness of authors and individual sources plurality of information sources, main topic of the article, frequency of topic occurrence in individual articles, critical (value) relation to the main topic of the article (positive, negative or neutral), »depth« of the article (in-depth or superficial), existence and type of graphic equipment/image material in the article, and when the authors considered the necessary, brief description and explanation of the article. As noted above, the main objective of the research was to determine whether, as the authors have assumed, credibility is still on the side of traditional, especially printed media, in relation to new media, specifically internet portals.

Another guideline for conducting own research were the results of the last available survey by Ipsos MediaPuls and Ipsos BrandPuls on the trends and habits of consumption and exposure of Croatian citizens to mass media. This Ipsos Adria Agency survey was conducted for the period from the second half of 2012 to the second half of 2015; the reference target group ranged from 15 to 64 years of age; the most popular traditional and new mass media (press, radio, television, the Internet) were included; and the results were published in the spring of 2016³⁹. According to the results, the Internet grew most compared to the mentioned media (by as much as 15%), with its reach among consumers going as high as 77% in the second half of 2015 in comparison with 2014. On the other hand, consumption of print media was declining. The largest drop in the number of readers per year – from the second half of 2014 to the second half of 2015 – was recorded in bi-weekly magazines (-21%), followed by daily newspapers (-19%), monthly (-14%) and weekly publications, which were read on average by less than 11% of citizens. Nevertheless, despite a significant drop in readership, daily newspapers are still the most conspicuous printed format. Despite the negative trend, the press is still a relevant media in Croatia, as 49% of the population older than 15 read at least one edition of printed media³⁹ available at public places, such as libraries and reading rooms or various establishments. The authors drew two conclusions from the results: a) the press, which has at one time created the community's media image⁴⁰, still has a firm core of loyal devotees, not only among the older population; b) this research supported Brautović's claim that „online journalism represents a new way of presenting and distributing news to the public“⁴¹ and that portals are factually a digital „successor“ of print media. Given that they share the same characteristics (daily, informative) and audience (readers), as well as disseminating information (journalist articles, most often equipped

with accompanying graphic materials) it was logical to draw a parallel between daily newspapers and daily information websites in attempting to analyze the content and compare traditional and new media regarding the research topic (human rights).

The basic selection criteria were readership, i.e. number of visits, and national reach. Therefore, three most read daily national daily newspapers in Croatia (24 sata, Jutarnji list and Večernji list) and three most popular (most visited) daily informative Internet portals – Index.hr, Net.hr and Tportal.hr – were selected for the analysis. An additional criterion for the portals was that they are independent media that appear only in the form of an online electronic publication, without a print, radio or television edition, thus avoiding the possibility of daily publications being compared with their online editions – 24sata.hr, Jutarnji.hr and Vecernji.hr – which are also high in readership ratings.

In both cases, data from two official sources were combined to make the selection as relevant as possible. According to the research conducted by MediaPuls and BrandPuls, the list of the most popular daily newspapers has been unchanged for four years in a row (from 2012 to 2015). The first place is consistently held by 24 sata (it was regularly read by 15.2% of the population in 2015), the second is Jutarnji list with 7%, and the third Večernji list with 6.2% of readership in 2015³⁹. Similar data is provided by the relevant national organization ABC Croatia⁴² for 2016. On the other hand, the results of official measurements of two professional web sites were used to track the ratings of Internet portals – GemiusRating.com and DotMetrics.net. In the first week of September 2016, when this analysis was conceived, GemiusRating found that the two most visited daily news portals without a printed edition were Net.hr (6th position with about 14.5 million so-called page views, with a 30.56% reach of the total number of Internet users) and Tportal.hr, which took 7th place with approximately 9 million pages views and a 25.17% reach, in the total number of internet users⁴³. The situation is still quite similar today⁴⁴. The popular portal Index.hr is missing from the list due to a dispute with the owners of GemiusRating.com in February 2014. However, Index.hr has been continually among the most widely read Croatian portals in a range of other official metrics and charts, such as DotMetrics, the first Croatian web site measurement system and data analysis, launched in early 2015. Thus, Index.hr, according to DotMetrics, was the most popular Croatian portal in August 2015 with a total of 113,994,467 page views by Croatian visitors, or 120,475,739 page views in September 2015⁴⁵. Index.hr retained the title of the most widely read Croatian web site without a printed edition, in September 2016⁴⁶ and in February and March 2017⁴⁷, with similar figures.

The main point of reference for determining the sample was found in the political situation in the Republic of Croatia, i.e. the social context. Namely, research was done in a rather turbulent political time for Croatia. Based on the results of the parliamentary elections, held on 8 November 2015, the new government was based, as would later turn

out, on a rather unstable coalition between the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Bridge of Independent Lists (Most), along with several smaller political partners. After lengthy negotiations, the new composition of the Government of Croatia, headed by Prime Minister Tihomir Orešković, was constituted after two and a half months⁴⁸. This political alliance did not last long, and after a many mutual tensions and misunderstanding, in the beginning of May 2016, there was a large affair labeled „Drimia“. The Nacional weekly magazine published an article, written by Orhideja Gaura Hodak, in which indications were given that Ana Šarić Karamarko (wife of Tomislav Karamarko, then HDZ President and First Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Croatia), as the owner of Drimia consultancy agency, favored the Hungarian company MOL in its takeover of Croatia's national oil company Ina, in exchange for monetary benefits⁴⁹. This affair was the leading media and social issue in Croatia for weeks and, according to political analysts, is the decisive cause of disagreement and coalition breakup between HDZ and Most, which on 16 June 2016 led to the fall of the government⁵⁰. Subsequently, the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarović issued the Decision on the Early Elections for Members of the Croatian Parliament⁵¹, which were held on 11 September 2016.

Due to all the above, an indicative two-month period from 15 February to 15 April 2016 was chosen for the implementation of the research. In the authors' opinion, this was the only period in which the then Croatian government functioned relatively normally and the media and the public had the opportunity to give attention to everyday topics, other than politics. Of course, it is undoubtful that the existing situation in Croatia had changed the media discourse and the reporting on human rights at least in part. It would be interesting to determine to what extent and in what way, but a deeper analysis of this issue, especially linguistic, would go beyond the framework of this paper.

Survey questionnaire on media credibility

As an additional research tool, a survey was conducted among the Croatian citizens in the period from 10 to 20 March 2016, in order to receive feedback from the targeted audience about credibility, social responsibility and media practices. The authors wanted to explore the citizens' media habits, media attitudes and comparative advantages of individual media channels for the delivery of different types of content and information. The research was quantitative, and combined the Face-To-Face Computer Assisted Personal Interview (F2F CAPI) and an online written questionnaire. The sample consisted of 600 respondents (N=600) from the entire Croatian territory, chosen by random selection, 500 of whom completed an online survey questionnaire and 100 of whom were surveyed via F2F CAPI. The sample was created in line with the criterion of 75% of Internet users aged 18 to 60³⁹ and is nationally representative of age, sex and region. The average age of respondents was slightly more than 43

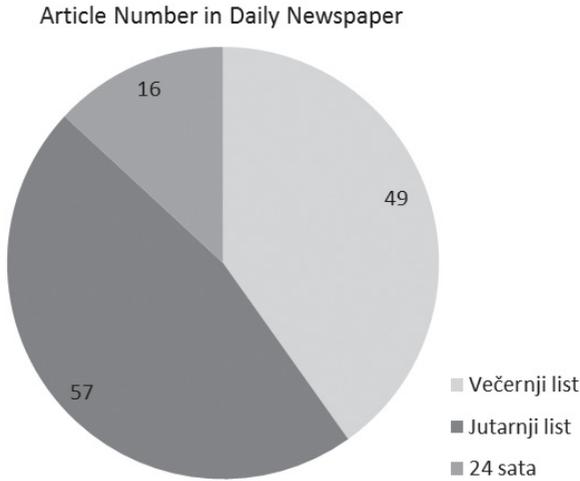


Fig. 1. Article number published in daily newspapers.

years ($M=43.2$), and they responded to a total of five targeted questions of the closed type, i.e. questions with offered answers. The authors received a total of 243 completed questionnaires ($N=243$), meaning that the response rate was more than satisfactory (40.5%).

Research Results and Discussion

By conducting content analysis in selected daily newspapers, authors reviewed published articles in each issue that came out from 15 February to 15 April 2016. In the observed period, a total of 122 texts were found to deal directly or indirectly with human rights issues (Figure 1). A similar number of texts – 49 (about 40% of the total number) and 57 (about 47%) – were published in Večernji list and Jutarnji list respectively, while a significantly smaller number of articles, only 16 (about 13%) was recorded in 24 sata. Such a ratio is logical because Večernji

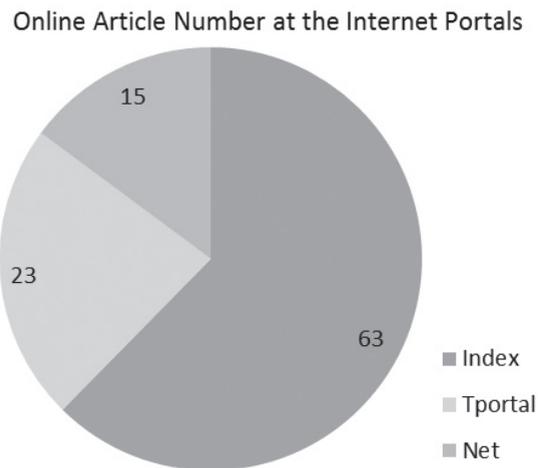


Fig. 2. Online article number published at the Internet portals.

and Jutarnji list claim a more serious approach, while 24 sata is predominantly a tabloid, to which human rights issues are, as a rule, interesting only if an extraneous circumstance or incident occurs. (Figure 1)

In the same time range, human rights were less represented on the analyzed internet portals by roughly one fifth, which can be seen in Figure 2. There was a total of 101 articles dealing with these issues, almost two-thirds of which, or 63 (approximately 62%) on Index.hr, while only 23 (about 23%) on Tportal.hr and 15 (about 15%) of articles published on Net.hr indicate that they report on current events from that social area far less. This result should not be surprising as Index.hr has a habit of processing one event through texts with several extensions, which has been particularly noticed in the mentioned two months, when it comes to reporting on the so-called migrant crisis in Europe. (Figure 2)

Following the situation, the authors also noted differences in the frequency of appearance of articles on human rights, both in newspapers and on portals (Figures 3 and 4). This is expected because media releases depend largely on what events are more current and more interesting. Thus, for example, the largest number of articles related to the issue of human rights in print media was published on 24 February (nine articles) and 14 March 2016 (as many as 11 articles). In the first case, newspapers mostly dealt with the official report by Amnesty International, with the troubling conclusion that there is still discrimination against minorities in Croatia. The second topic in the public eye is illustrated by the commentary written by Jelena Lovrić, columnist of Jutarnji list, titled „HSP Ante Starčević descends into political hooliganism“ published on the same day (14 March 2016) in print and online, about the fierce verbal sortie of the party’s leader at the then assembly, aimed at the discrimination of minorities⁵².

With portals, no date differs significantly regarding the number of articles on human rights, but 15 February (six articles), 23 February (seven articles), and 14 April 2016 (six articles) still stand out. What the emphasis was is exemplified by an article on Tportal.hr from 15 February 2016 entitled »Statements by Milanović and Frlić on HRT are not hate speech«⁵³, dealing with offensive statements of the then leader of the Croatian political opposition, Zoran Milanović, and Oliver Frlić, the then director of the Croatian National Theater in Rijeka, on account of their opponents and other dissenting opinions. A great interest in the results of the above-mentioned report by Amnesty International was also demonstrated by Index.hr on 23 February 2016 in an article under the indicative title „Human Rights in Croatia: Roma Excluded from Society, Serbs Discriminated in Employment“⁵⁴. The authors noticed that in many cases, newspapers and portals are still different in their interests and the way they report on topics, indicating a differentiation in approach between traditional and new media. (Figure 3, Figure 4) As far as journalistic formats are concerned, richness and diversity dominate the print media, since the following formats were found: news, reports, classical articles, coverages, comments, interviews, denials and readers’ reactions (Figure 5). The report is the most common form in the news-

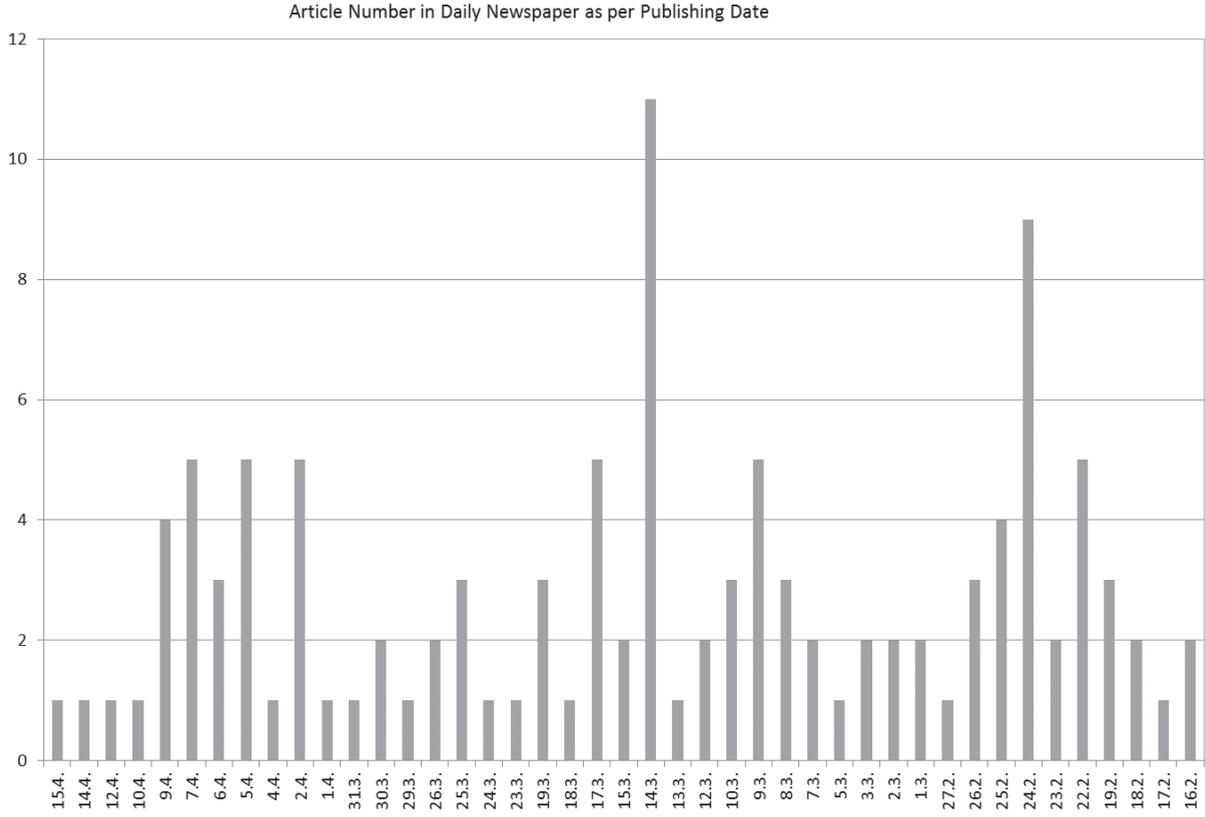


Fig. 3. Number of articles in daily newspapers as per pub.

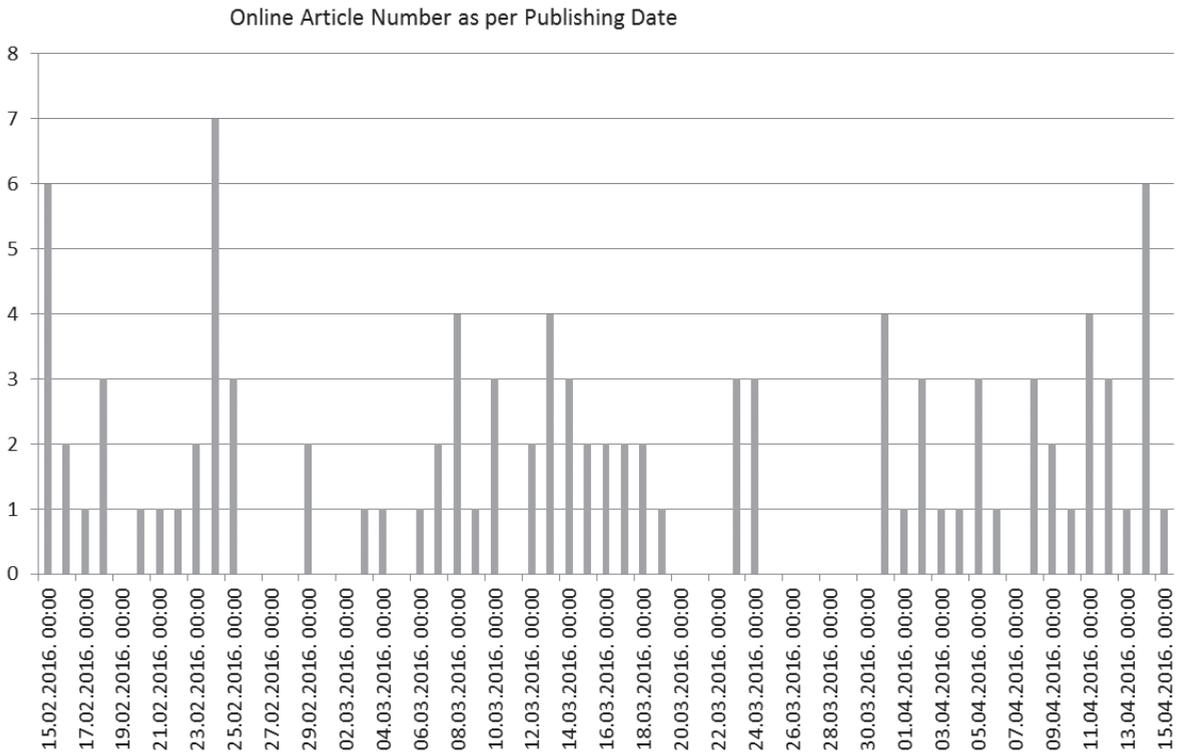


Fig. 4. Number of articles on Internet portals as per publishing date.

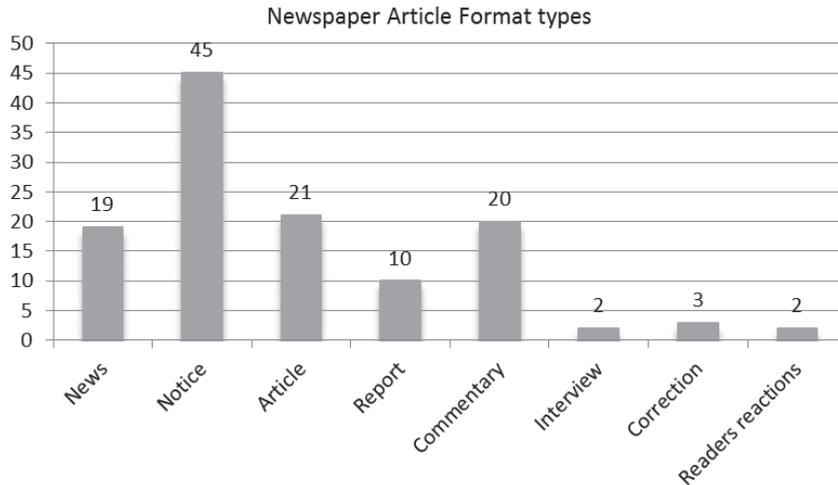


Fig. 5. Types of article formats in daily newspapers.

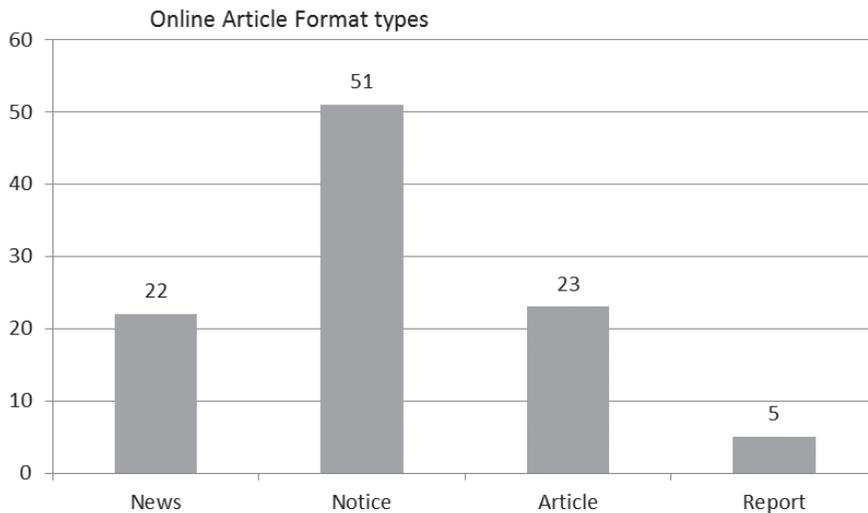


Fig. 6. Types of article formats on Internet portals.

paper (45 contributions or about 37%), and after that, news, classical articles and comments are equally represented – with 17%. The authors only found four formats on Internet portals (Figure 6), where reports are predominant (a total of 51 or more than half), followed by classic articles (23) and news (22), while only five coverages were recorded over a two-month period. Hence, in this example, it is obvious that portals are more prone to shorter formats, while newspapers prefer analytical formats. The reason is probably in the very nature of the media, because newspapers have more time to handle a topic, while portals often must react very quickly and bring information, even if it is in a shorter and more superficial format. (Figure 5, Figure 6)

Smaller differences have been noted regarding main topics of concern in particular media (Figures 7 and 8). Topics are dominated by the different types of human rights issues, with printed media publishing more than

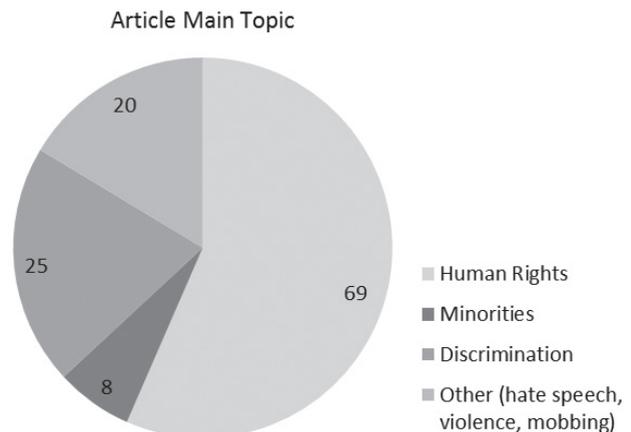


Fig. 7. Representation of main topics in articles in daily newspapers.

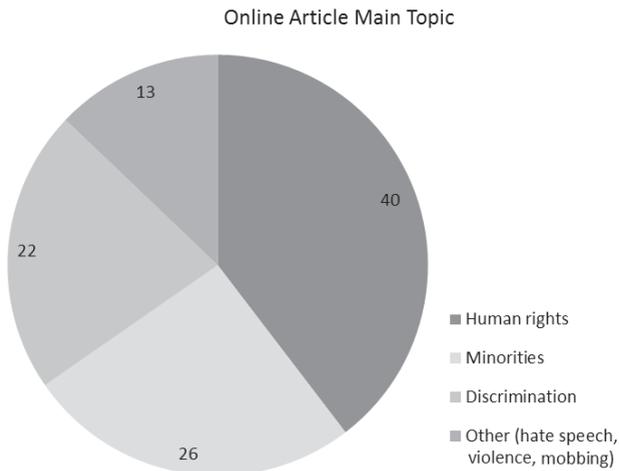


Fig. 8. Representation of main topics in articles on internet portals.

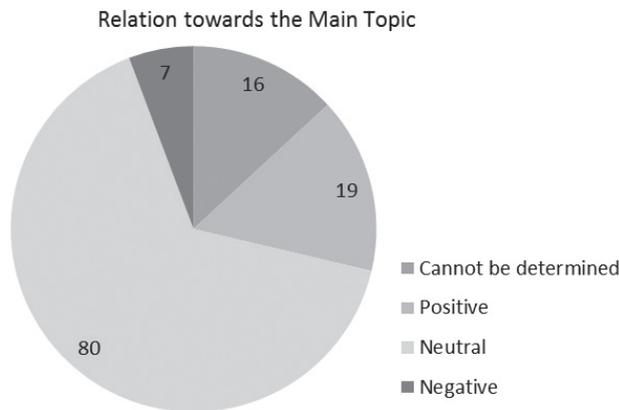


Fig. 9. Relationship towards the main topic in daily newspapers.

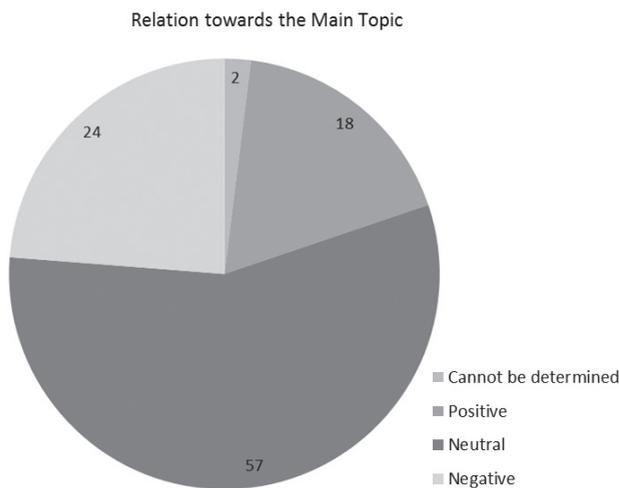


Fig. 10. Relationship towards the main topic on Internet portals.

50% of articles on those topics versus around 40% on Internet portals. In the analyzed period, newspapers reported on several cases of discrimination and other closely related issues (hate speech, violence, mobbing), on average about 20%, and minorities were represented to a surprisingly small percentage – about 6.5%. At the same time, minority groups as a topic were four times more frequently (about 26%) detected in articles on online portals. The following is the topic of discrimination (around 22%), while the rest deal with hate speech, violence and mobbing.

When it comes to minorities as vulnerable groups of society, the media devoted most attention, about 40% of the articles, to the Serbian minority, which is logical since it is the most numerous minority in the Republic of Croatia and the fact that neighboring Serbia and its citizens have complicated relations with Croatia. Other minorities detected in the media were: Roma (about 20%), Jews (around 10%), refugees/migrants (Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan – also about 10%), and approximately 10% of all other minorities: homosexuals, Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Hungarians and others. (Figure 7, Figure 8)

One of the guiding parameters for assessing the credibility of a media is its relationship towards the main topic. Namely, basic principles prescribe that a journalistic approach should, as a rule, be as neutral and as objective as possible. In this regard, print media are better. As can be seen in Figures 9 and 10, the relationship towards the main topic is more neutral than that of news portals. Almost two-thirds of all texts are more neutral, more than on portals (not reaching 60%), noting also that online media have a much larger share of negatively-intoned texts on human rights – about 25% compared to 5.7% in printed media – which can be evaluated as a particularly negative occurrence. (Figure 9, Figure 10)

The next important segment for valorizing the credibility of a media is certainly the depth or profoundness in reporting on the main topic. Bertrand comments on the depth of analysis through value-related attributes and of

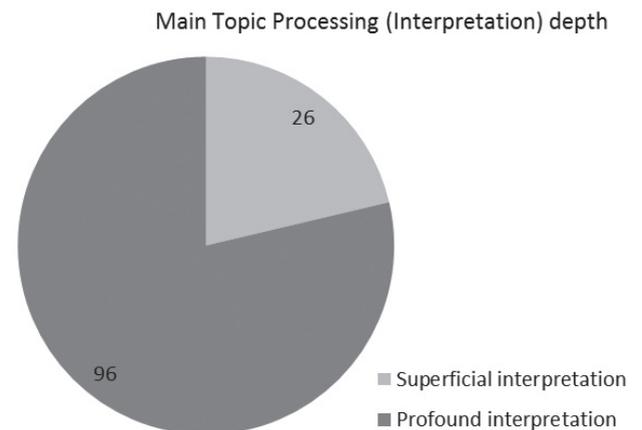


Fig. 11. Main topic processing (interpretation) depth in daily newspapers.

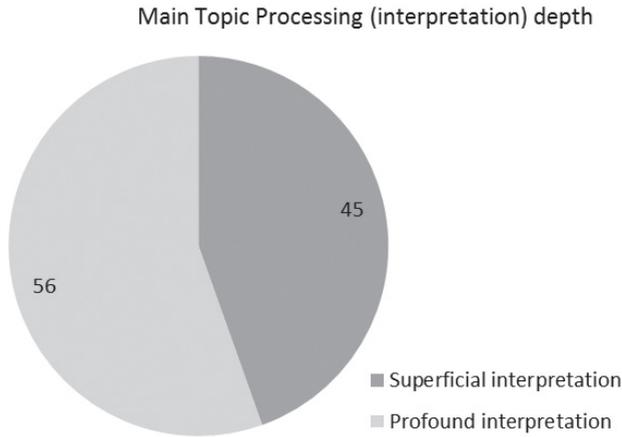


Fig. 12. Main topic processing (interpretation) depth on Internet portals.

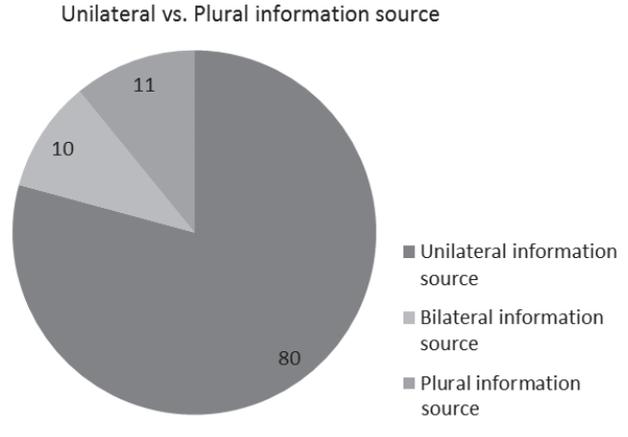


Fig. 14. Plurality of information sources on Internet portals.

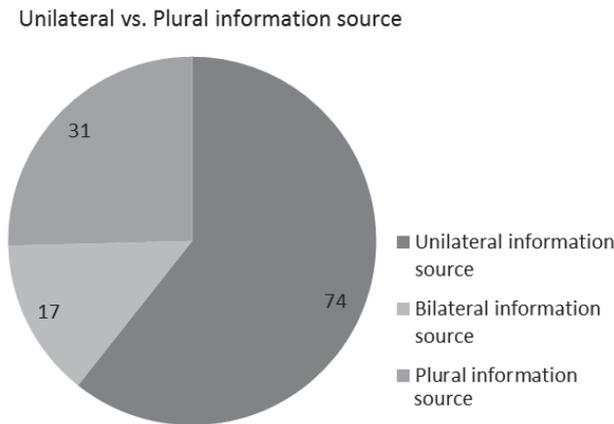


Fig. 13. Plurality of information sources in daily newspapers.

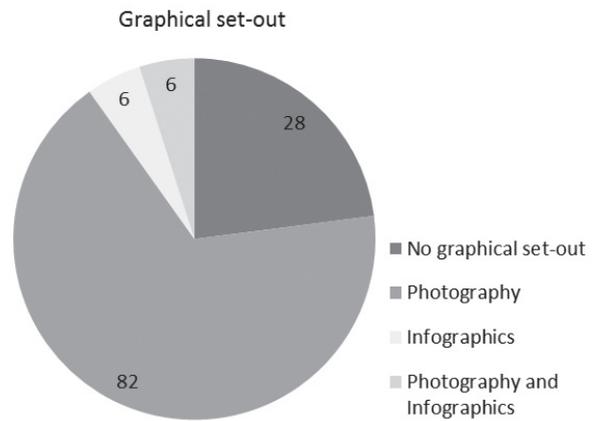


Fig. 15. Prevalence of individual graphic equipment types in daily newspapers.

fers the concept of »iceberg journalism«⁵, i.e. the superficial covering of only the visible part of reality, while ignoring a much larger portion beneath the surface³⁸. Internet portals are considerably closer to this concept, where the share of superficially processed topics reaches almost 50%, while the share in-depth analysis of topics almost exceeds 80% in printed media (Figures 11 and 12), which has already been noted in the analysis of newspaper formats. (Figures 11, 12)

The significant difference in favor of newspapers is also reflected on the important plane of plurality of information sources, as shown in Figures 13 and 14. One of the fundamental rules in journalism, the „two sides rule“, is often neglected on portals, thus, as many as 80% rely on only one source. The situation is not great in print media either (a not insignificant 60% of articles are based on one-sided sources), but plurality of sources (about a quarter of the texts) is still much higher than at portals. (Figures 13, 14)

Since contemporary trends bring ever stronger visual and textual content, the prevalence of certain types of me-

dia equipment in the media is not surprising (Figures 15 and 16). It is expected that photographs will be a part of the graphic equipment in every online article (in all 100%

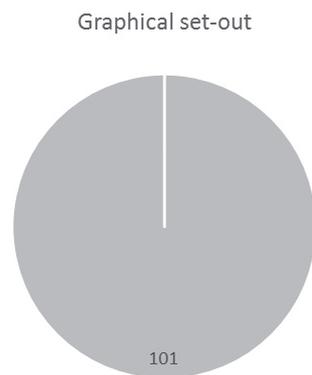


Fig. 16. Prevalence of individual graphic equipment types on Internet portals.

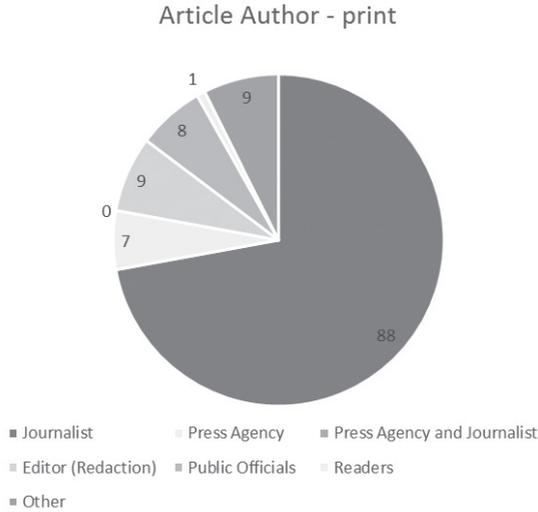


Fig. 17. Prevalence of authors and sources in daily newspapers.

of cases), and newspapers are increasingly less likely to publish – in just 20% of cases – texts without any graphic equipment (photos, graphics, or both) since they wish to attract the readers’ attention. (Figures 15, 16)

The final observed segment in analyzing the content of selected media was the prevalence of authors and individual sources in daily newspapers and on portals. Namely, it is logical that citizens are more inclined to believe in media releases bearing an authoring signature or at least having a clearly defined source, which the public finds trustworthy. According to this parameter (Figures 17 and 18), credibility is on the side of traditional media. More than 70% of the analyzed texts have been signed by a



Fig. 18. Prevalence of authors and sources on Internet portals.

person with a name and surname, on several occasions, authors were public figures and experts, with an extremely small percentage of non-credible sources. By contrast, barely a quarter of all texts on portals have a clearly marked author, and most (around 60%) relied on news agencies as rather unspecified sources. Social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, are increasingly used as legitimate sources (approximately 10%), which also does not contribute to strengthening trust in online media. (Figures 17, 18)

Regarding the survey conducted among citizens, the answers received (Figure 19) to the first question »How often do you read the following media?« (responses provided) indicate that more than 50% of respondents use the Internet several times a day, approximately a quarter of respondents use the Internet every day. No one confessed to never using the Internet, and only a small percentage

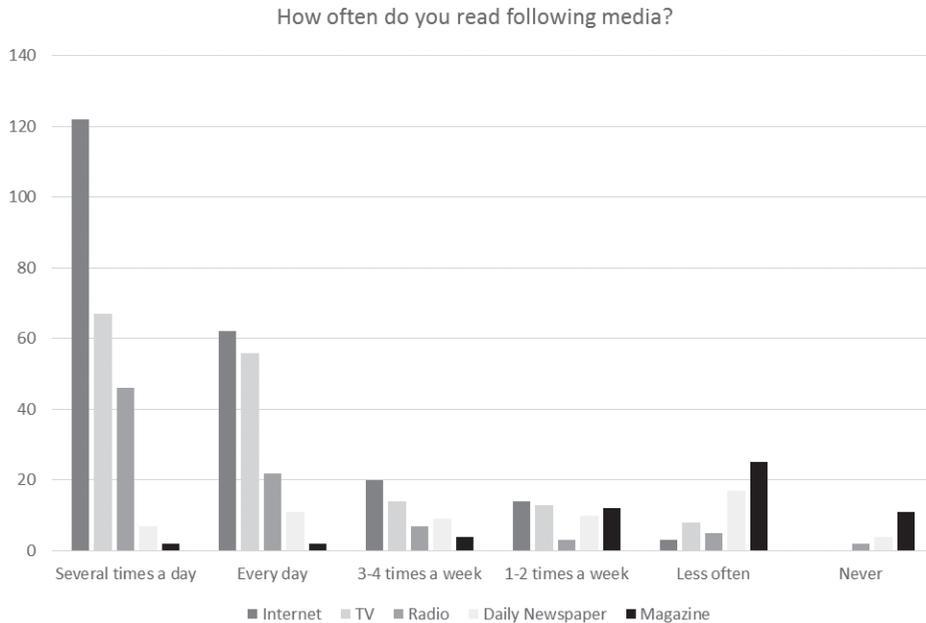


Fig. 19. Frequency of following individual media outlets.

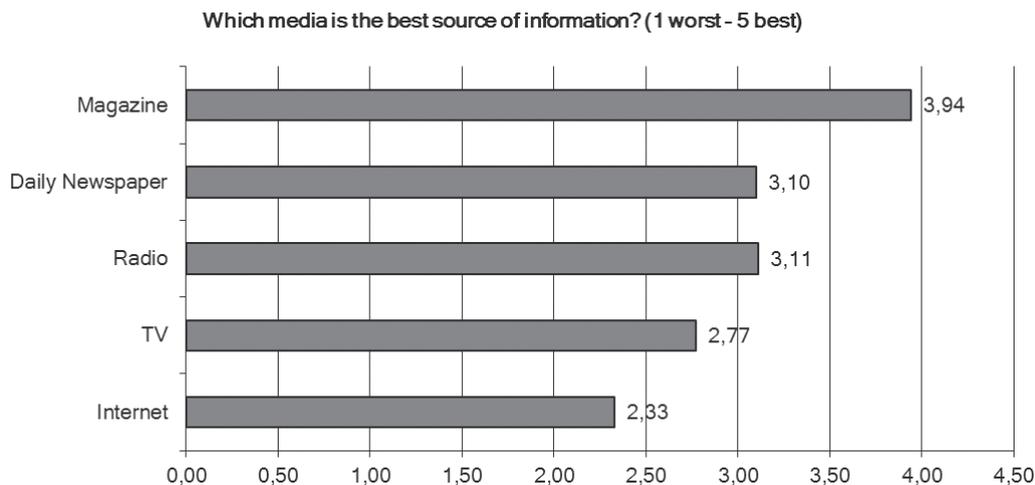


Fig. 20. Evaluation of media regarding the quality of information sources.

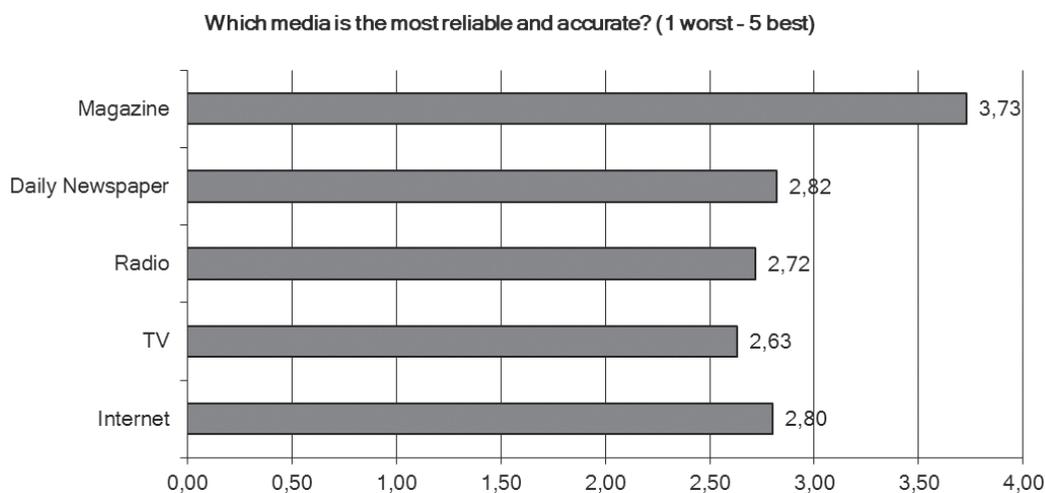


Fig. 21. Evaluation of media reliability and accuracy of information.

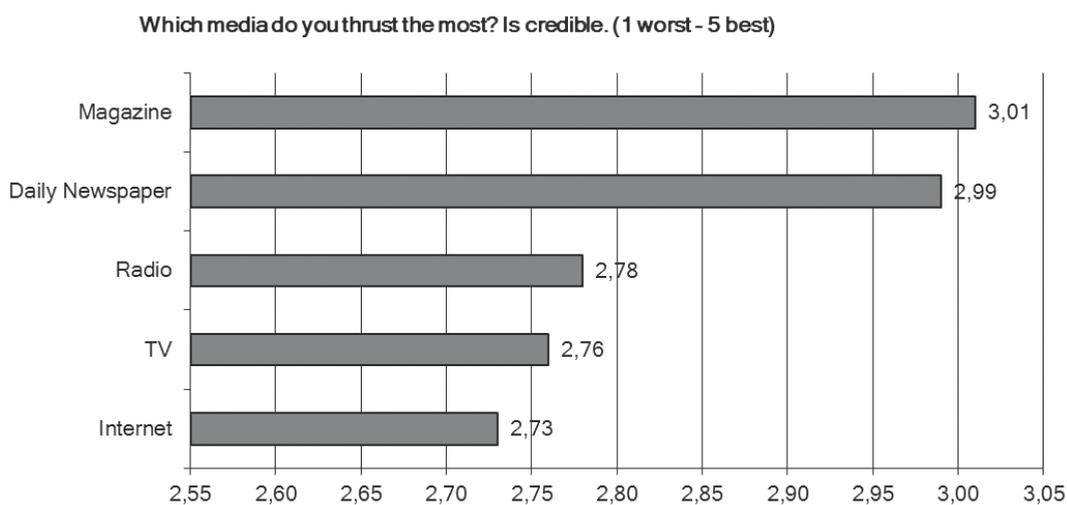


Fig. 22. Evaluation of media credibility.

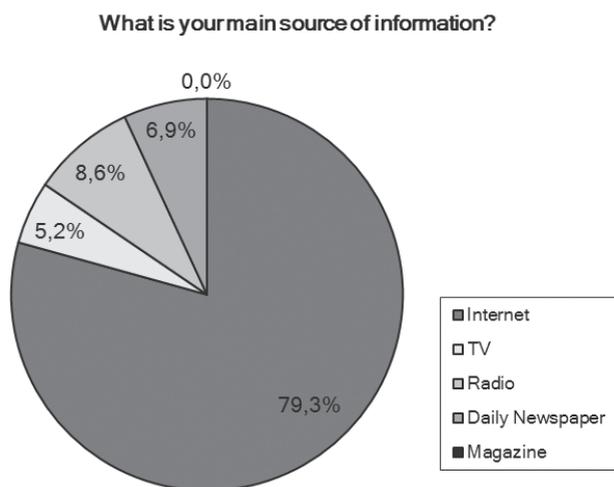


Fig. 23. Main source of information.

rarely use it. By contrast, only about 10% of respondents read daily newspapers every day. These results largely correspond to data from Ipsos Adria's reference research (2016)³⁹. It should be reiterated that almost half of the citizens regularly consume the contents of at least one daily newspaper, and a smaller number of respondents at least occasionally read both weekly and monthly magazines, so the press, despite this negative trend, is still an influential traditional mass media. (Figure 19)

In addition, respondents answered several questions aimed at determining the level of media credibility as seen by the media audience. When asked »Which media is the best source of information?« – with 1 being the worst, and 5 the best (Figure 20) – the highest, solid score belonged to magazines (3.94). The second place is practically shared by radio stations (3.11) and newspapers (3.10), television

has an average rating of 2.77, while Internet media received the weakest score of 2.33, barely passing. (Figure 20)

Interestingly, though the respondents had previously assessed them as a much better source of information, newspapers only managed to be one step ahead of Internet media (with 2.82 vs. 2.80), when respondents answered the question regarding reliability and accuracy of information (Figure 21). However, printed media still achieved good scores, given the fact that magazines were ranked first again, averaging a score of 3.73. (Figure 21)

The crucial question respondents had to answer asked them to evaluate the media regarding their credibility. Generally, the ratings were lower and the differences between the media smaller than in the previous responses, but the order in Figure 22 is clear. At the top, there were again print media, i.e. magazines (3.01) and daily newspapers (2.99), followed by radio (2.78), television with 2.76 and again the internet at the rear, with an average rating of 2.73. (Figure 22)

All the evaluation results and, on average, the lowest scores achieved by Internet media outlets are particularly interesting since the clear majority, up to 79.3% of respondents, had just marked the Internet as their main source of information, as shown in Figure 23. However, this overriding dominance must be considered in view of the fact that a good number of respondents have stressed they use the Internet for gathering information by reading online editions of printed media or watching video clips from television stations. (Figures 23, 24)

Regarding the last question in the survey, »What media content do you consume the most?« (Figure 24), respondents placed news from Croatia in first place (77.6% of respondents follow it regularly), and local news in third place, with exactly half of all respondents interested in it. As previously analyzed, the listed topics – with »International News« occupying the 5th position with 41.4% of all

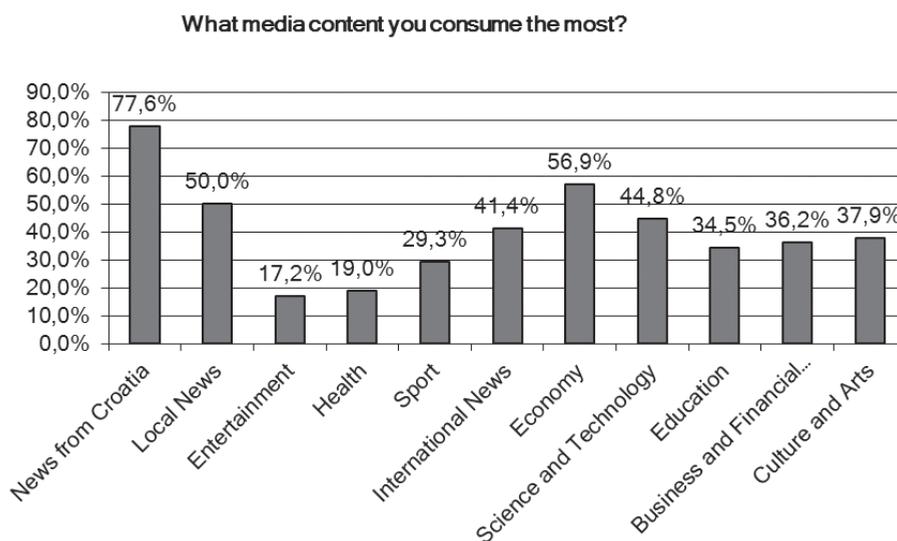


Fig. 24. Most consumed media content.

responses – were the ones within which the media cover human rights issues in daily newspapers and on Internet portals. It can be concluded that a good portion of the media audience is consistently familiarized with human rights issues and events.

Conclusion

By looking at the current media environment from several aspects, based on a concrete example of treatment and representation of human rights in different media, the authors have been able to confirm the underlying hypothesis that traditional (printed) media in Croatia are still more credible than new media, especially Internet portals.

This was proved by results of each research methods applied for this paper. Analysis of the content of the selected media and the comparative method yielded a series of exact conclusions. The analytical matrix consisted of 15 classification categories, and in each area crucial for proving or refuting the proposed hypothesis – the frequency of use of certain types of journalistic reports, the relation to the main topic, the depth of topic, the plurality of information sources, and the representation of authors and information sources – the data obtained were on the side of daily newspapers, compared to daily news Internet portals. Thus, despite unlimited space found on the Internet, in the informative sense, there is a prevalence of short and superficial forms, with more space given to »exotic«, more media potent and entertaining themes. In-depth journalistic forms of analysis, reportage and commentary mostly appear in print media. Articles on the Internet mostly transmitted texts, especially from the Croatian State News Agency (HINA). social networks like Facebook and

Instagram are becoming new, and realistically, still insufficiently reliable sources of information. An additional confirmation of the results of the content analysis was reached through a survey conducted among citizens, within which the respondents also undoubtedly gave precedence to printed, traditional media on all the measures relevant to this research (media ratings regarding the quality of information sources, reliability, accuracy and credibility).

In other words, even though readership has been convincingly on the side of internet portals for years now, the newspapers obviously still provide stronger public credibility with their approach and manner of dealing with issues, especially when it comes to such serious topics as human rights. Though they generally might seem superficial and insufficiently media literate, the Croatian media audience is aware of how the multimediability of new media is inclined towards images/videos, creating a simulacral-entertainment framework that usually lasts for only one day. The next day, for example, yesterday's media content will have been replaced by new simulacral-entertainment content almost completely revoking previous events and information as if they had never occurred.

The research carried out for this paper also confirmed that, unfortunately, journalists often report on minority issues, citizen discrimination and other sensitive social issues, such as hate speech and mobbing, in an inappropriate and biased manner. Given the fact that trust in the media, especially new media, is steadily declining, the question is whether and when the level of credibility achieved by mass media such as newspapers, radio and analogue television in the late 20th century will be reached again, not just in Croatia, and not just in terms of reporting on human rights issues.

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RAZINA VJERODOSTOJNOSTI TRADICIONALNIH I NOVIH MEDIJA U PRAĆENJU PITANJA LJUDSKIH PRAVA

SAŽETAK

U svrhu pronalaska odgovora na pitanje koje se nalazi u fokusu ovoga rada – jesu li u Hrvatskoj vjerodostojniji i društveno odgovorniji novi ili tradicionalni masovni mediji? – autori istražuju nekoliko ključnih aspekata u pogledu praćenja i obrade tema vezanih uz ljudska prava u izabranim medijima. Uz teorijski temelj primijenjeno je nekoliko kvalitativnih i kvantitativnih istraživačkih metoda. U prvom redu, komparativna metoda i analiza sadržaja (ponajprije samih tekstova, ali i vrsta njihove grafičke opreme) tri najčitanija nacionalna dnevna tiskana medija (24 sata, Jutarnji list i Večernji list) te tri najčitanija dnevno informativna internetska portala (Index.hr, Net.hr i Tportal.hr) u razdoblju od 15. veljače do 15. travnja 2016. godine. Uspoređeno je na koji su način odabrane novine i internetski portali u tom vremenskom rasponu izvještavali o temama i pitanjima vezanima za ljudska prava, s naglaskom na prava vjerskih, nacionalnih, rasnih i drugih manjina. Paralelno, u razdoblju od 10. do 20. ožujka 2016. godine provedena je i anketa među građanima kombiniranjem ispitivanja Licem-u-lice i online anketnoga upitnika. Sve nabrojano realizirano je u cilju dokazivanja hipoteze kako su tradicionalni, poglavito tiskani mediji u Hrvatskoj i dalje vjerodostojniji, a rezultati istraživanja to su i potvrdili. Premda je već godinama čitanost, odnosno praćenost osjetno na strani internetskih portala, novine još uvijek svojim pristupom i načinom obrade tema očito osiguravaju jači kredibilitet u hrvatskoj javnosti, osobito kada su posrijedi ozbiljne teme poput ljudskopravnih pitanja.

