# Kultura Media Teologia

# Kultura Media Teologia

NUMER 47/2021

# WE CELEBRATE OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY

# KULTURA – MEDIA – TEOLOGIA

## KWARTALNIK NAUKOWY WYDZIAŁU TEOLOGICZNEGO UKSW W WARSZAWIE

### ISSN 2081-8971

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# SPIS TREŚCI

# A word from the Editorial Office

The quarterly scholarly journal *Kultura–Media–Teologia* was established in January 2010. The periodical, published by the Faculty of Theology of Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, has been providing a meeting space for scholars representing the theological, humanities, and social sciences since the beginning. In 2020 it celebrates its 10th anniversary. We owe our existence to the faculty authorities, members of the editorial board, authors, reviewers, and all those contribute to the periodical. We express our deep respect, thankfulness, and gratitude to all of them for their collaborative work for the progress of our studies. We hope that this modest jubilee will highlight the significance of the quarterly to our faculty and its importance in strengthening our relationships with wider circles of media, culture, and theology experts. Prof. Andrzej Adamski and Prof. Katarzyna Flader-Rzeszowska led the periodical as its executive editors over the past 10 years. We have published more than 300 articles and scholarly treatises, not to mention reviews and reports, in 40 issues. The whole content of each issue is accessible on the journal's website. The fact that our texts are indexed in reference databases improves our citation rates and contributes to us reaching broader audiences.

The jubilee issue contains an anthology of selected texts published over the last 10 years, which have been translated into English. We hope they will attract interest of English-speaking readers as well.

**Agnieszka Barczyk**

**Uniwersytet Łódzki**

# The characteristics of game shows broadcast on Polish public television

## Charakterystyka teleturniejów emitowanych w polskiej telewizji publicznej

**ABSTRACT**

The increasing competition in the media industry, the changes in viewer habits, and the viewers' demand for infotainment have an impact on all television genres. The news, current affairs programmes, and even documentaries have all undergone massive changes. The aim of the paper is to take a closer look at the changes that the game show, a specific genre of tv programme, has undergone so far. A presentation of the history of the game show and of the programmes currently on polish public television as well as an analysis of selected tv programmes are intended to indicate the contemporary status of game shows.

**KEYWORDS:**
television, entertainment, game show

**ABSTRAKT**

Wzrost konkurencji na rynku mediów, zmiana nawyków odbiorczych i zapotrzebowanie odbiorców na inforozrywkę nie pozostają bez wpływu na wszystkie gatunki telewizyjne. Przeobrażeniom ulegają przede wszystkim: serwisy informacjom, programy publicystyczne, a nawet reportaże. Celem tekstu jest przyjrzenie się transformacjom, jakim podlegał teleturniej, specyficzny gatunek programów telewizyjnych. Przybliżenie historii teleturnieju, obecnej oferty programowej polskiej telewizji publicznej oraz analiza wybranych programów, pozwolą na określenie współczesnej kondycji gatunku.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
telewizja, rozrywka, teleturniej

In its basic meaning, a game show – in accordance with the definition in the *Dictionary of Foreign Words* (scientific editor: Irena Kamińska-Szmaj) – is "a TV programme in the form of a contest, the participants of which, gathered in the studio, answer questions in various fields."[1] However, this definition, especially today, turns out to be too narrow. The authors rightly notice that a synonym for this term

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[1] http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/100017,,,teleturniej,haslo.html (accessed on 10 October 2012).

is a *contest*, though they limit it to a competition based on providing answers to questions. Such a definition may prove to be insufficient because it does not refer at all to other fields of competition – those based on agility or vocal skills.

This definition has been broadened with new aspects by Wiesław Godzic, in his paper *Telewizja i jej gatunki po Wielkim Bracie* [Television and its genres after *Big Brother*]: "one of the most commercial genres: on the one hand, clearly directed towards a particular audience, and on the other (...) cheap to produce and easy to adjust to various cultural conditions."[2] The author presents game shows as a certain *commodity* which functions on the media market and is designed for defined target groups (and programmed for them).

> Leaving aside the market conditions, it is worth paying attention to the lexeme "game show", which is striking in its construction at first sight: it is, above all, a *game*, which is a *show* that is remote. All games, irrespective of their type – for example, a chess tournament, sporting match, or knightly jousting tournament – assume competition and mutual rivalry. Holding a remote game is enabled by television, that is, a medium which allows viewers who are not participants of the events to become the audience to the events.

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[2] Godzic 44.

enabled by television, that is, a medium which allows viewers who are not partici-pants of the events to become the audience to the events.

While characterizing game shows, it is necessary to refer to certain keywords and to use them as possible directions for analysis. Therefore, in this field there are notions such as casting calls, contestants, hosts, audiences, rules of the game, tasks, and prizes. The relationships between these elements are presented in Figure 1.
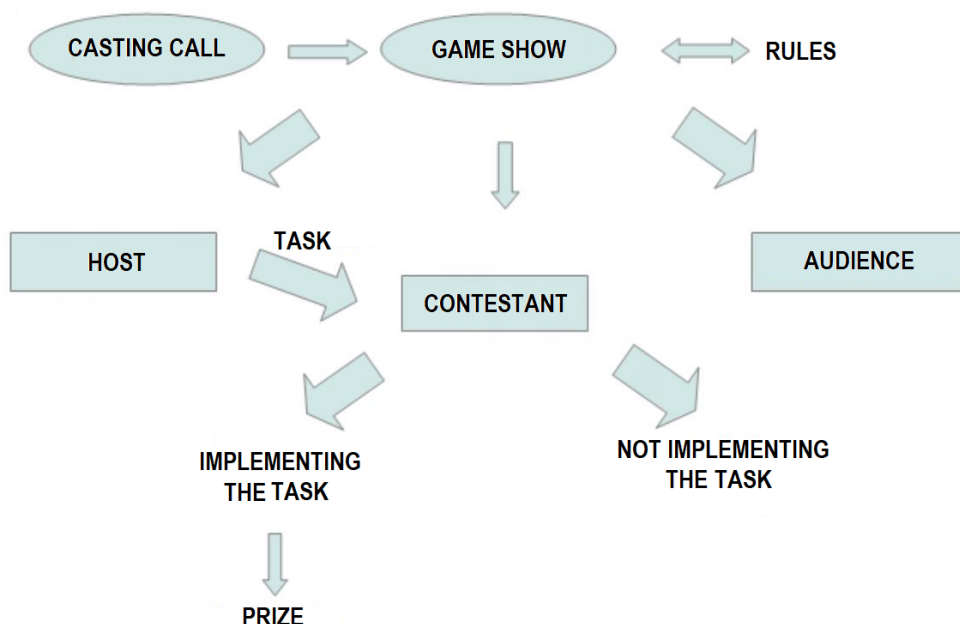


Figure 1. The elements of game shows

The casting call may be defined as a pre-game-show, i.e. the stage preceding the contest which is broadcast. The aim of the casting call is to select the contest-ants who will take part in the programme. Nowadays, in many game shows it is common to invite celebrities to participate in the programme (most frequently on special occasions[3]). The game show itself divides the people who are some-how associated with it into three groups: the hosts (usually one person), the

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[3] The special occasions in the case of the game shows broadcast on public TV (e.g. *Name That Tune*) could be Christmas editions, in which the contestants are famous persons and the prizes are donated to charity.

contestants (invited to the studio when they pass the casting call phase, or because they are a celebrity), and the audience, both in the studio and in front of their TV sets. An important element of this reality, which is created for the needs of the programme, is the rules of the game which, on the one hand create this fictional world, and on the other hand would be useless without this world, because every game show establishes its own set of rules.

The course of the game show is defined by the hosts and the contestants, without which the programme would not exist. In accordance with the rules of the game, the hosts set the *tasks* which the contestants are asked to perform. The task may vary in nature, from providing an answer to a question which tests their knowledge or ability to make associations to performing a musical piece. Irrespective of the nature of the task, the most important thing is that the contestant performs it correctly. In the end of such a course of events, there is usually a *prize*, which is not awarded if the task is performed incorrectly.

## A BIT OF HISTORY

The need for fun, entertainment, or an escape from our everyday life is a natural human need. A perfect example of searching for a different world is Carnival, which proves that each of us needs at least a little break from what usually surrounds us in our lives. As noted by Wojciech Dudzik, "if the world, as it is, was the best possible one, people probably would not need Carnival to be happy."[4] An even more explicit example is ludology, which "emerged as a discipline of scientific research in response to the increase of the importance of and the interest in computer games; however, the theories and methods elaborated by ludology may serve for analysing various kinds of games and play which we observe in contemporary cultures."[5] The works which were of huge significance for the development of this field of research were *Homo Ludens* by Johan Huizinga and the extension of this book, *Man, Play and Games* written by Roger Caillois in the 1940s.[6] Contemporary evidence for the need for entertainment is the schedule offered by the major TV stations, which to a significant degree are composed of entertainment

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[4] Dudzik 107.
[5] Bomba.
[6] Szabłowska.

programmes. Interestingly, the entertainment function appeared quite early in the typologies of the functions of the media. For example, it was not yet present in Harold D. Lasswell's concept from 1948, but it did appear eleven years later in the typology by Charles R. Wright (1959).

According to Wiesław Godzic, a game show, also referred to as a *quiz show*, is a natural extension of guessing game contests which were popular during town and village festivals in the past.[7] The show which is considered to be the first representative of the genre is *Spelling Bee* (1938), which was broadcast by the BBC. The contestants on the programme had to demonstrate the ability to spell out difficult words. In the 1950s the number of game shows on American television increased significantly; they also started to appear in the schedules offered by TV stations in other countries.[8]

> In the 1960s the number of game shows started to increase, but the element which still remained more important than the attractive form was the content, because – according to the authors – the basic aim of these programmes was to increase the level of general knowledge of the audience. Even back then, Western patterns were implemented, the result of which was the appearance of, for example, *The $64,000 Question* (1962).

As Piotr Drzewiecki pointed out, game shows appeared in Poland in the 1960s.[9] The first Polish quiz show was the programme *Zgaduj-zgadula – Tele-Warszawa*, which was first broadcast in January 1957. The contestants were asked to answer questions, which were criticised by publicists for their "eclecticism

[7] Godzic 44.
[8] Ibidem.
[9] Drzewiecki.

(…), the unclear principle of their selection and of their division into difficulty levels."[10] Over time, the gradual shift away from one model represented by this programme – *a fun quiz* – resulted in the change of the name of the programme to *a game show* and in the appearance of the first game show, by Czechoslovakian TV, entitled *Kto, co?*.[11] In the 1960s the number of game shows started to increase, but the element which still remained more important than the attractive form was the content, because – according to the authors – the basic aim of these programmes was to increase the level of general knowledge of the audience.[12] Even back then, Western patterns were implemented, the result of which was the appearance of, for example, *The $64,000 Question* (1962).[13] In that period, two types of game shows dominated: those based on knowledge (e.g. *The $64,000 Question*) and programmes which also tested the participants' ability to calculate or to make associations (e.g. *Asocjacje, Kółko i krzyżyk*, or *Śladami Pitagorasa*).[14] In the 1970s, many forms of rivalry emerged, which were based on an ideological or political message.[15] The formula of the game show also started changing: "The new aesthetics resulted in the fact that the minimalist forms which were present until then started acquiring theatrical panache. More and more frequently, the rivalry was accompanied by an audience, and the breaks in the competition were filled with performances by artists."[16] A lack of interesting new ideas contributed to the decreasing popularity of these forms in the 1980s.[17]

A way of coping with the lack of original ideas is to seek out foreign patterns. Piotr Drzewiecki believes that

> currently, Polish television networks less frequently invent their own forms and prefer to use ready, Polonised versions of mainly American programmes. The advantage of those TV formats is the fact that their creators have verified and are familiar with the viewers' interest in a given programme, the size of the audience, and the

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[10] Kozieł 42.

[11] Ibidem 43.

[12] Ibidem 100.

[13] Ibidem 100.

[14] Ibidem 100–101.

[15] One example is the series *My 74*, the aim of which was to demonstrate the political maturity of members of organisations and to test social and political knowledge (Ibidem 176).

[16] Ibidem 176.

[17] Ibidem 256.

estimated proceeds from advertisements. A network purchases the right to broadcast a programme together with written guidelines regarding the way of using it; naturally, also with an estimate of the costs and profits.[18]

Examples of such programmes include *Jeden z dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One], *Familiada* [Family Feud], or *Va banque* [Jeopardy!], "the audience of which in the United States and Great Britain reached several million viewers."[19]

## GAME SHOWS ON POLISH TELEVISION (TVP)

The subject of interest of the present paper is the game shows broadcast on Polish Television (TVP). On the website www.tvp.pl, one can find a list of the game shows the station offers. In such a short paper it is impossible to analyse all fourteen game shows; therefore, they shall only be listed (together with a short note based on the descriptions from the website). Subsequently, the paper more closely presents several selected programmes.[20]

- *Kocham Cię Polsko* [I Love My Country] – first broadcast on 13 March 2009 (TVP2). The host is Maciej Kurzajewski. The contestants are divided into two teams, each consisting of four people, which compete in various disciplines (elements of a quiz or musical puzzles). The aim of the programme is to test the participants' knowledge about Poland.
- *Postaw na milion* [The Money Drop] – the first episode was broadcast on 5 March 2011 (TVP2). There are two contestants who are related to each other, eight questions, and one million PLN to be won. This is an example of a game show in which knowledge alone is not enough; one also needs luck. The host is Łukasz Nowicki.
- *Jeden z dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One] – since 6 June 1994, in every episode, hosted by Tadeusz Sznuk, ten contestants test the level of their knowledge. It is a classic example of a game show, in which the task is to answer the questions that are asked.

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[18] Drzewiecki.

[19] Ibidem.

[20] The listed game shows are discussed based on the information which may be found on www.tvp.pl and on the official websites of particular programmes.

- *Wiesz, co dobre* – a contest associated with the *Wiesz, co dobre* movie series. On the website of Polish Television the following information is available: "13 film hits and 13 opportunities to win a set of guidebooks from the Pascal publishing company. How to get it? There is nothing simpler than that, just answer three questions referring to the next film on our website. The winner will be randomly selected from the people who vote. Take part in the fun!"[21]
- *Gilotyna* [*L'Eredità*] – a programme broadcast since 5 October 2009 (TVP2). The host is Roman Czejarek, who accompanies the contestants in solving puzzles.
- *Jaka to melodia*? [Name That Tune] – a game show based on testing knowledge in the field of music. It was first broadcast on 4 September 1997. Three contestants compete with each other, trying to guess the names of musical pieces. The host of the programme is Robert Janowski.
- *Gotowi na ślub* – Piotr Pręgowski checks which of three couples planning their wedding is ready to get married.
- *Wielka draka o dzieciaka!* – a programme hosted by Wojciech Jagielski and broadcast since 18 September 2010; adults and their children compete to win valuable prizes.
- *Dzieciaki górą* [The Kids Are All Right!] – a game show broadcast since 12 September 2008 on the channel TVP2. The contestants form two teams – one of adults and one of children – have to answer questions and solve quizzes and puzzles. The host of the programme was Tomasz Kammel, who was later replaced by Marzena Rogalska.
- *300% normy* – a game show first broadcast on 7 September 2008 and hosted by Maciej Orłoś. It tested the contestants' knowledge about life in the times of the Polish People's Republic.
- *Familiada* [Family Feud] – the game show has been broadcast on TVP2 since 17 September 1994. Two teams of five people each guess the answers previously given by a surveyed group. The host is Karol Strasburger.
- *Koło Fortuny* [Wheel of Fortune] – the first episode was broadcast on TVP2 on 2 October 1992. The task of the three contestants was to select letters and guess word puzzles. The prize depended on the titular "Wheel of Fortune", which also included a "Bankrupt" field.

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[21] http://www.tvp.pl/rozrywka/teleturnieje?id=&sort_by=POSITION&sort_desc=false&start_rec=0&li-sting_ mod=&wit h_video=false.

- *Ona i On – wojna płci* – it was first broadcast on TVP2 in 2006. Two teams – a male team and a female team – compete with each other; the host is Beata Sadowska.
- *Wielki Poker* [PokerFace] – first broadcast on 16 March 2007, the game show was hosted by Cezary Kosiński and Paweł Burczyk and was an example of a programme which proves that cleverness, reflexes and bluffing may be more important than knowledge.

This review of game shows from the website of Polish Television is very brief, which is the consequence of both the limitation of this paper's length and the fact that it is unnecessary to analyse all the programmes in depth. However, it is worth recalling all the titles in order to be aware of their diversity in terms of both the tasks set for the contestants and the types of skills which can bring them success.

> The most frequent type of games used by game shows is undoubtedly *agon*, which is based on rivalry and competition understood in a broad sense; "it demonstrates the nature of a competition, i.e. fighting in the conditions of an artificially created equality of chances which allows the antagonists to compete in an ideal situation, thanks to which the advantage gained is strictly measurable and indisputable."

## GAMES AND PLAY

In one of my earlier articles I analysed the TV schedule of the channel Polsat according to the theory of games and play by Roger Caillois.[22] Roger Caillois – a French anthropologist who became famous thanks to titles such as *Człowiek i sa-*

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[22] Barczyk.

*crum* [Man and the Sacred], *Ludzie a gry i zabawy* [Man, Play, and Games], or the collection of essays *Odpowiedzialność i Styl*[23] – classified games and play, dividing them into four categories. The researcher, himself, once wrote that "games and play are so numerous and diverse that initially we doubt whether it is possible to find some principle for division which will allow them to be separated into several distinct categories."[24] However, he finally managed to create a typology of four categories: *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*.[25] Each of these games has a characteristic feature. The theory Caillois developed seems to be a good tool for analysing game shows and for reflecting on the types of games he differentiated, which these game shows may represent.

The most frequent type of games used by game shows is undoubtedly *agon*, which is based on rivalry and competition understood in a broad sense; "it demonstrates the nature of a competition, i.e. fighting in the conditions of an artificially created equality of chances which allows the antagonists to compete in an ideal situation, thanks to which the advantage gained is strictly measurable and indisputable."[26] The contestants compete according to a certain feature, for example, speed, inventiveness, or agility, in order to find the winner who "proves to be the best in a given competitive category."[27] In the case of game shows, the area of competition is most frequently knowledge. Caillois draws attention to the fact that *agon* "refers only to personal values and aims to demonstrate them."[28] A perfect example of a game show which represents this type of games is *Jeden z dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One].

This game show, hosted by Tadeusz Sznuk, is a multi-phase competition. Ten contestants take part in three rounds (in each round the number of contestants is reduced), the aim of which is to find the best contestant. The rules of the game are simple: they can be derived from the common rule of "third time lucky" because the contestants have three "lives" (represented by three lights at each contestant's podium). A correct answer results in points, while no answer or a wrong answer causes one of the lights to go out. The aim of the first round – in which

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[23] Caillois, "*Człowiek i sacrum*" 5.
[24] Idem, "*Żywioł i ład*" 307.
[25] Idem, "*Gry i ludzie*".
[26] Idem, "*Żywioł* " 310–311.
[27] Ibidem 311.
[28] Ibidem 312.

the contestants are consecutively asked two questions each – is to recognize the capabilities of the contestants and provide them with, in the words of Caillois, "conditions of an artificially created equality of chances". Providing a correct answer to at least one of the questions guarantees advancement to the next round. In the second round, the seeming equality of chances is upset because the number of questions which have to be answered by each of the contestants varies: the contestant who manages to answer a question correctly nominates the contestant for the next question. There may be various motivations for that choice, but most likely the aim is to eliminate the strongest rivals. The final round of the game show is based on similar principles.

The field of competition between the programme's contestants is the knowledge they possess. It is worth underlining that this is general knowledge (although sometimes very detailed). The questions posed to the contestants are concrete and unambiguous, and every question is preceded by an indication of the category to which it belongs: for example, "Music – In which century did Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart live?" or "Zoology – Are amphibians and reptiles cold-blooded or warm-blooded?" (sometimes the form of the question requires the contestant to choose the correct answer from two proposed options), or "History – Was Napoleon II the son of Napoleon Bonaparte?"

*Jeden z dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One] is a game show which has been broadcast on the channel TVP2 for nearly twenty years now. Despite the passage of time, during which the trends dominating the media market have made public television more and more similar to commercial stations and the producers of programmes more and more willing to closely follow the path of infotainment[29] and to deliver to viewers what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural "fast-thinking", "cultural *fast-food* – already digested (…) food",[30] this game show has not undergone significant transformations. The studio has been redecorated several times since 2010 and some questions are illustrated with passages of music,[31] but the formula of the programme has remained the same.

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[29] *Infotainment* is a portmanteau word of information and entertainment. The person who is considered to have coined the term is Ron Eisenberg, who used it in the magazine *Phone Call* in 1980. http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/jagodzinski561.html. Accessed 30 September 2012.

[30] Bourdieu 57.

[31] http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeden_z_dziesi%C4%99ciu. Accessed 14 October 2012.

The second type of games mentioned by Caillois is *alea*, or gambling with fate. This category, therefore, includes games in which an important role is played by *chance*. *Alea* is based on "a decision which does not depend on the player, and which he or she cannot in any way influence, so that the aim here is not so much winning against an opponent, but against fate."[32]32 The best example is *Koło Fortuny* [Wheel of Fortune], which proves that fortune is fickle.

This game show, broadcast in Poland since 1992, "was the first game show in Polish television which was produced under a foreign licence. The originator of introducing this game show in Poland was Wojciech Pijanowski, who became the programme's host."[33] In contrast to *Jeden z Dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One], in this programme there was a change of the host (Pijanowski only played this role until 1995). Besides the host, there are three contestants in the studio who compete with each other, but also with fate, symbolized by the titular *Wheel of Fortune*. The selection of letters which are supposed to help them guess the word puzzle is preceded by randomly drawing a prize; this prize may be awarded for guessing a letter.

Such rules of the game demonstrate that knowledge is not required from the contestants. Their answers are based on their selection of an appropriate letter of the alphabet, so they in fact have got 32 options. Even while guessing the word puzzle, the elements that are necessary more than knowledge are perceptivity, reflex, and luck. One also needs to be lucky while drawing a prize, especially because the wheel also holds a "Bankrupt" field. Therefore, *Koło Fortuny* [Wheel of Fortune] is a game in which chance plays an important role. It is an example of *alea*, a game which "shows who is favoured by fate."[34]

While looking at all the types of game shows, it is difficult to find programmes which represent *mimicry* or *ilinx*. Actually, it is only possible to mention certain elements of these games which appear in certain game shows. *Mimicry*, i.e. a game which "assumes the temporary adoption of – if not illusion (...) then, in any case, a world which is closed, mutually agreed and, to some extent, fictional",[35] is based on mimicking, playing a role, or pretending something. "The pleasure is based on the fact that one is someone else or is regarded as someone else."[36] Mimicking

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[32] Ibidem p. 314.
[33] Ferfecki.
[34] Caillois, "*Żywioł*" 315.
[35] Ibidem 318.
[36] Ibidem 321.

and dressing up are frequently associated with special costumes or accessories. Mimicking a different reality justifies a lack of rules because it dispenses the player from all rules, except for one – the rule of the *make-believe world*. An element of mimicking may be found in the game show *300% normy*, in which Joanna Jeżewska pretended to be various famous women: TV presenters, singers, or actresses.[37] *Ilinx*, in turn, is a game which aims to arouse feelings of daze, euphoria, or rapture. This category of games "aims to lead the participant to achieve a kind of spasm, trance, or rapture, as a result of which the rules of reality suddenly stop applying."[38] Examples mentioned by Caillois include dancing dervishes, acrobatics, or a roundabout. The participants of some game shows, for example *Kocham Cię Polsko* [I Love My Country], are able to lose themselves in music or dance. However, it would be difficult, and probably impossible, to indicate a programme which is wholly based on *ilinx*.

## CONCLUSIONS

Even a brief look at the programmes listed on the website of Polish Television in the Teleturnieje [Game Shows] tab may cause slight concern which, over time, transforms into the question of whether every programme presented there is truly a game show. In the case of many of them, the much more relevant term is *a show*. This problem was mentioned in the work by Wiesław Godzic, who pointed out that

> a noticeable tendency in contemporary game shows is to mix mixing the classic *game show* or *quiz show* with the tradition of the American *variety show*. In the British game shows *Families at War* or *Shooting Stars* the principles of the game show are strictly associated with conversations with a star, sketches, stage jokes, and the postmodern tradition of including the clips or people from other TV programmes.[39]

Such elements may also be found these days in Polish game shows, even those broadcast on public television. One example is the previously mentioned

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[37] http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/300_procent_normy. Accessed 11 October 2012.
[38] Caillois, "*Żywioł*" 323.
[39] Godzic 47.

programme *Kocham Cię Polsko* [I Love My Country], in which the teams are formed by famous people.

The vast majority of game shows broadcast on Polish Television aim to test the contestants' knowledge. However, according to Krzysztof Łuszczek,

> the knowledge in game shows is of various value. Some game shows promote academic knowledge, others popular knowledge. The viewers experience passive pleasure resulting from the contact with the "world of knowledge". It is the pleasure of a safe fight and competing with others without risk. The viewers are watching the mistakes made by the contestants, due to which their own self-esteem improves. Game shows do not encourage one to deepen one's knowledge (except for *Wielka Gra* [The $64,000 Question]) – they are a television programmme. They are co-created by the audience, both the one at the studio and the one in front of the TV set. The questions and the answers are only an addition. Valuable prizes may arouse jealousy and the belief that this is the only force powering human actions (e.g. the game shows Żądza Pieniądza and Życiowa Szansa broadcast by the channel Polsat) and the only value which makes humans happy.[40]

It is also significant that this author uses the term *a show*. Contemporary television, which wants to attract viewers, is becoming attractive for them and more and more frequently takes the form of *a show* – spectacular, thrilling, and arousing emotions. Audiences are starting to be present in studios, which intensifies the emotions (such dramaturgy is not present in *Jeden z dziesięciu* [Fifteen to One], in which knowledge is more important than the spectacle); subsequent rounds are announced or prizes are handed out by beautiful hostesses; the monotonous structure of the programme, based on the question–answer principle, is enriched with more free segments that are attractive for the viewer (e.g. performances by music groups or by the host, who sings songs whose titles have appeared on *Jaka to melodia*? [Name That Tune]).

Art. 21 of the Polish Broadcasting Act of 29 December 1992 states that

> Public radio and television shall carry out their public mission by providing, on terms laid down in this Act, the entire society and its individual groups with diversified programme services and other services in the area of information, journalism, culture, entertainment, education, and sports which shall be pluralistic, impartial,

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[40] Łuszczek 45.

well balanced, independent, and innovative, marked by high quality and integrity of broadcast.[41]

The entertainment function, therefore, remains one of the basic assignments of the media. However, the following question emerges: What is and what should be the level represented by entertainment programmes? According to Drzewiecki,

> in the era of the Polish People's Republic game shows were more strongly an expression of the educational mission than currently. Nowadays, the financial factor and the degree of popularity are more decisive. In free-market conditions the preservation and development of knowledge-based game shows depends on the demand of the audience.[42]

Unfortunately, contemporarily, the so-called "average viewer" more and more frequently chooses para-documentary series and reality TV, due to which the demand for programmes which test knowledge in a traditional way is decreasing. The viewer, accustomed to colourful, flashing images, is not always satisfied by programmes based on asking questions. Where should broadcasters search for a solution, then? In media *shows* which attempt to popularise knowledge? The tendencies observed in the area of game shows – for example, the presence of celebrities, the increasing role of the dramaturgy of events, the spectacularity, or the introduction of more free segments – demonstrate that even if the evolution towards a *show* is not the best way, it may be the only one that is left.

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## About the autor

Agnieszka Barczyk – a graduate of Journalism and Social Communication and of Cultur-al Studies (specialisation: film studies) from the University of Łódź and currently a PhD student at the Department of Journalism and Social Communication of the University of Łódź. Her scientific interests include analysis and history of film, the polycode of the visu-al arts, oral history, and local and regional media.

## Piotr Drzewiecki

**Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie**

# Suicides of teenagers on the Internet in the perspective of media pedagogy

## Samobójstwa nastolatków w Internecie w perspektywie pedagogiki mediów

### ABSTRACT

On the internet, we can find a lot of information on how to commit suicide; we can learn about various forms of suicide. There are more and more cases of internet suicides, committed online, live. According to a report prepared by the British Medical Journal in 2008, the internet encouraged more than discouraged people from committing suicide. In this article, i analysed the problem from the perspective of media education. How can the internet be the "culture of life"? How can we carry out effective suicide prevention?

**KEYWORDS:**
suicide, internet, youth, media education

### ABSTRAKT

Coraz częściej słyszymy o powstawaniu nowych witryn i forów internetowych, które zachęcają do popełniania samobójstwa wśród nastolatków. Internauci znajdujący dzięki wyszukiwarkom informacje o samobójstwie częściej są do niego zachęcani niż przed nim zniechęcani – wynika z raportu przygotowanego przez British Medical Journal w 2008 roku. W artykule chciałbym zanalizować problem od strony pedagogiki mediów. W jaki sposób możemy – również poprzez internet – prowadzić skuteczną profilaktykę suicydologiczną? Jak wychowywać do internetu by stawał się on kulturą sensu życia, a nie samobójczej śmierci?

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
samobójstwo, internet, młodzież, edukacja medialna

More and more often, we hear about new websites and online forums that encourage teenagers to commit suicide. Internet users who find information about suicide through search engines are more often encouraged than discouraged to commit it, according to a report prepared by the British Medical Journal

in 2008.[1] We can also increasingly read about cases of suicide broadcast live in webcam chat rooms.

At the outset, I would like to present research published in the British Medical Journal. Then, we will analyse the case of Abraham K. Biggs, who committed suicide during an online video transmission. In this article, I would like to analyse the problem from the perspective of media pedagogy. How can we carry out effective suicide prevention by using the Internet? How can we educate ourselves about the Internet so that it becomes a culture of meaningful life rather than suicidal death?

## DOES THE INTERNET ENCOURAGE TO COMMIT SUICIDE? AN ANALYSIS OF A BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL REPORT

In 2008, a group of English researchers led by Lucy Biddle[2] analysed 480 websites related to suicide. They published their results in the British Medical Journal. In four search engines (Google, Yahoo, MSN, and ASK) they typed in 12 search terms related to the topic of the study (in English): suicide, methods of committing suicide, effective (also painless, quick …) methods of suicide, how to commit suicide, etc). They chose the first 10 results from each search engine for analysis. In this way they received 480 sites (12 terms × 10 results × 4 search engines).

Of this number, 90 pages were dedicated to suicide, half of which encouraged, induced, or facilitated the taking of one's life. The next 43 sites contained personal information about the various methods of committing suicide – including their advantages and disadvantages – without directly encouraging readers to commit it. Another 44 sites presented their visitors with ways of taking their lives

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[1] "Suicide and the Internet." *British Medical Journal*, 2008, no. 4,??? http://www.bmj.com/content/336/7648/800.full. Accessed 02 February 2011. Cf. Internet zachęca do samobójstw, http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/internet-zacheca-do-samobojstw#. Accessed 21 February 2011; Niesłuchowska, A. "Nastolatki: chcemy się zabić, nie ratujcie nas!" *Wiadomości*. http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1329,title,Nastolatki-chcemy-sie-zabic-nie-ratujcie-nas,wid,11027227,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1bd3f. Accessed 22 February 2011; "Umówmy się na... samobójstwo." *Fakty*. http://fakty.interia.pl/fakty_dnia/news/umowmy-sie-na-samobojstwo,718928. Accessed 22 February 2011; Kownacka, K. "Coraz więcej stron internetowych radzi, jak popełnić samobójstwo." http://www.nto.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090424/REPORTAZ/456590478. Accessed 22 February 2011).

[2] Lucy Biddle, research fellow; Jenny Donovan, professor of social medicine; Keith Hawton, professor of psychiatry; Navneet Kapur, reader in psychiatry; and David Gunnell, professor of epidemiology.

in a completely objective (24 sites), partly humorous (12), or completely humorous (8) style. The search results also included 12 pages with chats and discussion forums about the methods of suicide.

On the other hand, 62 sites searched by the researchers were focussed on the prevention of suicide and 59 had content prohibiting or discouraging people from taking their own lives. However, these sites were ranked lower by search engines than sites encouraging suicide or informing about the ways of committing it.

Table 1. Results of the research published in the British Medical Journal report[3]

| | |
|---|---|
| • Dedicated to suicide: 90<br>• Encouraging to commit suicide: 45<br>• Describing methods, but not encouraging: 43<br>• Showing suicide in fashionable terms: 2 | • Against suicide: 59<br>• Preventive: 62 |
| • Other categories: 225<br>• Academic, political: 70<br>• Not found: 88<br>• Describing individual suicides: 12<br>• Chats about suicide methods: 12<br>• Chats where suicide is discussed: 8<br>• Other websites related to the subject of suicide: 35 | • Information websites: 44<br>• Actual objective information: 24<br>• Partially humorous: 12<br>• Completely humorous: 8 |

When interpreting the results, the researchers highlighted the availability of suicide-related content, the lack of regulation, and the irresponsibility of Internet service providers in this area. According to the researchers, the way to reduce access to websites containing messages that encourage or instruct people to commit suicide is for Internet service providers to block them and for parents to use content-control software if their children use the network. However, operators have no influence over the positioning of websites by search engines. The responsibility of the creators of such sites is also limited and it must first be proven that the content they present had an impact on a specific act of suicide. Polish law also does not prohibit the publishing of content that encourages suicide. Criminal liability concerns a direct influence on an act of suicide.[4] We also have no influence over content uploaded to foreign servers.

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[3] http://www.bmj.com/content/336/7648/800/T1.expansion.html. Accessed 21 February 2011.

[4] According to Article 151 of the Polish Penal Code, whoever persuades or renders assistance in laying violent hands on someone's life shall be subject to the penalty of imprisonment for a term of between three months and five years.

On the Polish Internet, one can also find websites that were classified in the British Medical Journal report. The sites that describe methods and cases of suicide are particularly problematic; for example, the blog *Requiem dla śmierci* [Requiem for death],[5] marked by the hosting service provider as a website for adults, though this does not make it difficult for minors to use it. Other websites or individual blog entries are clearly humorous in nature and are intended in this perverse way to discourage others from committing suicide, such as the "Guide: How to commit suicide" on the website Nonsensopedia[6] or entries such as "How to commit suicide" by the bloggers "Kominek" and "Dante".[7] There are also posts on Internet forums where young people discuss their problems with their parents as well as their intentions to commit suicide, such as on the forum *Zapytaj* [Ask].[8]

## ONLINE SUICIDE: A CASE STUDY OF ABRAHAM K. BIGGS

A more worrying phenomenon is the increasing frequency of suicides committed "live" on the Internet.[9] I would like to examine one such case: Abraham K. Biggs, a 19-year-old American from Florida who committed suicide in November 2008.[10]

On Wednesday morning, 19 November 2008, Abraham K. Biggs announced on the Internet that he wanted to commit suicide that very evening and to broadcast it via the website Justin.tv. Biggs committed suicide by overdosing on drugs. He died after a few minutes. The viewers of the broadcast were convinced that

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[5] http://requiemdlasmierci.blox.pl. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[6] http://nonsensopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Poradnik:Jak_popełnić_samobójstwo. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[7] http://kominek.blox.pl/2006/03/JAK-POPELNIC-SAMOBOJSTWO.html. Accessed 24 February 2011; http://dan-te12042010.blogspot.com/2008/07/jak-popeni-samobjstwo.html. Accessed 24/02/2011.

[8] http://zapytaj.com.pl/Category/001,003/2,1617316,Najlepsza_metoda_popelnienia_samobojstwa- .html. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[9] "Internet suicide." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_suicide. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[10] Cf. similar cases: the suicide of 27-year-old Marcin from Zagórze (Mękarska, D. "Samobójstwo w internecie: Marcin wołał o pomoc, nikt go nie usłyszał." http://www.nowiny24.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article? AID=/20090131/WEEKEND/973644836. Accessed 15 February 2011); the suicide of a 24-year-old inhabitant of Sendai, Japan ("Popełnił samobójstwo – na żywo w Internecie." http://tvp.info/informacje/ludzie/popelnil-samobojstwo-na-zywo-w-internecie/3284839. Accessed 15 February 2011. *Akty samobójcze w obu podanych tu przypadkach są zbliżone do historii Abrahama K. Bigg- sa, dotyczą jednak osób 20-letnich.*

this was a joke; they encouraged Biggs to commit suicide. Previously, through the online forum BodyBuilding.com, among others, they had ridiculed the teenager and encouraged him to commit the act. After a few hours, seeing Biggs lying still, the audience realised the tragedy that had taken place. The medical team which was called in confirmed his death.

> When interpreting the results, the researchers highlighted the availability of suicide-related content, the lack of regulation, and the irresponsibility of Internet service providers in this area.

After the event, Justin.tv administrators withdrew the recording from the website, explaining that it had violated the rules of the social network. At the same time, they rejected the charges against the website, stressing its open nature and their inability to monitor all entries in the service on an ongoing basis.[11]

The behaviour of the viewers of Abraham K. Biggs' suicide played an important role. Firstly, we are dealing here with "cyberbullying", the persecution of another person over the Internet. It can vary in its forms and tools. Usually, it is composed of bullying, harassment, and mockery of other people using the Internet (forums, chats, communicators) or mobile phones (text messages and MMSs). According to the Safer Internet 2007 report, between 6 February and 31 December 2007, 524 out of 1,408 notifications to helpline.org.pl (a portal that deals with the spread of harmful content on the Internet) were related to cyberbullying, which makes this problem the second most reported ( first place belonged to questions about safety rules on the Internet, with 549 notifications).[12] Cyberbullying is not

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[11] Gannes, L. "19-year-old Commits Suicide on Justin.tv." http://gigaom.com/video/19-year-old-commits-su- icide-on-justintv. Accessed 15 February 2011; Gontarczyk, P. "Wstrząsający film na żywo w sieci nie był żartem. Nastolatek popełnił samobójstwo." http://pclab.pl/news34462.html. Accessed 15 February 2011.

[12] "Raport Safer Internet 2007." http://www.saferinternet.pl/images/stories/raport2007.pdf. Accessed 22 February 2011.

a prohibited act in the Polish Penal Code. It is, however, punishable when it takes the form of slander, insults, punishable threats, the destruction of IT data, or obstructing access to IT data, which may be considered manifestations of cyberbullying. Injured parties may claim their rights and sue persecutors in a civil trial for infringement of personal rights.

The second important problem concerning the behaviour of the audience of the tragic event was their treatment of the teenager. The audience was not convinced that he really wanted to do this and did not take him seriously. Therefore, perhaps part of the audience encouraged him to commit suicide, even recommending certain methods, and the rest of the audience tried to prevent the tragedy by treating the event seriously. However, this fact does not explain the behaviour of the audience. What could be the cause? The problem is the anonymous nature of online communication. It is easier to humiliate, discredit, and harass when one can hide behind an online pseudonym and there is no need to confront one's victim. The Internet also disturbs the sense of the reality of events. The participants of the communication process are not sure whether an event is not fake, played out. After all, on the Internet one can find information about fake suicide attempts.[13] In this case, however, the message had was audio-visual, which increased its credibility, as opposed to online verbal communication.

As one can read in the event report, it was only after a few hours that the case became serious and tragic. The explanation of the website administrators is important here. Michael Seibel, the managing director of Justin.tv, said that the explanation of the website's administrators is important:

> "as far as the incident is concerned, we do not comment on individual video recordings; however, our policy prohibits placing inappropriate content on the portal. We advocate tagging such video recordings by the portal users themselves. When such a video is tagged by users, we check it and quickly remove it from the service if it contradicts our terms of use. (...) As a result of this event, we are convinced that all members of the online community will be more alert and protect other users in the future.[14]

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[13] Cf. e.g. "Udawane samobójstwo w Internecie." http://www.tvn24.pl/0,1615391,0,1, udawane-samoboj- stwo-w-internecie,wiadomosc.html. Accessed 22 February 2011.

[14] Gannes, L. op. cit.; Stelter, B. "Web Suicide Viewed Live and Reaction Spur a Debate." http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/25/us/25suicides.html? _r=2&th&emc=th. Accessed 22 February 2011.

The problem is therefore difficult to solve only by introducing legal regulations. Also, responsibility does not lie solely with the Internet service provider. The problem is the responsibility of the users of social networks. It can therefore be said that preventing similar events in the future requires us to undertake educational and media activities, to simultaneously educate the culture of Internet communication and raise awareness of the responsibility for communication among the users of social networking sites themselves.

## THE "WERTHER EFFECT": THE MEDIA AND THE PROBLEM OF SUICIDE

The media have a particular responsibility when it comes to reporting on suicides. Describing and showing individual cases of suicide can lead to the "Werther effect", i.e. young people imitating a given case and an increase in the incidence of suicides. The name comes from the well-known work of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. After the first publication of the novel, there was a fashion among young romantics to imitate the main character, starting by wearing a similar outfit (a blue tailcoat with a yellow waistcoat) and ending with suicides. In 1974, sociologist David Phillips coined the term the "Werther effect". It defines the relationship between a sudden increase of suicides and the suicide of a well-known person[15] publicised in the media beforehand. Another documented case is the publication of a novel by Derek Humphrey entitled *Final exit*,[16] in which the author described the methods of committing suicide, among other things. The publication also triggered the phenomenon of collective imitative suicides. The same was the case with the French translation of the book.

According to Phillips' research, suicides involving famous people (celebrities) have a strong impact on those who would like to commit it. The effect is also intensified by television. The number of suicides was found to increase within 10 days of the information appearing on TV news. High-profile suicide cases also have a stronger impact.

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[15] As cited in De Wyze, J. "Why Do They Die?" http://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2005/mar/31/why-do--they-die. Accessed 24 February 2011). Cf. Phillips, D. P. Suicide rates increased significantly after suicide stories were reported newspaper stories. The increase was proportional to the amount of newspaper coverage devoted to the suicide stories, "American Sociological Review" 1974 Vol. 39, pp. 340–354.

[16] Humphrey, D. "Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying." New York: Dell Publishing, 1991. Accessed 24 February 2011.

As far as the impact of feature films is concerned, it is difficult to determine its manner and scale. Some messages increase suicidal behaviour, while others do not. There is also no correlation between music, plays, and suicide. There is also a lack of scientific research analysing the impact of websites that encourage suicide on real suicide cases.[17]

> On Wednesday morning, 19 November 2008, Abraham K. Biggs announced on the Internet that he wanted to commit suicide that very evening and to broadcast it via the website Justin.tv. Biggs committed suicide by overdosing on drugs. He died after a few minutes. The viewers of the broadcast were convinced that this was a joke; they encouraged Biggs to commit suicide.

Suicide – from the point of view of modern journalism – is a message that can arouse the curiosity of the recipient. This is why the media are interested in passing on information about suicide acts, especially when it comes to unusual cases. Most often, these cases are unusual, hence the accusation against the media that they can act as an instructor of suicidal behaviour, and even the suggestion that this subject should be completely banned from social media. The researchers, however, stress that what is important here is not the information about suicide itself, but the way it is communicated. Equally important is the frequency of the message, which has an impact on the number of imitative suicides committed.[18]

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[17] As cited in Polskie Towarzystwo Suicydologiczne. *Zapobieganie samobójstwom. Poradnik dla pracowników mediów, Światowa Organizacja Zdrowia*, Geneva–Warsaw, 2003. http://www.who.int/mental_he-alth/prevention/suicide/en/suicideprev_media_polish.pdf. Accessed 24 February 2011), pp. 12–13.

[18] Ibidem.

In 2003, the World Health Organisation published a guide for media professionals on how to describe and present suicide cases.[19] They concern providing general information about the problem of suicide, describing and presenting specific suicide attempts, and promoting prevention and assistance in this area.

As regards recommendations for providing general information on suicides, the authors of the guide recall the principle of journalistic integrity in the use of information sources (statistics and informants). Generalisations and evaluations in commenting on events, i.e. a "suicide epidemic", "the place with the highest number of suicides in the world", or "successful suicide" should be avoided, and live commentary should be carefully prepared. Suicidal behaviour also should not be described as an understandable response to degradation or social and cultural change.

In terms of the description of particular cases, the authors of the guide advise to avoid luridness when describing suicides, especially when it comes to well-known people. Detailed descriptions of the methods used and the preparations made should be avoided. Suicide should not be described as something inexplicable or too simplistic, either. Suicide is usually caused by a complex interaction of various factors, such as physical and mental illness, abuse of psychoactive agents, family problems, stress, etc. Suicide should also not be presented as a way of dealing with personal problems (as an escape from problems...), i.e. bankruptcy, sexual harassment, or failure to pass an exam. When reporting a suicide, one should take into account the impact this event has on family members and other survivors, their mental condition, and the related social stigma. Nor should the victims of suicide be glorified, or shown as martyrs worthy of public admiration. Instead, we should focus on mourning the suicide victim. On the other hand, describing the physical consequences of unsuccessful suicide attempts (electric shock or brain damage) can act as a deterrent to potential suicide victims.

The guide also suggests how to inform about available assistance and suicide prevention. The media can actively contribute to suicide prevention. It is good to publish contact information for mental health clinics, psychiatric institutions, and telephone helplines. It is also good when the media provides information on how to recognise suicidal warning signals or addressing mental health problems in counselling programmes, e.g. depression, which can often lead to suicidal attempts. It is good when journalists express their sympathy to surviving relatives

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[19] Ibidem, pp. 16–18.

of a victim and informs them of the available forms of assistance (support groups, mental health professionals, etc.).

The media therefore bear a great deal of responsibility for the contemporary problem of suicide. We too – the recipients and users of the media – have a responsibility, especially with regard to the Internet, which is a medium that is difficult to regulate and control.

## THE INTERNET AS THE "CULTURE OF LIFE": EDUCATIONAL AND MEDIA DEMANDS

This year's Safer Internet Day (8 February 2011) was held in the countries of the European Union under the motto "The Internet is more than just fun: It's your life".[20] If the Internet is becoming or is already an important part of my life, I take responsibility for it and want it to be the "culture of life".[21] It encouraged personal development, aroused cognitive interests, and enriched morally. This is a common task for all of us as the users of services, websites, forums, chats, and instant messengers. It can also be said to be one of the main objectives of modern media education, the task of which is to educate the public. We should also remember that the media (including the Internet) are only tools whose use depends on us as its users. They can become carriers of both positive and harmful, destructive and even criminal ideas and values.[22]

So what can we do to make the Internet the "culture of life"? What educational measures can we take in the field of media pedagogy? What prevention programmes and social campaigns can we initiate to counteract the problem of

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[20] See the Safer Internet Day 2011 press release: http://www.saferinternet.pl/dbi_wiadomosci/informacja_prasowa:_dzien_bezpiecznego_internetu_2011.html. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[21] Peters, T. *Nowe media w USA: budowanie on-line kultury życia*, translated by R. Lizut. http://www.naszdziennik.pl/index.php?dat=20091219&typ=my&id=my81.txt. Accessed 24 February 2011); "Media a kultura życia." http://www.lamsan.com.pl/media-a-kultura-zycia. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[22] For more on this, see Łęcicki, G. "Edukacja medialna jako istotna cecha nowoczesnego społeczeństwa." *Kultura – Media – Teologia*, 2010, no. 3, pp. 70–80. http://www.kmt.uksw.edu.pl/edukacja-medialna-ce- cha-nowoczesnego-spoleczenstwa-artykul. Accessed 24 February 2011.

online suicides? I asked two Polish suicidologists to help me formulate the directions of action, in email correspondence.[23]

Włodzimierz Brodniak, Ph.D., secretary of the Polish Suicidological Society, admitted that the problem is not being monitored in Poland and that there are few preventive or assistance initiatives. He gave as an example a website, which unfortunately no longer exists: www.przyjaciele.org. In his opinion, the biggest problem is "suicide pacts", in which there is a mutual agreement to commit suicide by several people, in which the Internet plays the role of the basic communicator. According to Brodniak, Ph.D., films such as "Sala Samobójców" [Suicide Room], directed by Jan Komasa, are a good form of prevention. The film tells the story of Dominik (played by Jakub Gierszał), a high school graduate and the son of very wealthy, but also very busy parents. As we read in the announcement of the screening: "his seemingly orderly world breaks down when he is humiliated by a peer and falls victim to bullying via social networking sites. Dominik then closes up in a virtual world where he meets Sylwia (played by Roma Gąsiorowska), who introduces him to the 'suicide room' in an online game. Embraced by an older girl, the queen of the virtual world, the boy puts his real life in danger".[24] According to the director of the film, "this is a story about the great need for love, which in the world of the Internet can become mortally dangerous".[25] [26]

In turn, Professor Agnieszka Dmitrowicz, MD, Ph.D., president of the Scientific Section of Suicidology of the Polish Psychiatric Association and head of the Clinic of Adolescent Psychiatry and the Department of Psychiatry of the Medical University of Łódź, assessed the problem as urgent and demanding a two-pronged approach: the diagnosis of the threat and counteraction and prevention. As she admits, "as far as the diagnosis of the phenomenon is concerned, we generally

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[23] Personal correspondence with W. A. Brodniak, Ph.D., 4 May 2011; Personal correspondence with Prof. A. Dmitrowicz, 5 May 2011.

[24] "„Sala samobójców" na Berlinale – głos polskiego reżysera." http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Sala-samobojcow-na-Berlinale-glos-polskiego-rezysera,wid,13128070,wiadomosc.html. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[25] Ibidem.

[26] "Jan Komasa o „Sali samobójców" przed Berlinale." http://film.onet.pl/wiadomosci/jan-komasa-o-swoim-filmie-sala-samobojcow-przed-be,1,4119375,wiadomosc.html. Accessed 24 February 2011). *llion people are suffering from Facebook Addiction Disorder (accessed FAD).* http://sickfacebook.com/350million-people-suffering-facebook-addiction-disorder-fad. Accessed 24 February 2011.

know little about the prevalence of suicidal behaviour in Poland; even in psychiatric hospitals suicide attempts are not recorded." The Polish Psychiatric Association also plans to develop standards for dealing with online suicide cases, which has not been done to date.

The above statements point to at least two types of actions and practical measures related to the problem of Internet suicides. In both groups, social media and media education can play an important role.

The first group concerns *problem diagnosis and monitoring*. Thanks to the cooperation with administrators of websites, forums, and Internet chat rooms, it would be possible to develop technical improvements and standards of conduct in the event of prospective attacks. In this group of problems – in addition to solutions of a technical or legal nature – there is a need to prepare a training programme for those responsible for providing Internet services. As Professor A. Dmitrowicz noted in her letter, it was the "administrator of the website of the Polish Psychiatric Association that asked her to develop the standards of conduct in case of the appearance of information about suicidal intentions on the website".

So what can we do to make the Internet the "culture of life"? What educational measures can we take in the field of media pedagogy? What prevention programmes and social campaigns can we initiate to counteract the problem of online suicides?

Diagnosis and monitoring would also involve the use of new Internet techniques for statistical analysis, which would be extremely valuable in recognising the scale of the phenomenon and the conditions under which it occurs.

The second group of measures would concern *prevention and social education*, where a special role for the media and media education can be perceived. The example of the film given above is one of many such activities in this group. In addition to the film, a nationwide social campaign on the subject should be launched using the available media, from billboards, through leaflets and brochures,

to participation in television counselling programmes by experts who are properly prepared for this. This could also be the main topic of the next Safer Internet Day and the subject of greater involvement of those responsible for Safer Internet in Europe. In doing so, it is important to bear in mind the Werther effect mentioned above and, when preparing such a campaign, to develop specific precautionary rules for dealing with the problem of online suicides.

It seems a good solution not so much to address the problem of suicide itself directly, but as part of a larger phenomenon; here I am thinking of the alienation of Internet users from the real community, which may also result in suicide. The problem relates to excessive, even addictive, use of the Internet, especially recently from social networking sites such as Facebook.[27] An example of an interesting campaign is the one entitled Web 2.0 Suicide Machine,[28] which encourages a particular type of online suicide that discourages virtual space and calls for a return to activity in the real world. "Suicide" in this sense consists in the removal of one's own social account. It should be noted, however, that the action is radical in nature and has therefore been criticised by social networking sites.[29] Media education aims at promoting a more positive model of media use, assumes the principle of moderation and proportion, does not focus solely on negative phenomena, and is not an incentive for radical action.

The role of media education is to build and promote appropriate attitudes towards using the Internet, by identifying good practices in this area, raising awareness by conducting lessons in schools or through extracurricular education, e.g. in the form of workshops for young people or training for educators and parents. It is also about individual media reflection on the subject. As users, let us question our own use of the Internet; let us share building websites and promote good

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[27] Uzależnienie to ma już swoje określenie we współczesnej psychiatrii: FAD – Facebook Addiction Disorder. Zob. M. Fenichel, Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD), http://www.fenichel.com/facebook/ (Accessed 24.02.2011); 350million people are suffering from Facebook Addiction Disorder (Accessed FAD), http://sickfacebook.com/350million-people-suffering-facebook-addiction-disorder-fad/ (Accessed 24.02.2011).

[28] http://suicidemachine.org. Accessed 24 February 2011; Szymański, D. "Samobójstwo w internecie? Teraz to możliwe." http://www.benchmark.pl/aktualnosci/Samobojstwo_w_internecie._Teraz_to_mozliwe- 26155.html. Accessed 24 February 2011.

[29] "Facebook walczy z internetowym samobójstwem." http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/Wiadomosci/1,80708,7422415,Facebook_walczy_z_internetowym_sa- mobojstwem_.html. Accessed 24 February 2011.

practices aimed at restoring the value of real communication; let us teach our children to use the Internet safely; but more importantly, let us communicate the meaning and beauty of life to them. This is our pedagogical task for a new decade of media development.

## About the autor

Piotr Drzewiecki Ph.D. – born in 1977, university teacher, specialist in media education, journalist, and media theologian by education (doctorate in 2007). He works at the Institute of Media Education and Journalism of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, where he conducts classes in the specialisation of education and media. More information on the website http://presscafe.eu.

## Jolanta Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek

**Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce**

# *Niedziela*, the Catholic Weekly, 1981–2014: Publishing Concepts and Positioning Among Polish Media

## Tygodnik Katolicki „Niedziela" w latach 1981-2014. Koncepcja wydawnicza i miejsce w polskim systemie medialnym

### ABSTRACT

In the ninety-year-old history of "Niedziela" a number of periods can be distinguished. They are demarcated by subsequent editions of the magazine, chief editors' visions of its handling and the role it played among the entirety of catholic press in Poland. The newest chapter in "Niedziela's" history is tied with father Ireneusz Skubiś who edited the magazine for almost 33 years and since July 2014 serves as honorary editor in chief. He made "Niedziela" the second biggest catholic weekly magazine in Poland and one of the leading opinion-forming magazines in Polish media system.

### KEYWORDS:

catholic press, "Niedziela" weekly magazine, publishing concept

### ABSTRAKT

W dziewięćdziesięcioletniej historii „Niedzieli" można wyróżnić kilka etapów wyznaczanych kolejnymi edycjami pisma, koncepcjami prowadzenia tygodnika przez jego redaktorów naczelnych, rolą, jaką odgrywał w obrębie całej prasy katolickiej w Polsce. Najnowszy rozdział w dziejach „Niedzieli" wiąże się z osobą ks. Ireneusza Skubisia, który kierował tygodnikiem przez prawie 33 lata, a od lipca 2014 roku pełni funkcję honorowego redaktora naczelnego. Uczynił on z „Niedzieli" drugi co do wielkości tygodnik katolicki w Polsce i jedno z czołowych pism opiniotwórczych w polskim systemie medialnym.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

prasa katolicka, tygodnik „Niedziela", koncepcja wydawnicza

The 90-year history of *Niedziela* can be split into a few stages marked by sub-sequent editions,[1] the editor-in-chiefs' ideas[2] for running the weekly, and the circulation that was pivotal in reaching the whole Catholic press in Poland.[3] Father Ireneusz Skubis managed the weekly from 1981 to 2014. He made *Niedziela* the second largest Catholic weekly and one of the opinion-leading magazines in Poland.

In the People's Republic of Poland (1945–1989), after 1981 (when the weekly was reinstated after its closure in 1953), *Niedziela* was one of the few titles that published content other than the government's propaganda. It dealt mainly with ecclesiastic matters in Poland and abroad, the cult of Mary, Christian ethics, and beatifications as well as historical and cultural topics. The weekly avoided clear-cut evaluation of political matters and did not comment on current events until 1989, but its firm adherence to the Catholic model of family life, child-rearing, education, and national history stood in opposition to the contemporary ideas. Many of its articles were censored, particularly those concerning the rebirth of independent social movements, including "Solidarity." 1989 was a breakthrough in the history of the magazine, and not only because it could speak freely again. As Ireneusz Skubis said in numerous interviews, it was simply the end of the hitherto chronic shortage of paper that enabled the weekly to prosper by increasing its circulation and developing diocesan variations of, and numerous additions to, the magazine.[4]

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[1] The first issue was published on April 4, 1926 and the periodical was in circulation until the outbreak of the Second World War. The weekly had a rebirth with its reactivation on April 8, 1945 until its closure for political reasons on March 15, 1953. The third embodiment of the weekly was conceived on June 7, 1981.

[2] *Niedziela* had seven editors-in-chief: Father Wojciech Mondry (1926–1937), Father Stanisław Gałązka (1937–1939), Father Antoni Marchewka (1945–1953: his term was interrupted by his arrest in 1947), Fathers Władysław Soboń and Marian Rzeszewski (1947), Father Ireneusz Skubiś (1981–2014), and Ms. Lidia Dudkiewicz (2014–present).

[3] During the interbellum period, *Niedziela* was one of many diocesan periodicals and, depending on the source, had a circulation of 8,000 to 25,000. During the People's Republic period, it turned into a national magazine with a circulation of 80,000 to over 100,000. See Mielczarek, T. "Od *Monitora* do *Gonca Reklamowego*. Dzieje prasy częstochowskiej (1769-1994)." Kielce, 1996, pp. 98–99,192, 248–249. After 1989, the weekly built a system of diocesan editions and its holiday circulation reached 450,000.

[4] Giżyńska, U. "Zwyczajna, normalna, wielka." *Gazeta Częstochowska*, 20/12/2001, no. 49/50; Kindziuk, M. "*Niedziela* prezent od Pana Boga." *Niedziela*, 2006, no. 38; Rajski, K. "Służyć normalności." http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZS/kr_niedziela.html. Accessed 5 August 2015.

## BUILDING THE REACH

In early 1990s, the weekly faced a huge increase in publishing costs, the consequences of the pauperization of society and the boom in independent publications that undercut the market of opinion-leading Catholic titles. In 1990, the magazine's price was raised drastically and the circulation was reduced to 80,000 copies, but it continued to lose business. The editor-in-chief therefore asked readers for donations to save the weekly. He also encouraged the clergy to promote the weekly in their parishes.[5] The formula of the weekly as a national one was a challenge because, as Skubis noted, an increasing number of dioceses were founding their own titles that, naturally, were more interesting for local audiences and were promoted more vigorously by the local clergy. This is why *Niedziela* was more difficult to sell outside its native diocese.[6] According to Skubis, 25% of the circulation was sold to the 1.5 million people in the Częstochowa diocese.

Apart from the significant staff turnover in the editorial office,[7] this was the reason why the weekly started to pay increasingly more attention to matters of interest to Częstochowa, its region, and its diocese.[8] However, in time, the idea of retaining the national reach of the weekly prevailed and the coverage of local matters was entrusted to a monthly supplement established in early 1992, addressed to the Częstochowa Archdiocese.[9] The editorial office of *Niedziela* took measures to make the distribution more efficient and to recover readers in other dioceses. For instance, readers were asked to report instances when the weekly was unavailable or inadequately displayed in kiosk and to build independent distribution systems within parishes. These activities were supposed to be led by the Apostolic Movement of Friends of *Niedziela*, associating devoted readers, advocates

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[5] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "O przetrwanie prasy katolickiej." *Niedziela*, 1990, no. 6.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Many Częstochowa journalists who found employment in *Niedziela* after the period of martial law of 1981 left for other periodicals. After the 1989 election, some journalists took up political careers. They were replaced by local journalists: Leszek Cichobłaziński, Wojciech Skrodzki, Marek A. Koprowski, and Katarzyna Woynarowska.

[8] The periodical reported on cultural events and celebrations of national holidays in Częstochowa and interviewed local politicians and government officials. See *Niedziela*, 01/07/1990, no. 26; 07/04/1991, no. 14; 14/04/1991, no. 15; and other 1990–1991 issues.

[9] The supplement was converted into a weekly supplement entitled *Niedziela Częstochowska* in 1993.

and distribution helpers.[10] Another such example is the Communities of Friends of the Catholic Weekly *Niedziela*, inspired by Bohdan Bejze, the Bishop of Łódź.[11] Nonetheless, the weekly failed to grow a community of adherents as the "Radio of Mary's Family", possibly because of less charismatic leadership. Bishops' decisions to establish diocesan variations of the weekly and to engage parish priests in collecting subscriptions" turned out to be more important for the increase in circulation and improved presence of the weekly in parishes throughout Poland than the activity of its readers.

Many diocesan editions were established by converting existing diocesan periodicals into local inserts in a national title. This policy was dictated by both the market and decisions of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, driving consolidation of diocesan press around the leading national weeklies.[12] The latter's editors undertook to provide jobs for local staff, including at least one priest, at the diocese level.[13] In return, the dioceses arranged for widespread subscription and distribution of the weekly.[14]

The first weekly off-site edition of *Niedziela* was establish in the Łódź diocese.

*Niedziela Łódzka* was published on April 11, 1993, as a two-page insert to the national publication. By the end of the century, *Niedziela* had 18 diocesan editions.[15] *Gość Niedzielny* printed local

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[10] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Drodzy Przyjaciele *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 15/09/1991, no. 37.

[11] "*Niedziela* dla Łodzi, Łódź dla *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 26/09/1993, no. 39.

[12] For the decree of Archbishop Marian Przykucki on May 29, 1998 about the conversion of the diocesan periodical *Kościół nad Odrą i Bałtykiem* into a supplement to *Niedziela*, see *Niedziela*, 31/03/2002, no. 13.

[13] Skubiś, Ireniusz. "Drodzy Czytelnicy *Niedzieli Małych Ojczyzn*." Ibid.

[14] The agreements with dioceses assumed the sales of 1 copy per 100 residents. Ibid.

[15] Apart from *Niedziela Częstochowska* and *Niedziela Łódzka*, there were *Niedziela Sosnowiecka*, *Niedziela Legnicka*, *Niedziela Lubelska*, *Niedziela Łowicka*, *Niedziela Przemyska*, *Niedziela Płocka*, *Głos z Torunia*, *Niedziela Podlaska* (the Drohiczyn diocese), *Niedziela Gnieźnieńska*, *Niedziela Warszawska* (the Prague diocese), *Aspekty* (the Zielona Góra & Gorzów diocese), *Głos Katolicki*" (the Łomża diocese), *Niedziela Południowa*" (the Rzeszów diocese), *Ład Boży* (the Wrocław diocese), *Kościół nad Odrą i Bałtykiem* (the Szczecin & Kamien diocese), and *Niedziela Zamojsko-Lubaczowska*.

inserts for 12 dioceses and the Krakow weekly
*Źródło* for two dioceses.

As a consequence, *Niedziela*'s circulation started to grow. The six initial variations increased sales by 50,000 in 1993.[16] Three years later, the weekly and its 13 local editions had a circulation of approximately 220,000.[17] In 1998, with 16 variations, it had 320,000 copies.[18] Some holiday issues of the weekly had 450,000 copies.

In the early 21st century, the editors continued to launch subsequent diocesan editions: in 2003 for Kielce, in October 2004 for Sandomierz (whose diocese already had a local insert to *Gość Niedzielny*[19]), and later that year for Warsaw.[20] By 2004, *Niedziela* had 22 local editions, including two foreign ones.[21] In 2005, the Italian edition (*Niedziela we Włoszech*) was closed, but a new one was opened for the Bielsko-Żywiec diocese (*Na Podbeskidziu*), so the overall number did not change. Today, the weekly has 19 diocesan editions and, according to its editors, the circulation, distributed mainly by parishes, ranges from 131,000 to 170,000 copies.[22]

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTENT

The weekly grew in volume and in variety. In March 1990, it started to print a TV guide.[23] In mid-1992, it launched a column for children ("Niedziela Dzieciom")

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[16] Czuba, K. "Kościół – wielki nieznajomy polskiej prasy." *Niedziela*, 12/12/1993, no. 50.

[17] "Rozmowa o *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 14/04/1996, no. 15.

[18] "Nowe edycje *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 14/12/1997, no. 50.

[19] Andrzej Dziega, the bishop of Sandomierz, said the modest circulation of the diocesal version of *Gość Niedzielny* was responsible for the introduction of the new title. See "*Niedziela* w diecezji sandomierskiej." *Niedziela*, 03/10/2004, no. 40.

[20] In September 2005, Leszek Sławoj Głódź, the bishop of the Warsaw & Prague diocese, suspended the publication of *Niedziela Warszawska* because of poor sales (8,200 copies sold from the 22,000 printed). In response, *Niedziela* launched its edition in the Warsaw (primatial) archdiocese, where a diocesan edition of *Gość Niedzielny* was already in circulation. See "Drodzy czytelnicy *Niedzieli w Warszawie*." *Niedziela*, 28/08/2005, no. 35.

[21] Inserts for the Polish diaspora in Chicago and Italy were established in 2003 and in 2004, respectively. The latter was not welcomed and was soon closed.

[22] *Niedziela* does not report to the Press Distribution Monitoring Union.

[23] Father Ireneusz Skubis lingered with the publication of the TV guide because of television's conflicts with Catholic ethics. See "O przetrwanie prasy katolickiej." *Niedziela*, 11/02/1990, no. 6.

which was converted into a color add-on published under the same title in 1995. In 1993, *Niedziela* started to publish a supplement for academic circles edited jointly with the Catholic University of Lublin ("Niedziela Akademicka"), initially as a monthly and later on as an *ad hoc* publication. There were also columns for young people ("Co się w nas pali") that evolved into the supplement "Niedziela Młodych" in 1995. The magazine invited authors of cooking, health care, plant growing, and even beauty care guides. From 1996 to 1998, *Niedziela* was accompanied by the weekly *Czyn Katolicki*, devoted to the group Akcja Katolicka [Catholic Action].[24] The weekly published special supplements on the occasion of the Pope's visits, ecclesiastic anniversaries, readers' pilgrimages to Częstochowa, parliamentary elections, and major public debates.

In time, the periodical turned into a multimedia company. Apart from the weekly and its diocesan entourage, the editors published a monthly for children (*Moje Pismo Tęcza*[25]) and book series ("Biblioteka Niedzieli" and "Zeszyty Niedzieli"). In 1997, the owner established a studio to prepare audio content for local and national Catholic radio channels and for the magazine's website.[26] Soon, the company launched a TV studio working for the channel "Niepokalanów TV."

As a consequence of this impressive growth, the editorial office employed 160 regular members of staff (100 in Częstochowa and 60 in local offices) and approximately 1,000 freelancers in 2001.[27] In addition, the company maintained the substantial technical assets required to produce approximately 130 pages of the national and diocesan issues. The costs of publishing were very high,

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[24] This was an attempt to reactivate the monthly *Czyn Katolicki* (1933–1939), designed to support evangelization and the charity activity of the organization Akcja Katolicka. However, the circles of Akcja Katolicka centered around parishes and dioceses ran their own publishing businesses, so *Czyn Katolicki* did not make it as an independent national title, even if this was the intention of the archbishop of Częstochowa. See "Arcypasterz do Czytelników *Czynu Katolickiego*." *Niedziela*, 23/06/1996, no. 25.

[25] The Polish-language version of the French monthly *Mon journal arc-en-ciel* was launched in March 1993.

[26] "Od słowa pisanego do słowa w eterze." *Niedziela*, 11/01/1998, no. 2; "Rozmowa o *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 14/11/1999, no. 44.

[27] "Dla nas *Niedziela* to codzienność. Czas milczenia i czas mowienia. 75 lat *Tygodnika Katolickiego Niedziela*. Księga Jubileuszowa." Częstochowa, 2001.

covered mainly by the retail price of the weekly because the sales of advertisements were marginal.[28]

The crisis of readership of the printed press, which also affected the weekly in spite of its reliance on non-market sales mechanisms, forced the company to stop printing the regular diocesan supplements, so the weekly became thinner. After the change in layout in 2002, the weekly retained only the TV guide as a regular add-on. On the other hand, it increased the number of infotainment pages, extended the letters section ("Listy do Niedzieli"), and introduced a communication-facilitating column ("Chcę korespondować").

In the end of 2006, *Niedziela* took on an even more magazine-like look. It switched sizes from A3 to A4 and began publishing more photographs and illustrations.[29] The articles became shorter, the layout more dynamic, and the content less formal. These changes were driven by a change in the proportion of ecclesiastic and religious texts to columns devoted to infotainment (opinions, reportage, interviews, and an absolute novelty: sports).

Based on a 2008 review of the content, the proportions of church matters, secular topics, and infotainment (the TV guide, entertainment, contact with readers, and advertisements) were 36:34:30, respecitively.[30]

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[28] As a rule, each insert occupied just one column. The editor-in-chief attributed the advertising weakness to the fact that "Catholic press lends its pages mainly to the ministry." Wyszyńska, A. "Z Chrystusem w samym środku życia." *Niedziela*, 04/06/2000, no. 23.

[29] The first issue of the new format of *Niedziela*, number 42, was published on October 15, 2006.

[30] Rygiel, B. "*Niedziela* i *Gość Niedzielny* jako przykłady tygodników katolickich." *Rocznik Bibliologiczno-Prasoznawczy*, 2010, vol. 2/13, pp. 159–177. For comparison, the contents of ecclesiastic and secular topics in *Gosc Niedzielny* occupied 20% and 48% of the space, respectively.

The changes were implemented to align with secular publications offering their audiences more fun, color, and "good vibes."[31] The layout was updated again in September 2014, after a new editor-in-chief took over. The new leader, Lidia Dudkiewicz, promised new authors, more family topics, and more guides.

## ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC TO READ THE CATHOLIC PRESS

The promotion of reading the weekly was a fixed idea of Editor-in-chief Skubis. He considered the reading of Catholic periodicals to be a Christian duty.[32] He appealed to parents to expose their children to Catholic titles.[33] He postulated that each Catholic family should buy at least one copy of *Niedziela*, preferably more as gifts for neighbors.[34] He regretted that Catholics were not very concerned with the Catholic press,[35] instead choosing "colorful, gossiping, or trivial" titles, watching sitcoms, and feeding themselves sensational news taken from the Internet.[36]

The editor-in-chief of *Niedziela* reminded readers in his numerous articles that Catholic media are the only forum that presents the teachings of the Pope, the voices of bishops, and suggestions on how to live a Christian and evangelical life.[37] He stressed that the media serve the Catholic electorate by helping them choose appropriate representatives for governments of various levels:

> If I am to be represented by an atheist who, possibly, conceals his convictions today but, in the future, may contribute to the enactment of a non-Christian law aimed against the natural law, such as legalization of homosexual relationships, a Catholic must not vote for such people (…). This is why [we] announce lists with names and how they voted on important matters, to know what representatives we have and whether they are actually Christian.[38]

Father Skubis believed that providing believers with a "Catholic point of view" on contemporary matters and with evangelical arguments for discussions about the outlook was an important role of Catholic media.

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[31] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Witamy w nowej *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 15/10/2006, no. 42.
[32] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Słowo redaktora naczelnego *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 11/03/2001, no. 10.
[33] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Drodzy młodzi czytelnicy *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 08/04/2001, no. 14.
[34] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Podaruj sąsiadowi *Niedziele*." *Niedziela*, 21/11/2010, no. 47.
[35] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Dobry początek, *Niedziela*." 14/10/2012, no. 42.
[36] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Pod prąd pełzającej ateizacji." *Niedziela*, 17/03/2013, no. 11.
[37] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Rzeczywistość to także życie Kościoła." *Niedziela*, 24/01/2010, no. 4.
[38] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Katolik musi być dobrze zorientowany." *Niedziela*, 02/10/2011, no. 40.

Meetings with readers arranged in parishes and weekly radio broadcasts on Catholic stations promoted the reading of *Niedziela*. Skubis presented current issues of the weekly and commented on major national and international events. The editors organized pilgrimages to Częstochowa for readers, rewarded those who supported the weekly with the "Materverbi" award, and held ceremonious promotions of publications from the "Biblioteka Niedzieli" series, during which they gave away "branded" pens, folders, and even T-shirts.

Seniors were the predominant readers (more than half were aged 60+),[39] so the editorial office made efforts to rejuvenate the audience. The website of the weekly, niedziela.pl was one such means. Although the editor-in-chief boasted about the growth of the online readership of "N," the site was positioned in the middle of the ranking of Catholic sites, lagging beyond not only the largest websites (deon.pl and opoka.pl), but even that of "Gość Niedzielny." According to Megapanel, the website of *Niedziela* had 165,000 users in November 2009 and 130,000 in July 2014, compared to 228,000 and 240,000 users of "Gość Niedzielny" online.

Seeing this, the editor-in-chief continued to ask priests to promote *Niedziela* during masses and meetings with believers. He also called on school catechists to use Catholic magazines as a teaching aid in religion lessons.[40] He was supported by bishops of the dioceses that published local supplements to the weekly. For instance, Archbishop Władysław Ziółek wrote to provosts of the Łódź Archdiocese to remind them of the need to facilitate the distribution of *Niedziela* in parishes. He wrote the following in the conclusion of the letter: "I will be particularly glad if a provost notifies me of a growth of readership of *Niedziela* in his parish."[41]

Referring to the words of the founder of *Niedziela*, Bishop Teodor Kubina, Father Skubis often compared the weekly to a curate helping a provost in his priestly work. He kept arguing that *Niedziela* helps readers to better understand matters of faith and the Church. He occasionally admonished clergy for their insufficient commitment to the distribution of the periodical: "I want to remind you of one provision of our agreements with the dioceses: We postulated a circulation

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[39] Stelmasiak, A. "*Niedziela* – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników." http://ekai.pl/wydarzenia/xll587/niedzi. Accessed 20 July 2015.

[40] Ryszka, C. "*Niedziela* wystarczy na cały tydzień." *Niedziela*, 22/09/2002, no. 38.

[41] Ziółek, W. "*Niedziela* to wikary w parafii." *Niedziela*, 20/10/2002, no. 42.

of one copy for every 100 residents of the diocese, both townspeople and villagers. Today we see that only some dioceses have managed to achieve this target. In most of them, the circulation is 1 per 150 or as little as 1 per 200."[42]

Their belief that "the fate of the Catholic press in Poland is in the hands of priests and it is up to their commitment to the ministry through the press whether Polish Catholics will buy it or not"[43] made the editors play two roles. On the one hand, they wished to serve their readers and "be a guidepost and help people live,"[44] and on the other hand, they denied the existence of such guideposts, recognizing that the readership of the Catholic press depends on the marketing skills of parish priests. As they concluded, "it can be easily noticed that demand for *Niedziela* follows the priest."[45] This approach affected the nature of the weekly's content. *Niedziela* had an ambition to make its content "serious, contemplative, requiring basic religious knowledge and thought"[46] and, at the same time, admitted that "many people do not understand the content of the Catholic press; they become shallow and such superficial Catholicism conserves immaturity and, often, a decline of faith and moral responsibility."[47] It is likely that the weekly published explicit evaluations and guides on how to interpret the social reality specifically for the latter category of readers. This focus was particularly strong in the context of information provided by non-Catholic media, concerning matters that are difficult for the Church, such as pedophilia, avarice, or its attitude to abortion, euthanasia, or homosexual marriages.[48] Readers were told which media wrote the truth about the Church and, accordingly, should be supported.[49]

This could have discouraged more demanding readers, particularly in view of the fact that, according to a 2006 survey of the Statistical Institute of the Catholic

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[42] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Drodzy czytelnicy *Niedzieli Małych Ojczyzn*." *Niedziela*, 31/03/2002, no. 13.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Wyszyńska, A. "Z Chrystusem w samym środku życia." *Niedziela*, 04/06/2000, no. 23.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Woynarowka, K., and Klauza, K. "*Niedziela* wierna Bogu i Ojczyźnie." *Niedziela*, 22/07/2001, no. 29.

[47] Ibid.

[48] "Nie wszystko jest towarem." *Niedziela*, 18/07/2004, no. 29; "Skandal czy prowokacja." *Niedziela*, 25/07/2004, no. 30; "Kościół z oszczerstwami." *Niedziela*, 12/12/2004, no. 50.

[49] "Radość budowania wspólnoty." *Niedziela Czestochowska*, 08/08/2004; "Pomagajmy pomagać." *Niedziela*, 12/09/2004, no. 37; The column "Dlaczego warto rozmawiać" promoting TV interviews by Jana Pospieszalski.

Church, *Niedziela* was mostly read by university graduates (approx. 40%) and colleges (30%). Also, more than half of Polish provosts read the periodical.[50] Father Leon Dyczewski asked Father Skubis directly whether placing the weekly in the role of a curate imposed on the bounds on its thematic spectrum by confining it to teachings and accounts of religious ceremonies. He also suggested that *Niedziela*, as a periodical for Catholics with their own problems, doubts, and visions of the future, should be a forum for debate, dispute, and explanation.[51]

## *NIEDZIELA* VERSUS THE PROBLEMS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD AND THE CHURCH

*Niedziela* defined itself as an ecclesiastical and patriotic periodical serving "God and Homeland."[52] It avoided evaluating current political events and moved away from any political affiliation, but admitted that it represented a specific, somewhat right-wing worldview as a defender of traditional Christian values. "The Polish right wing is certain to perceive *Niedziela* as their ally and a kind of a press secretary," said the editor-in-chief.[53]

Before the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, the editor-in-chief praised the election campaign of PiS and appealed to readers: "Without disregarding the others, let's consider the proposal of PiS because it seems to be worthy."[54] This open support included an interview with Lech Kaczyński, who was running for the office of president,[55] a series of articles on state reforms ("Witaj IV Rzeczpospolita," written by PiS), an interview with Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz,[56] the newly elected prime minister), an account of the swearing-in of the new president, and even a reprint of the president's address.[57]

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[50] Stelmasiak, A. "Niedziela – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników." http://ekai.pl/wydarzenia/xll587/niedziela-jeden-z-najpoczytniejszych-tygodnikow. Accessed 20 July 2015.

[51] Dyczewski, L. "Tygodnik katolicki *Niedziela* – to więcej niż prasa." *Niedziela*, 20/01/2015, no. 4.

[52] "Słowo ks. red. Ireneusza Skubisia." *Niedziela*, 06/07/2014, no. 27.

[53] "Rozmowa o *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 14/04/1996, no. 15.

[54] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Z karta wyborcza w ręku." *Niedziela*, 18/09/2005, no. 38.

[55] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "W trosce o silna uczciwą Polskę." *Niedziela*, 25/09/2005, no. 39.

[56] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "To państwo trzeba naprawić." *Niedziela*, 27/11/2005, no. 48.

[57] *Niedziela*, 08/01/2006, no. 2.

> The weekly's pages were shared with right-wing politicians more frequently during election campaigns. Before the 1997 election, *Niedziela* presented the platforms and candidates of AWS and ROP and evaluated the previous terms of the parliament, particularly in terms of the attitudes of individual political parties to subjects such as abortion or the ratification of the concordat.[58]

The involvement of "Niedziela Częstochowska" in the parliamentary election campaign of Czesław Ryszka, a journalist of the weekly and a member of PiS – particularly the article published before the repeated Senate election in the Częstochowa district, entitled "We hope you win again,"[59] and the letter sent by the editor-in-chief to provosts of the Częstochowa Archdiocese – raised controversies and a sharp response from *Gazeta Wyborcza Częstochowa*. The article under the symptomatic headline, "To the Senate via the Vestry," cited the words of Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek: "The letter of Father Skubis involved the Church in politics, which should not have occurred. I regret that this happened because getting political harms the image of the Church."[60] In his polemic with this statement, Father Skubis called it a "denunciation of the Church and priests aimed to deprive us of our influence on the Homeland."[61] Father Marian Mikołajczyk, the chancellor of the Metropolitan Curia in Częstochowa, made a similar statement. He wrote in the pages of *Niedziela* that he had read the bishop's statement with distaste because it "reminded him of the language of journalists of the early People's

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[58] "Dwie kadencje Sejmu RP – kto i jak głosował oraz dodatek *Niedziela na wybory*." *Niedziela*, 14/09/1997, no. 37.

[59] *Niedziela Czestochowska*, 15/01/2006, no. 3.

[60] Jaremko-Siarska, M. "Przez zakrystie do Senatu." *Gazeta Wyborcza – Częstochowa*, 14–15/01/2006.

[61] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "W odpowiedzi *Gazecie Wyborczej*." *Niedziela*, 29/01/2006, no. 5.

Republic, dreaming about locking priests in vestries and depriving them of the right to talk about public matters other than in concord with the official propaganda."[62]

*Niedziela* took a dual approach to the parliamentary election campaigns of 2007 and 2011. Right-wing political sympathies of the weekly were more prominent in the diocesan supplements than in the national content. However, the problem of political involvement continued. Father Prof. Leon Dyczewski, a frequent contributor to the weekly, advised distinguishing the "political" from the "partisan" and allowed Catholic periodicals the right to speak about political matters and to disagree with parties and politicians who voiced views and moral norms inconsistent with Christianity, particularly on subjects so important to Catholics as family, marriage, social ownership, truth, etc.[63] Father Skubis denied that he favored any party but admitted that "indeed, as in any home one needs to lend someone else some place sometimes, let them speak because, sometimes, on matters important to the Homeland, people do not have the penetrative force of the media, but this does not mean that we practice politics or that we side with this or that party. We simply follow the rule of subsidiarity."[64]

Because of this "following the rule of subsidiarity," the weekly was often associated with a specific social and political environment. *Gazeta Wyborcza* wrote directly about affiliation with PiS and *Radio Maryja*.[65] A publicist for *Gość Niedzielny* attributed to *Niedziela* nationalistic and Catholic sympathies, reminding readers that *Niedziela* had been supporting the right wing (ZChN and PC) since the 1990s, while *Gość Niedzielny* was identified with more centrist post-Solidarity parties (UD and its successor, UW).[66]

Because of this political content, *Niedziela* was perceived as integralistic and fundamentalist. However, Cezary Gmyz noted that these terms were illegitimate

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[62] "Odpowiedzialność za słowo." Ibid.

[63] See Skubis's interview with Leon Dyczewski: "Dziennikarz jest po to, żeby ludzie myśleli." *Niedziela*, 20/01/2013, no. 3 and Dyczewski's polemic with *Gazeta Wyborcza*: "Mnie wolno, wam nie." *Niedziela*, 08/06/2014, no. 23.

[64] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Kościół – moja miłość." *Niedziela*, 27/04/2014, no. 17.

[65] Wielowieyska, D. "Jaka diecezja, taka kościelna gazeta. Preferencje polityczne odzwierciedleniem poglądów biskupów." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17–18/05/2014.

[66] Grajewski, A., and Father Tkocz. "*Gosc.*" http://gosc.pl/doc/1770435.Ks-Tkocz-i-jego-Gosc. Accessed 5 August 2015.

and the management of *Niedziela* protested against the forced distinction be-tween open/progressive and fundamentalist/traditional Catholic press.[67]

Responding to the expectations of readers for articles about the teachings of John Paul II (71.4%), information about the life of the Church in Poland (72.4%), local communities (60%), and journalism (62.6%),[68] the weekly published impor-tant papal statements and documents, dealt with theological, biblical, Mariologi-cal, and canon-law subjects, and wrote about the life of the contemporary Church in Poland and worldwide. In light of these interests, it is surprising that *Niedzie-la*, drawing information from Vatican Radio and the Polish Catholic Information Agency, did not produce a special issue after the death of John Paul II. Issue 15 was published after this event, on April 10, 2005, merely noting it on the title page with a cursory comment by the editor-in-chief, "The Good Shepherd has passed away." Father Skubis explained this "fault" in one of his interviews by claiming his disbelief in the passing of the pope and his lack of courage to write about him in the past tense.[69] Not until later issues did the weekly make up for the delay by publishing numerous memoirs devoted to the funeral, summarizing his pontifi-cate, and following up the process of the pope's beatification and canonization.

The weekly also dealt with other problems that troubled its readers. It led campaigns for the return of religion lessons to schools and against abortion, ar-ranged for the collection of signatures in defense of the cross in public spaces, and took efforts to strengthen the position of Catholic media.

The weekly made a solid contribution to the formation of the media mar-ket in Poland and to the promotion of Catholic media in the contemporary world by publishing numerous articles written by Bishop Adam Lepa, his successors as chair of the Mass Media Commission of the Polish Episcopate, and Catholic media experts – who consistently reminded the clergy about the evangelical merits of the media and the opportunities for using them in priestly and catechetic work. The editor-in-chief of *Niedziela* especially raised these topics on the occasion of pilgrimages of journalists, media people, and *Niedziela* readers to Częstochowa, subsequent anniversaries of the periodical, celebrations of St. Francis de Sales Day (the patron saint of journalists), and, most importantly, in the context of a "threat

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[67] Gmyz, C. "Gość w Niedziele." *Wiez*, 1998, no. 12, pp. 94–103.
[68] Stelmasiak, A. "Niedziela – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników."
[69] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Niedziela. Prezent od pana Boga." *Niedziela*, 17/09/2006, no. 38.

to the freedom of speech in Poland," recognized as any attempt to curb the role of Catholic media, such as the Polish Media Board's (KRRiT's) refusal to license "TV Trwam" to broadcast through the national digital multiplex platform. *Niedziela* devoted a dozen or so articles to this refusal in 2012 and 2013 and joined the campaign for collecting signatures in defense of "TV Trwam."

The pages of *Niedziela* were also used for promoting other Catholic periodicals, books, radio stations, and TV channels, which occasionally attracted criticism because of the polemic temper of the editor-in-chief. For instance, Father Skubis's article "Stone the Church" criticized a publication of *Tygodnik Powszechny* that opposed Father Tadeusz Rydzyk and the bishops supporting "TV Trwam";[70] his commentary "It is important what one represents" was aimed against the publication *Gość Niedzielny*.[71]

The attitude of *Niedziela* towards the secular media was more adverse. While writing about the world of contemporary media and about their effect on audiences, Catholic publicists most frequently stressed related threats: the escalation of social tensions, the dissemination of consumerist attitudes, the corruption of the youth, journalistic dishonesty and, most of all, systemic anti-Catholicism.[72] Father Skubis blamed them directly because "they work very hard to smash the Church and destroy it to destroy Christianity."[73] He even claimed that he was under the impression that the Polish media space had been domesticated by "descendants of party officials, or maybe even security officers who used to murder members of the National Army."[74] However, the principled defense of Christian values often turned into a defense of the clergy and into the equating of criticism of certain steps they take with an attack on the Church. For example, he considered "the hunt for various alleged scandals involving the clergy, such as homosexual scandals, to show that the Church is not sacred and its representatives are

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[70] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Kamieniami w Kościół." *Niedziela*, 01/07/2012, no. 27.

[71] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Ważne co się reprezentuje." *Niedziela*, 01/06/2014, no. 22.

[72] "Środki przekazu w głoszeniu słowa Bożego." *Niedziela*, 15/08/1993, no. 33; "Media – szanse i zagrożenia." *Niedziela*, 19/09/1993, no. 38; "Kościół – wielki nieznajomy polskiej prasy." *Niedziela*, 12/12/1993, no. 50; the series "Kultura mediów, mass media, rodzina." *Niedziela*, 03/10/1993, no. 40+.

[73] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Katolicka solidarność." *Niedziela*, 21/11/2010, no. 4.

[74] Skubiś, Ireneusz. "O medialna przestrzeń dla katolików w Polsce." *Niedziela*, 10/03/2013, no. 10.

sinners or even crooks" to be a strike against the Church and the gospel.[75] Other priests writing for the weekly represented a similar point of view.[76]

*Niedziela* reacted very sharply to critical remarks about it, which concerned both polemics with the weekly's content and with its ratings on the media market.[77]

## SUMMARY

It is stressed in many scholarly and journalistic reviews that religious media operating on a free market have to balance "the *sacrum* of their evangelical mission with the *profanum* of their struggle for viewership, readership, or click rate."[78] They do this in two ways. Using the terminology of Joseph Borg, these can be defined as the incarnational model and the intra-ecclesiastical devotion model.[79] As Damian Guzek explains, "the former model, based on theological solutions of the Second Vatican Council, consists in approaching all social issues from an ecclesiastical point of view without leaving the problems of the Church unstated. The latter, older model adopted by the Catholic media assumes that the institutional Church treats them as tools for disseminating information about the internal life and current initiatives of the Church. This model is also more involved in intra-ecclesiastical religious practices."[80] Based on this differentiation, one can assume that *Niedziela*, as a Catholic weekly, follows the second model of communication. In the age of digital media, as a result of generational change, the weekly continues to lose its ability to attain its goals. This happens because it attaches more

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Krukowski, J. "Najnowsza metoda walki z Kościołem pod hasłem walki z pedofilią."; Goraj, J. "Słowem można skazać na śmierć." *Niedziela*, 03/11/2013, no. 44.

[77] Gawryś, Cezary. "Wolność, uczciwość, pluralism." *Rzeczpospolita*, 04/01/1993 ("Polemizujemy rzetelnie, piszemy uczciwie." *Niedziela*, 28/02/1993, no. 9); Tochman, Wojciech. "Reportaż na niedziele zamieszczony." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07–08/08/1993 ("W związku z Reportażem na niedziele." *Niedziela*, 29/08/1993, no. 35); Wielowieyska, Dominika. "Jaka diecezja, taka kościelna gazeta." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17–18/05/2014 ("Mnie wolno, wam nie." *Niedziela*, 08/06/2014, no. 23)

[78] Czubkowska, S. "Wiara i oglądalność." *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 13/01/2001.

[79] Borg, J. "Malta's Media Landscape: An Overview." *Exploring the Maltese Media Landscape*, edited by J. Borg, A. Hillman, and M. A. Lauri. Valetta, 2009, pp. 27–28. As cited in Guzek, D. "System medialny Malty." *Studia Me dioznawcze*, 2012, no. 4, pp. 138–139.

[80] Ibid.

weight to informative purposes, unilateral information, and persuasive communication than to integrational purposes, participation, and dialogue.

The change in editor-in-chief has certainly ended a chapter in the history of *Niedziela*, though it is still too early to say how the periodical may evolve. The new, secular editor-in-chief declared a continuation of the hitherto program line: "The strong foundations of *Niedziela* are certainly inviolable. We take up the good work done by my predecessors and, augmenting it, we will set off into the future walking the roads of new evangelization."[81] She also demonstrated a strong attachment to the church: "I sense I am in the hands of God and Mary,"[82] she said after her nomination, declaring that journalism was a special kind of calling to her and that she saw in Catholic media a sign of protest against the "modern world" imposing a consumerist way of life, damping the voice of conscience, and expelling God from public life.[83]

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[81] Dudkiewicz, L. "Nowe wyzwania dla *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 13/07/2014, no. 28.

[82] She is a Dame of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and she studied theology. See "Lidia Dudkiewicz nowym redaktorem naczelnym Tygodnika Katolickiego *Niedziela*." http://www.nie-dziela.pl/artykul/10280/Lidia-Dudkiewicz-nowym-redaktorem. Accessed 25 July 2015.

[83] Ibid.

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**About the autor**

Dr Jolanta Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek, adiunkt w Instytucie Dziennikarstwa i Informacji Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach, e-mail; jdm@ujk.edu.pl

**Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska**

**University of Warsaw**

# The topics on magazine covers and the reactions of Polish audiences

## Treść tematów okładkowych w magazynach a reakcje polskich odbiorców

### ABSTRACT

This article is a continuation of research on the topics that are displayed on the front covers of magazines. The subject of research is the content of these topic areas. The main purpose of the analysis is to investigate the reaction of Polish audiences to the topics of magazine cover stories. Other goals are to present 1) the impact of demographic categories (gender, age, education, and place of residence) on the reception of the cover story topics and 2) the most and least popular topics among representatives of each of these demographic categories.

The author tests her hypothesis that the selection of topics for covers affects the reactions of polish audiences, encouraging or discouraging them to choose a specific magazine. However, consumers' decisions are linked to the above-mentioned demographic categories. The paper is based on a quantitative survey, conducted with Computer Assisted Web Interviews between September 2 and 6, 2016 on a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094), selected by panel Ariadna.

### KEYWORDS:

cover stories, content of cover stories, covers, magazines, the press

### ABSTRAKT

Niniejszy artykuł jest kontynuacją badań nad tematami okładkowymi, eksponowanymi na frontowych okładkach magazynów. Przedmiotem badań jest treść tych tematów. Cel główny analizy to zbadanie reakcji polskich odbiorców na treść tematów okładkowych. Pozostałe cele sformułowano jako zamiar przedstawienia: 1) wpływu kategorii demograficznych (płci, wieku, wykształcenia i miejsca zamieszkania) respondentów na odbiór treści tematów okładkowych; 2) najpopularniejszych i najmniej popularnych treści tematów okładkowych dla przedstawicieli każdej wspomnianej kategorii demograficznej. Autorka weryfikuje hipotezę: dobór treści tematów okładkowych wiąże się z reakcjami polskich odbiorców, zachęcając lub zniechęcając do kontaktu z wydaniem magazynu, przy czym decyzje odbiorców uwarunkowane są ich przynależnością do wzmiankowanych kategorii demograficznych. Fundamentem przedstawianego tekstu są własne badania ilościowe, przeprowadzone metodą ankietową za pomocą techniki CAWI. Zrealizowano je w dniach 2–6 września 2016 r. Na ogólnopolskiej próbie Polaków (N = 1094), dobranej z panelu Ariadna.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

tematy okładkowe, treść tematów okładkowych, okładki, magazyny, prasa

This article is a continuation of research on the topics of cover stories on the front covers of magazines. Whereas the paper entitled "Cover topics of Polish magazines: Components and reader preferences" identified the role and form of cover story topics, the research behind this paper is dedicated to the content of these topics (whether expressed as text or graphics).

## 1. METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Considering the scarcity of Polish research papers dedicated to magazine covers in the context of media marketing (there are even fewer papers on covers' topics or content), the author has chosen to analyze her own quantitative survey results, obtained with the Computer Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI) interviewing technique. The survey took place from September 2 to 6, 2016, on a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna.[1] For the purposes of this paper, the author selected certain research topics relating to its title and focusing on the primary goal of study – investigating the responses of Polish audiences to the content of cover stories. The remaining goals were defined as the intention to present

- the impact of demographic categories (gender, age, education, and place of residence) on the reception of cover stories' topics and
- the most and least popular topics for representatives of each of the specified demographic categories.

The author aims to verify the following hypothesis: The choice of cover story is linked to Polish audiences' responses, encouraging or discouraging the audience from further contact with a specific issue of a magazine, where the readers' decisions depend on their affiliation with specified demographic categories (which is directly related to publishing business).

In order to investigate Polish people's reactions to a given issue, 24 motifs[2] were presented in a questionnaire and reviewed in the context of specific responses from demographically diverse audiences (from attracting attention to

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[1] A detailed description of the research is presented in another paper by the author, entitled "Cover topics of Polish magazines: Components and reader preferences", published in number 28 of *Kultura–Media–Teologia*. For more about the panel see https://panelariadna.pl/userpanel.php (accessed 15 May 2017)

[2] Specifically, these were vulgarity, politicians and politics, religion, violence, journalism, science, celebrities, nudity/sex, automotive, business and economy, tips/advice, real-life

discouraging a purchase). Considering the volume of data, the author decided to present the results in tables. She also attempted to determine which topics are perceived positively by audiences (i.e., to what extent they attract attention or encourage people to peruse or buy a magazine) and which receive negative perceptions (how they discourage readers from perusing or buying a magazine). For this purpose,

- the author arranged the motifs by the number of responses selected by the respondents (from lowest to highest) and
- in every column of each table, she selected the five motifs with the worst and the least responses, assigning them accordingly to positive and negative groups.

It should be noted that the full table is only presented once, for the averaged results, while only certain excerpts from the research are presented further in the paper, specifically the five best and worst results of every positive and negative impact.

## 2. COVER STORY TOPICS VS. AUDIENCE RESPONSES – AVERAGED DATA

The averaged results for all the respondents are shown in Table 1. According to the research assumptions, considering the positive influence of cover stories, the following can be noted:

- Vulgarity, politicians and politics, religion, violence, and sports attracted the least attention, while the most attention was paid to beauty, cooking, culture, hobbies, and the category "other."
- The items which least encouraged people to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, nudity/sex, computer games, politicians and politics, and violence; the most encouraging ones included tips/advice, technology, culture, history, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and religion; the most encouraging ones were real-life stories, cooking, science, tips/advice, and news.

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stories, computer games, history, fashion, technology, news, parenting/children, beauty, cooking, culture, hobbies, and other.

Table 1. Topics of cover stories vs. audience responses (averaged data) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vulgarity | 9.4% | Vulgarity | 5.8% | Vulgarity | 8.4% | News | 7.9% | Technology | 7.7% |
| Politicians and politics | 13.9% | Nudity/sex | 10.2% | Violence | 10.9% | Hobbies | 9.4% | Food/ cooking | 8.0% |
| Religion | 18.2% | Computer games | 10.9% | Politicians and politics | 12.0% | Tips/advice | 10.9% | Science | 8.2% |
| Violence | 18.2% | Politicians and politics | 12.6% | Nudity/sex | 14.5% | Science | 12.0% | Tips/advice | 8.6% |
| Sports | 18.6% | Violence | 12.7% | Religion | 15.1% | Technology | 13.4% | Other | 8.7% |
| Journalism | 19.5% | Religion | 16.3% | Business and economy | 15.8% | Real-life stories | 13.5% | Hobbies | 8.7% |
| Science | 19.6% | Automotive | 17.9% | Computer games | 16.0% | Other | 14.3% | News | 8.8% |
| Celebrities | 19.8% | Other | 19.0% | Celebrities | 16.7% | Culture | 14.3% | Culture | 9.3% |
| Nudity/sex | 20.3% | Sports | 19.1% | History | 18.7% | Food/ cooking | 15.1% | Parenting/ children | 9.7% |
| Automotive | 21.0% | Celebrities | 19.5% | Sports | 20.3% | Parenting/ children | 16.6% | History | 11.2% |
| Business and economy | 21.7% | Beauty | 19.8% | Culture | 20.6% | History | 17.0% | Fashion | 13.2% |
| Tips/advice | 22.6% | Fashion | 21.4% | Automotive | 21.6% | Journalism | 18.0% | Beauty | 13.3% |
| Real-life stories | 22.8% | Real-life stories | 22.2% | Parenting/ children | 22.1% | Beauty | 18.1% | Journalism | 13.3% |
| Computer games | 23.2% | Food/ cooking | 24.0% | Fashion | 22.2% | Fashion | 20.0% | Real-life stories | 14.6% |
| History | 23.2% | Parenting/ children | 26.5% | Journalism | 22.6% | Business and economy | 20.1% | Business and economy | 15.1% |
| Fashion | 23.3% | Journalism | 26.6% | Beauty | 23.6% | Sports | 21.8% | Celebrities | 16.8% |
| Technology | 23.4% | Hobbies | 26.6% | Other | 24.8% | Automotive | 22.2% | Automotive | 17.3% |
| News | 24.8% | Business and economy | 27.3% | Hobbies | 26.4% | Celebrities | 27.2% | Computer games | 18.9% |
| Parenting/ children | 25.2% | News | 28.0% | Technology | 26.8% | Religion | 27.4% | Sports | 20.2% |
| Beauty | 25.3% | Tips/advice | 28.7% | Real-life stories | 26.9% | Computer games | 31.1% | Violence | 21.1% |
| Food/ cooking | 25.9% | Technology | 28.8% | Food/ cooking | 27.0% | Nudity/sex | 32.0% | Politicians and politics | 21.5% |
| Culture | 26.6% | Culture | 29.2% | Science | 28.6% | Violence | 37.1% | Religion | 23.0% |
| Hobbies | 28.8% | History | 29.8% | Tips/advice | 29.2% | Politicians and politics | 40.1% | Nudity/sex | 23.0% |
| Other | 33.2% | Science | 31.6% | News | 30.5% | Vulgarity | 41.3% | Vulgarity | 35.2% |

The following can be noted about the negative influence of cover stories:

- The least discouraging topics were news, hobbies, tips/advice, science, and technology; the most discouraging were computer games, nudity/sex, violence, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were technology, cooking, science, tips/advice, and "other"; the most discouraging items were violence, politicians and politics, religion, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.

Based on the averaged study results, one can clearly see that there is a certain group of topics that tend to resurface at least once in specific responses. It seems that publishers should focus on these, whether by choosing or avoiding them. The best results for positive influence included news, cooking, and science; for a negative influence, these were nudity/sex, violence, politics, and vulgarity. The responses that suggested discouragement were unambiguous here – it should be emphasized that as many as 40.1% of respondents considered politics on the cover to be a factor that discourages them from perusing a magazine. Interestingly, politics, vulgarity, and violence ranked lowest in the positive influence classification of cover topics; this proves Polish people's extreme hostility toward these topics and the adverse effect on them buying or even perusing a magazine.

## 3. COVER STORY TOPICS VS. AUDIENCE RESPONSES – DATA SHOWN IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

### 3.1. Gender

The following tables, Table 2 (women) and 3 (men), present the research results divided by the respondents' gender. In the case of a female audience, the following can be stated with regard to a positive influence:

- The least attractive items were vulgarity, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, celebrities, and science; the most attractive ones were cooking, real-life stories, hobbies, beauty, and "other."
- The items which encouraged the audiences least to peruse a magazine were nudity/sex, vulgarity, computer games, and automotive; the most encouraging ones were history, technology, news, culture, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, business and

economy, and nudity/sex; the most encouraging ones were real-life stories, hobbies, news, cooking, and tips/advice.

The following was noted about the negative influence of cover story topics:

- The topics which least discouraged people from perusing a magazine were news, beauty, tips/advice, culture, and hobbies; the most discouraging were violence, computer games, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.

- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were cooking, "other," fashion, parenting, and beauty; the most discouraging items were computer games, politicians and politics, violence, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.

Table 2. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (gender: female) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs among women | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 6.0% | Nudity/sex | 5.1% | Vulgarity | 6.7% | News | 4.3% | Food/cooking | 4.1% |
| Nudity/sex | 12.1% | Vulgarity | 5.4% | Violence | 8.7% | Beauty | 4.8% | Other | 7.1% |
| Politicians and politics | 12.6% | Computer games | 9.4% | Politicians and politics | 8.9% | Tips/advice | 5.6% | Fashion | 7.3% |
| Celebrities | 17.5% | Automotive | 12.1% | Business and economy | 13.5% | Culture | 6.1% | Parenting/children | 7.9% |
| Science | 18.7% | Violence | 12.9% | Nudity/sex | 13.6% | Hobbies | 7.4% | Beauty | 8.4% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs among women | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine |
| Food/cooking | 27.2% | History | 32.2% | Real-life stories | 28.7% | Violence | 30.5% | Computer games | 23.0% |
| Real-life stories | 28.6% | Technology | 32.6% | Hobbies | 29.3% | Computer games | 32.9% | Politicians and politics | 23.3% |
| Hobbies | 29.3% | News | 32.9% | News | 30.0% | Politicians and politics | 41.1% | Violence | 23.4% |
| Beauty | 31.6% | Culture | 34.5% | Food/cooking | 31.0% | Nudity/sex | 42.1% | Nudity/sex | 27.1% |
| Other | 36.3% | Science | 35.7% | Tips/advice | 32.2% | Vulgarity | 43.7% | Vulgarity | 38.3% |

Women can exactly discern the types of covers they dislike, as they gave similar answers to the questions about being discouraged from perusing and from buying a magazine. Among the recurring motifs within the range of positive

influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, and violence. The most best responses were for cooking, real-life stories, hobbies, and news. Under a negative influence, the female respondents considered beauty as the least discouraging item, while they mentioned violence, computer games, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and vulgarity among the most discouraging ones. It would be reasonable to note that, unfortunately, these answers somehow match the stereotypical identification of women's preferences, as evidenced by the high ranking of items such as cooking, tips/advice, history, real-life stories, or beauty.

In the case of male audiences (with regard to the positive influence of cover topics), the following findings can be summarized:

- Violence, vulgarity, politicians and politics, journalism, and religion attracted the least attention, while the most attention was paid to computer games, news, hobbies, nudity/sex, and "other" (not otherwise specified).
- The items which least encouraged men to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, fashion, beauty, politicians, and religion; the most encouraging ones were journalism, tips/advice, science, history, and hobbies.
- The following cover topics least encouraged men to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, celebrities, politicians and politics, and nudity/sex; the most encouraging ones were journalism, "other," news, science, and technology.

The following findings can be noted about the negative influence of cover story topics:

- The motifs which least frequently discouraged men from perusing a magazine were hobbies, technology, news, science, and "other"; the most commonly discouraging items were beauty, celebrities, vulgarity, politicians and politics, and violence.
- The worst demotivators for buying were technology, science, news, tips/advice, culture, and vulgarity; the most discouraging items for men were beauty, politicians and politics, fashion, religion, and vulgarity.

The following motifs recurred within weakest positively influencing topics: violence, vulgarity, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and religion. The most positive answers were given to news, hobbies, and science. In terms of a negative influence, the male respondents identified technology, news, and science as the least discouraging motifs, whereas the most discouraging ones were beauty, vulgarity,

and politicians and politics. The men's responses also corresponded to the stereotypical gender representation: They chose nudity/sex (when paying attention) or technology, but also – in negative terms – beauty, celebrities, and fashion.

Table 3. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (gender: male) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs among men | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Violence | 11.4% | Vulgarity | 6.1% | Vulgarity | 10.4% | Hobbies | 11.6% | Technology | 3.2% |
| Vulgarity | 13.2% | Fashion | 10.0% | Violence | 13.3% | Technology | 11.8% | Science | 6.6% |
| Politicians and politics | 15.3% | Beauty | 10.8% | Celebrities | 14.6% | News | 12.0% | News | 7.8% |
| Journalism | 15.4% | Politicians and politics | 11.0% | Politicians and politics | 15.4% | Science | 13.0% | Tips/advice | 8.4% |
| Religion | 16.1% | Religion | 11.0% | Nudity/sex | 15.5% | Other | 15.2% | Culture | 8.7% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs among men | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Computer games | 26.0% | Journalism | 26.1% | Journalism | 27.5% | Beauty | 32.8% | Beauty | 18.6% |
| News | 26.7% | Tips/advice | 26.2% | Other | 29.7% | Celebrities | 33.0% | Politicians and politics | 19.4% |
| Hobbies | 28.3% | Science | 27.1% | News | 30.9% | Vulgarity | 38.6% | Fashion | 19.7% |
| Nudity/sex | 29.4% | History | 27.2% | Science | 32.7% | Politicians and politics | 38.9% | Religion | 26.3% |
| Other | 29.8% | Hobbies | 28.2% | Technology | 37.0% | Violence | 44.4% | Vulgarity | 31.7% |

The following conclusion can be drawn from the above data: the preferences for topics on magazine covers vary according to gender, which is presented collectively in Fig. 1 (for the sake of transparency, the author has decided to only present those responses concerning encouraging individuals to buy a magazine). Men scored technology, journalism, and automotive much higher than women, as they also did with business and economy, nudity/sex, and computer games. They were more reluctant than women to choose parenting and children, hobbies, beauty, fashion, and real-life stories.[3] Women were slightly more willing to

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[3] For example, in Aleksandra Perchla-Włosik's research, the men less frequently admitted their interest in fashion (Perchla-Włosik 56).
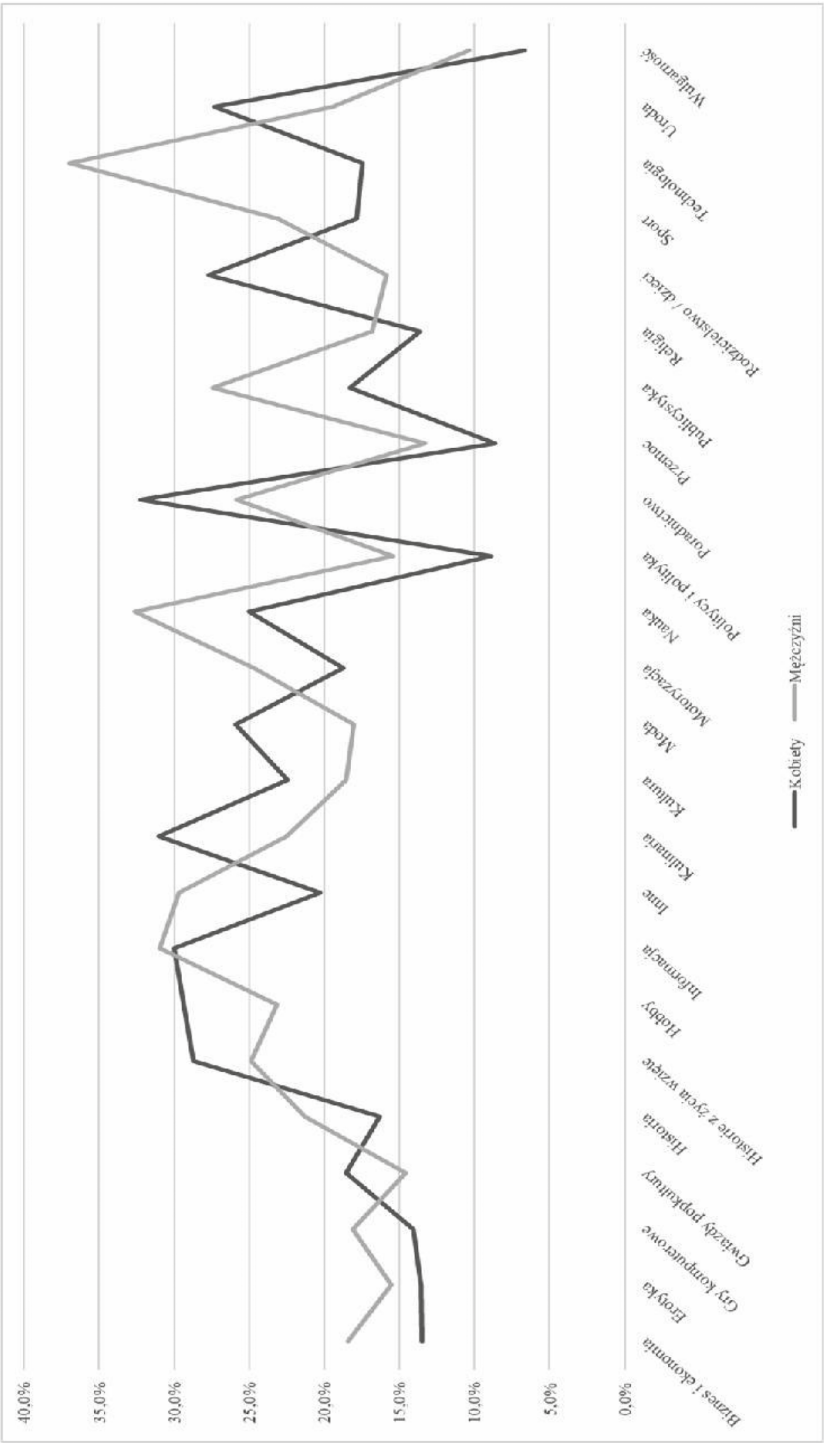
Figure 1. Preferences as to cover topics depending on age – comparison (pro-sales aspect)
Source: own study based on research carried out on a Polish sample of N = 1094 people, selected from the Ariadna panel using the CAWI method. Responders: all respondents

buy under the influence of celebrities.[4] On the other hand, both women and men maintained distance toward religion, whereas their attitudes were certainly negative toward vulgarity, violence, and politicians (even though the men were slightly more tolerant in respect of the two latter cases). Tips/advice had a positive influence on both genders (with a slight indication toward women), together with the above-mentioned motoring and journalism topics (with a significant indication toward men).

Therefore, in the author's opinion, the respondents' gender should have a distinct influence on the cover story topics they prefer because, as in the case of products other than media, this translates into clearly definable consumer reactions.[5]

### 3.2. Age

In the youngest target group, in the context of positive cover topic influence context:

- The following items attracted the least attention: vulgarity, tips/advice, automotive, politicians and politics, and history; the most attention was reported to be drawn by journalism, culture, cooking, hobbies, and "other".
- The items which least encouraged people to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, nudity/sex, violence, cooking, and real-life stories; the most encouraging items were business and economy, sports, history, technology, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: business and economy, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, celebrities, and journalism; the most encouraging ones were cooking, fashion, tips/advice, real-life stories, and news.

The following points can be noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- The motifs which would least frequently discourage people from perusing a magazine were hobbies, technology, science, "other", and news; the most

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[4] This is related to a certain extent to the gender stereotypes existing in society and the use of such stereotypes in marketing. See Rybowska 98.

[5] This has been demonstrated on the basis of the example that "there is a relationship between gender identity and consumer responses to brands" or a relationship between the "brand design impact (logo shape, brand name, font, or color) and the perceived masculinity/femininity of the brand, consumer preferences, and brand capital" (Hajdas 26).

commonly discouraging items were parenting and children, violence, politicians and politics, vulgarity, and nudity/sex.

- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were parenting and children, cooking, "other", and news; the most discouraging items were religion, celebrities, vulgarity, automotive, and computer games.

Among the recurring topics within the range of positive influence of cover stories, the results were weakest for vulgarity, politicians and politics, and nudity/sex, whereas the most preferable was cooking. As regards a negative influence on audience responses, the only recurring topics were news and "other" (in terms of the weakest impact), as well as vulgarity (in terms of the strongest impact).

It should be noted that journalism, for example, as a topic that draws the attention of at least 30% of the respondents, would only encourage approx. 7% of

Table 4. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (age: 18–24 years) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs among 18–24-year-olds | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 5.8% | Vulgarity | 2.7% | Business and economy | 4.6% | Hobbies | 22.9% | Fashion | 4.3% |
| Tips/advice | 7.1% | Nudity/sex | 2.9% | Nudity/sex | 4.8% | Technology | 23.9% | Parenting/children | 5.8% |
| Automotive | 7.6% | Violence | 3.6% | Politicians and politics | 6.0% | Science | 24.7% | Food/cooking | 10.0% |
| Politicians and politics | 8.9% | Food/cooking | 4.5% | Celebrities | 6.0% | Other | 24.7% | Other | 10.2% |
| History | 10.3% | Real-life stories | 10.2% | Journalism | 7.2% | News | 24.8% | News | 12.6% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs among 18–24-year-olds | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Journalism | 29.6% | Business and economy | 26.8% | Food/cooking | 20.3% | Parenting/children | 39.6% | Religion | 20.2% |
| Culture | 30.6% | Sports | 31.8% | Fashion | 21.0% | Violence | 47.2% | Celebrities | 20.5% |
| Food/cooking | 32.6% | History | 33.3% | Tips/advice | 22.6% | Politicians and politics | 50.6% | Vulgarity | 25.2% |
| Hobbies | 33.4% | Technology | 34.1% | Real-life stories | 23.7% | Vulgarity | 54.3% | Automotive | 29.9% |
| Other | 35.1% | Science | 38.9% | News | 32.1% | Nudity/sex | 59.0% | Computer games | 30.2% |

the population to buy the magazine (the proportion is similar for business and economy: 27% of all respondents would peruse a magazine with that topic, but only approx. 4.5% would ultimately buy the magazine). What about news topics? Indeed, they encourage more than 32% of all respondents to buy a magazine, yet at the same time, they discourage almost 25% of the population from perusing a magazine and almost 13% from buying it. Fashion seems to have a relatively good position: 21% of all Polish people reported being encouraged to buy by fashion topics (only 4.3% of the population are discouraged by it). The youngest group of subjects pointed to several motifs that were inconsistent with the author's expectations. Specifically, computer games and celebrities generated poor results (discouraging from purchase), while real-life stories ranked high (almost 24% of readers make a purchase under this influence). The youngest respondents strongly rejected nudity/sex, under the influence of which as many as 59% would not even peruse a magazine.

Within the target group of 25–34-year-olds, in the context of a positive influence, the following can be noted:

- The following items would attract the least attention: sports, violence, tips/advice, and politicians and politics; the most attention would be drawn by celebrities, hobbies, history, beauty, and "other".
- The items which would encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, religion, violence, nudity/sex, and computer games; the most encouraging ones include hobbies, science, real-life stories, and tips/ advice.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, nudity/sex, religion, and politicians and politics; the most encouraging ones were news, hobbies, science, technology, and cooking.

The following can be noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- The motifs which would least frequently discourage people from perusing a magazine were hobbies, science, news, fashion, and culture; the most commonly discouraging items were politicians and politics, sports, computer games, violence, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were technology, cooking, hobbies, and tips/advice; the most discouraging items were vulgarity, nudity/sex, violence, politicians and politics, and religion.

Among the recurring motifs within the range of positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for religion, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, and vulgarity, whereas the best results were obtained for hobbies and science. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the only recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were hobbies, science, and (in terms of the strongest impact) politicians and politics, violence, and vulgarity.

Within this age group, the perceived level of determination was higher than with the previous one: the responses tend to be recurring and complementary (the same things which do not really discourage at the same time encourage people to buy, as it was in the case of the responses about technology or cooking). The respondents presented a cautious attitude toward religion: not only does it not encourage them to peruse a magazine (less than 10% of responses), but it even discourages them from buying (34% of all the selected options).

Table 5. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (age: 25–34 years) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs among 25–34-year-olds | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Real-life stories | 13.1% | Vulgarity | 7.8% | Vulgarity | 12.1% | Hobbies | 5.9% | Technology | 7.3% |
| Sports | 13.6% | Religion | 9.6% | Violence | 15.3% | Science | 8.3% | Food/cooking | 13.1% |
| Violence | 14.0% | Violence | 9.7% | Nudity/sex | 16.2% | News | 8.4% | Science | 13.7% |
| Tips/advice | 14.5% | Nudity/sex | 9.9% | Religion | 16.7% | Fashion | 9.4% | Hobbies | 13.9% |
| Politicians and politics | 14.6% | Computer games | 10.1% | Politicians and politics | 18.2% | Culture | 9.6% | Tips/advice | 14.4% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs among 25–34-year-olds | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Celebrities | 24.8% | Hobbies | 21.7% | News | 33.4% | Politicians and politics | 28.0% | Vulgarity | 23.6% |
| Hobbies | 25.0% | Culture | 24.4% | Hobbies | 33.5% | Sports | 29.4% | Nudity/sex | 26.1% |
| History | 26.8% | Science | 25.8% | Science | 34.7% | Computer games | 31.5% | Violence | 27.3% |
| Beauty | 26.8% | Real-life stories | 26.0% | Technology | 35.0% | Violence | 33.7% | Politicians and politics | 29.0% |
| Other | 32.9% | Tips/advice | 28.5% | Food/cooking | 37.7% | Vulgarity | 36.5% | Religion | 34.1% |

Within the target group of 35–44-year-olds, the findings for a positive influence were as follows:

- Such motifs as vulgarity, politicians and politics, fashion, automotive, and sports attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to tips/advice, computer games, parenting/children, nudity/sex, and cooking.
- The items which would least encourage audiences to peruse a magazine were nudity/sex, computer games, sports, vulgarity, and beauty; the most encouraging ones were tips/advice, business and economy, parenting and children, journalism, and hobbies.
- The following cover topics are least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, politicians and politics violence, celebrities, business and economy; the most encouraging ones were automotive, news, "other", hobbies, technology, and science.

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It should be noted that journalism, for example, as a topic that drew the attention of at least 30% of the respondents, only encouraging approx. 7% of the population to buy a magazine; the proportion was similar for business and the economy: 27% of all respondents claimed they would peruse a magazine with such a topic, but only approx. 4.5% would ultimately buy the magazine.

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The following was noted on about negative influence of cover topics:

- The motifs which would least frequently discourage people from perusing a magazine were hobbies, science, news, technology, tips/advice; the most commonly discouraging items were beauty, fashion, celebrities, religion, politicians and politics.

- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were "other", cooking, hobbies, news, and technology; the most discouraging items were nudity/sex, automotive, politicians and politics, sports, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs within the range of positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for sports, politicians and politics, and vulgarity, whereas the best results were obtained for tips/advice and parenting/children. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the only recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the hobbies, news, technology, and (in terms of the strongest impact) politicians and politics.

In this target group, one can certainly identify a strongly negative impact of political topics, which attract attention and encourage buying least frequently, while they were also the strongest discouragement from perusing a magazine (almost 37% of the respondents' selections). Polish people aged 35–44 were more often encouraged by serious topics, such as science, technology, or news, when buying magazines. They usually avoid celebrities, or even fashion/beauty,

Table 6. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (age: 35–44 years) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (35-44-year-olds) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 5.2% | Nudity/sex | 4.9% | Vulgarity | 10.7% | Hobbies | 1.5% | Other | 3.0% |
| Politicians and politics | 7.8% | Computer games | 8.0% | Politicians and politics | 12.3% | Science | 2.6% | Food/ cooking | 3.7% |
| Fashion | 10.8% | Sports | 8.2% | Violence | 13.0% | News | 2.6% | Hobbies | 11.3% |
| Automotive | 11.0% | Vulgarity | 10.5% | Celebrities | 15.2% | Technology | 3.9% | News | 11.5% |
| Sports | 11.2% | Beauty | 12.3% | Business and economy | 15.2% | Tips/advice | 5.5% | Technology | 11.8% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (35-44-year-olds) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Tips/advice | 24.3% | Tips/advice | 32.0% | Automotive | 34.3% | Beauty | 28.2% | Nudity/sex | 27.6% |
| Computer games | 27.2% | Business and economy | 32.1% | News | 38.2% | Fashion | 28.2% | Automotive | 27.7% |
| Parenting/ children | 29.2% | Parenting/ children | 32.5% | Other | 38.2% | Celebrities | 30.6% | Politicians and politics | 30.0% |
| Nudity/sex | 31.9% | Journalism | 32.8% | Technology | 39.4% | Religion | 32.6% | Sports | 45.2% |
| Food/ cooking | 33.2% | Hobbies | 37.7% | Science | 41.0% | Politicians and politics | 36.7% | Vulgarity | 49.6% |

whereas their interest would be driven toward motifs relating to parenting, children, and tips and advice.

Within the next target group (45–54 years of age), in the context of positive cover topics:

- The following items attracted the least attention: vulgarity, religion, journalism, politicians and politics, and violence; the most attention would be drawn to automotive, "other", news, real-life stories, and culture.
- The items which encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, politicians and politics, celebrities, computer games, and automotive; the most encouraging ones included parenting and children, cooking, technology, history, and religion.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and religion; the most encouraging ones were beauty, other, hobbies, tips/advice, and science.

The following was noted on about negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were news, other, tips/advice, real-life stories, and culture; the most discouraging were computer games, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, violence, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were news, science, technology, and hobbies; the most discouraging items were nudity/sex, religion, politicians and politics, computer games, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs within the positive influence of cover story topics, the results were weakest for violence, politicians and politics, and vulgarity, whereas the best results were obtained for the "other" category only (indicating a high level of diversity of the tastes within the specified target group). As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the only recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news and tips/advice, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) computer games, nudity/sex, vulgarity, politicians, and politics.

For this group, it is easier to identify the disliked items than their actual preferences. Here, the Polish people have strongly negative opinions regarding computer games, which discourage them from buying or perusing magazines. The results for religion are interesting, as it discourages almost 19% of the respondents from buying, yet about 16% of them consider this topic to be a positive influence

Table 7. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (age: 45–54 years) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (45–54–year-olds) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 9.0% | Vulgarity | 6.1% | Vulgarity | 9.5% | News | 4.4% | News | 4.7% |
| Religion | 11.6% | Politicians and politics | 9.3% | Violence | 10.0% | Other | 4.4% | Tips/advice | 5.7% |
| Journalism | 14.0% | Celebrities | 12.0% | Politicians and politics | 11.9% | Tips/advice | 5.8% | Science | 6.5% |
| Politicians and politics | 14.2% | Computer games | 12.9% | Nudity/sex | 13.9% | Real-life stories | 9.5% | Technology | 6.7% |
| Violence | 14.3% | Automotive | 14.0% | Religion | 16.3% | Culture | 9.6% | Hobbies | 6.9% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (45–54-year-olds) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Automotive | 28.7% | Parenting/ children | 23.9% | Beauty | 36.5% | Computer games | 29.6% | Nudity/sex | 18.3% |
| Other | 30.9% | Food/ cooking | 24.2% | Other | 36.8% | Nudity/sex | 35.6% | Religion | 18.8% |
| News | 32.4% | Technology | 24.3% | Hobbies | 37.5% | Politicians and politics | 43.7% | Politicians and politics | 20.8% |
| Real-life stories | 32.9% | History | 24.5% | Tips/advice | 37.6% | Violence | 43.9% | Computer games | 22.5% |
| Culture | 35.1% | Religion | 25.2% | Science | 40.3% | Vulgarity | 46.4% | Vulgarity | 29.1% |

on their purchasing decisions. Tips/advice, on the other hand, remained in an indisputably high position; not only do they not discourage sales, but they even promote them in terms of their impact on the decisions of the audiences (almost 38% of all the selections).

Within the target group (55+ years of age), in the context of positive topic influence context, the following findings were recorded:

- The following items attracted the least attention: vulgarity, nudity/sex, celebrities, politicians and politics, and journalism; the most attention would be drawn to fashion, cooking, beauty, hobbies, and "other."
- The items which least encouraged people to peruse a magazine were computer games, violence, nudity/sex, and politicians and politics; the most encouraging ones included history, journalism, science, news, and culture.
- The following cover story topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, computer games, celebrities, and

politicians and politics; the most encouraging ones were hobbies, news, cooking, real-life stories, and tips/advice.

The following was noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging for perusing were news, tips/advice, hobbies, culture, and cooking; the most discouraging were celebrities, violence, computer games, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were science, culture, history, news, and tips/advice; the most discouraging items were computer games, violence, religion, nudity/sex, religion, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs with a positive influence from the cover story, the results were weakest for nudity/sex, celebrities, violence, politicians and politics, and vulgarity, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking, hobbies, and news. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were culture, news, and tips/advice, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) computer games, violence, and vulgarity.

Computer games received strongly negative results in this target group, as they discourage people from perusing or buying magazines, while the motifs relating to family life gained a lot of interest (such as tips/advice, real-life stories, or cooking). Polish people also valued news (they peruse and buy magazines with that theme), while they ignored celebrities.

Other than the Polish people's obvious reluctance toward vulgarity, violence, and politicians and politics, the data tend to vary according to specific subgroups. Specifically, journalism or science were preferred by the 25–34 and 35–54 age groups, much less by the 55+ group, and not very interesting to the youngest respondents. Tips/advice and history prospered quite well, despite the obvious differences among the values. Business and economy had no influence over those aged 18–24, but the 25–54 age group was influenced by these topics. Computer games work poorest among the youngest and the oldest audiences, while their results were highest in the population aged 35–44. Celebrities and hobbies were among the preferred cover topics for people aged 45–54. News was least frequently mentioned by people over 55 years of age, and culture was the least popular among the Poles under 24. Cooking promoted sales among respondents aged 45 or over, but not in the 18–44 group. Technology, on the other hand, was very important for all the groups apart from the youngest and the oldest respondents. Figure 2 shows that there were many differences and hence, in order to properly
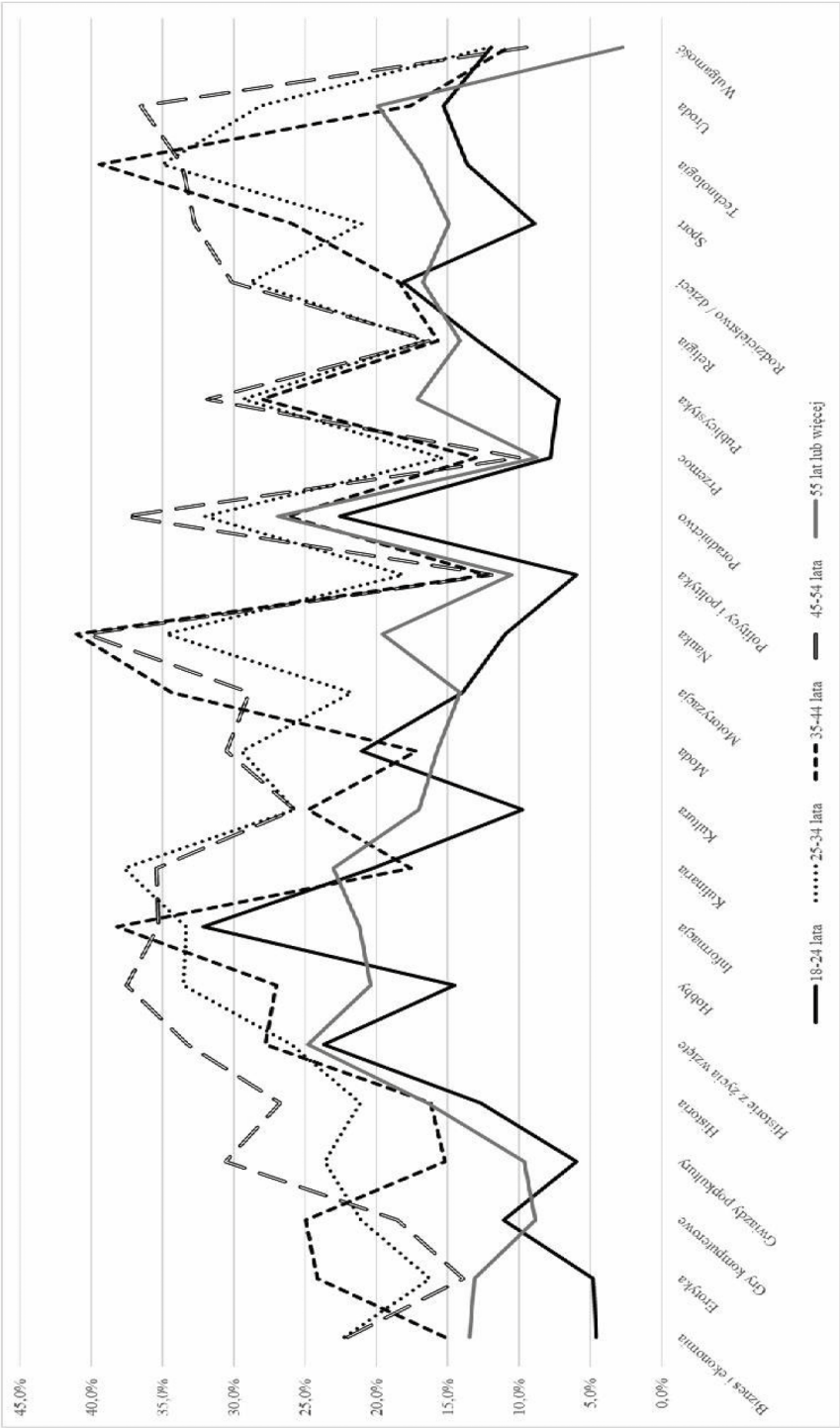
Figure 2. Preferences as to cover topics depending on gender – comparison (pro-sales aspect)
Source: own study based on research carried out on a Polish sample of N = 1094 people, selected from the Ariadna panel using the CAWI method. Responders: all respondents

Table 8. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (age: 55+) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (55+ years of age) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 6.6% | Vulgarity | 3.2% | Vulgarity | 2.8% | News | 4.9% | Science | 1.4% |
| Nudity/sex | 14.7% | Computer games | 10.7% | Violence | 8.7% | Tips/advice | 7.6% | Culture | 1.9% |
| Celebrities | 16.4% | Violence | 11.9% | Computer games | 8.9% | Hobbies | 8.5% | History | 2.1% |
| Politicians and politics | 18.6% | Nudity/sex | 13.2% | Celebrities | 9.6% | Culture | 9.4% | News | 2.7% |
| Journalism | 19.5% | Politicians and politics | 14.8% | Politicians and politics | 10.6% | Food/cooking | 9.7% | Tips/advice | 2.9% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (55+ years of age) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Fashion | 31.5% | History | 39.7% | Hobbies | 20.4% | Celebrities | 34.5% | Computer games | 14.7% |
| Food/cooking | 31.6% | Journalism | 40.4% | News | 21.2% | Violence | 37.0% | Violence | 20.2% |
| Beauty | 32.0% | Science | 40.6% | Food/cooking | 23.0% | Computer games | 38.3% | Religion | 21.1% |
| Hobbies | 35.5% | News | 40.8% | Real-life stories | 24.8% | Politicians and politics | 42.7% | Nudity/sex | 25.4% |
| Other | 39.4% | Culture | 47.3% | Tips/advice | 26.9% | Vulgarity | 44.4% | Vulgarity | 43.1% |

benefit from the results, for example in business, one should follow the specific needs of each particular audience group.

## 3.3. Education

The results were studied from the perspective of academic qualification: primary school, secondary school, university education, and vocational training. In the first case (Table 9), in terms of a positive influence:

- The least attention was given to politicians and politics, news, vulgarity, science, and tips/advice, while the most attention was paid to parenting and children, "other", hobbies, computer games, and cooking.
- The items which least encouraged the audiences to peruse a magazine were nudity/sex, vulgarity, computer games, vulgarity, beauty, and cooking; the most encouraging ones included journalism, science, tips/advice, history, and business and economy.

Table 9. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (elementary school education) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (elementary school education) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Politicians and politics | 7.9% | Nudity/sex | 4.3% | Violence | 1.2% | News | 10.4% | Food/cooking | 10.2% |
| News | 8.2% | Computer games | 4.4% | Vulgarity | 3.8% | Journalism | 10.4% | Other | 10.2% |
| Vulgarity | 8.7% | Vulgarity | 4.9% | History | 4.2% | Hobbies | 10.4% | Technology | 11.3% |
| Science | 13.0% | Beauty | 11.3% | Religion | 4.2% | Science | 10.4% | Parenting/children | 12.4% |
| Tips/advice | 16.1% | Food/cooking | 11.4% | Culture | 6.1% | Technology | 10.4% | Fashion | 17.7% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (elementary school education) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Parenting/children | 33.4% | Journalism | 30.8% | Journalism | 21.6% | Nudity/sex | 34.2% | Real-life stories | 30.9% |
| Other | 33.6% | Science | 31.0% | Other | 26.4% | Celebrities | 35.6% | Nudity/sex | 31.1% |
| Hobbies | 34.4% | Tips/advice | 33.2% | Science | 27.8% | Vulgarity | 42.6% | Automotive | 31.9% |
| Computer games | 36.4% | History | 34.1% | Technology | 29.8% | Violence | 44.6% | Sports | 36.1% |
| Food/cooking | 39.1% | Business and economy | 35.3% | News | 37.8% | Politicians and politics | 55.0% | Vulgarity | 40.1% |

- The following cover topics are least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: violence, vulgarity, history, religion, culture; the most encouraging ones were journalism, other, science, technology, news.

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were news, journalism, hobbies, science, and technology; the most discouraging were nudity/sex, celebrities, vulgarity, violence, and politicians and politics.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were cooking, "other," technology, parenting, and fashion; the most discouraging items were real-life stories, nudity/sex, automotive, sports, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs within the range of positive influence of cover contents, the results were weakest for vulgarity, whereas the best results were obtained for science and journalism. As regards the negative influence of topics

on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the technology and (in terms of the strongest impact) nudity/sex and vulgarity.

People with an elementary-school education preferred journalism: this topic rarely discouraged them from perusing a magazine, while it did encourage them to peruse (almost 31%) and to buy (almost 22%). A presentation of news and science can be equally effective. Computer games, even though they are effective in attracting the audience's attention, do not lead to buying or even perusing a magazine (only 4.4% of all the respondents would do so). The poor score of politics should be noted (as many as 55% of respondents would not choose a magazine for that reason), as well as celebrities (35.6% of respondents would not peruse the inside of a magazine for that reason).

In the case of secondary school graduates (Table 10), in terms of a positive influence of cover topics:

- Vulgarity, politicians and politics, violence, nudity/sex, and computer games attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to sports, hobbies, tips/advice, news, and the "other" category.
- The items which encourage the audiences least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, violence, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, and religion; the most encouraging ones included history, culture, news, technology, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and religion; the most encouraging ones were parenting and children, cooking, real-life stories, beauty, and tips/advice.

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:

- The motifs which would least frequently discourage people from perusing a magazine were news, hobbies, tips/advice, science, and culture; the most commonly discouraging items were nudity/sex, computer games, violence, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were science, news, tips/advice, other, and technology; the most discouraging items were politicians and politics, religion, nudity/sex, violence, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs with a positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, politicians and politics, violence, nudity/sex, and religion, whereas the best results were obtained for tips/advice and news. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the only

Table 10. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (high school education) in a nation-wide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (high school education) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 8.7% | Vulgarity | 4.8% | Vulgarity | 7.4% | News | 7.1% | Science | 4.1% |
| Politicians and politics | 15.8% | Violence | 13.2% | Violence | 13.4% | Hobbies | 9.1% | News | 4.4% |
| Violence | 16.3% | Nudity/sex | 13.6% | Politicians and politics | 14.5% | Tips/advice | 9.7% | Tips/advice | 4.7% |
| Nudity/sex | 16.9% | Politicians and politics | 14.0% | Nudity/sex | 15.2% | Science | 10.2% | Other | 5.2% |
| Computer games | 17.6% | Religion | 16.2% | Religion | 15.5% | Culture | 12.3% | Technology | 5.2% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (high school education) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Sports | 23.6% | History | 31.9% | Parenting/children | 26.7% | Nudity/sex | 31.7% | Politicians and politics | 18.7% |
| Hobbies | 27.4% | Culture | 32.1% | Food/cooking | 28.1% | Computer games | 32.2% | Religion | 22.2% |
| Tips/advice | 27.7% | News | 33.4% | Real-life stories | 28.3% | Violence | 33.2% | Nudity/sex | 22.6% |
| News | 29.6% | Technology | 34.6% | Beauty | 28.8% | Politicians and politics | 37.0% | Violence | 23.9% |
| Other | 31.5% | Science | 36.1% | Tips/advice | 29.5% | Vulgarity | 43.4% | Vulgarity | 35.7% |

recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news, tips/advice, science, and (in terms of the strongest impact) violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and vulgarity. Members of the group discussed here are certainly aware of what they dislike: they point to motifs which at the same time least attract their attention or encourage them to peruse or buy, and therefore discourage them from perusing and buying. These were vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, and nudity/sex. The Polish high school graduates were almost identical in their opinions, which should therefore be taken into account by publishers targeting their marketing at this group. Further, tips/advice was a positively perceived topic: it attracts attention and encourages people to buy a magazine (usually without perusing it first); this motif can be seen as provoking spontaneous purchases.

In the case of university graduates (Table 11), in terms of a positive influence of cover topics:

Table 11. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (university education) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (university graduates) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 10.8% | Vulgarity | 6.1% | Vulgarity | 6.4% | Hobbies | 6.7% | Science | 3.6% |
| Violence | 17.4% | Violence | 8.0% | Violence | 10.5% | News | 7.2% | Culture | 5.1% |
| Nudity/sex | 17.8% | Computer games | 11.7% | Politicians and politics | 13.5% | Science | 7.8% | Hobbies | 5.1% |
| Religion | 17.9% | Nudity/sex | 13.3% | Computer games | 14.3% | Culture | 11.3% | News | 5.2% |
| Politicians and politics | 17.9% | Politicians and politics | 14.7% | Nudity/sex | 14.7% | Tips/advice | 12.9% | History | 7.2% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (university graduates) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Food/cooking | 25.9% | Business and economy | 31.2% | Food/cooking | 27.4% | Computer games | 31.5% | Religion | 21.7% |
| Culture | 27.0% | Technology | 32.9% | News | 28.3% | Politicians and politics | 31.7% | Politicians and politics | 22.2% |
| Hobbies | 27.5% | Culture | 34.5% | Science | 28.7% | Nudity/sex | 35.1% | Computer games | 22.9% |
| News | 32.7% | History | 34.6% | Tips/advice | 29.2% | Vulgarity | 36.0% | Violence | 27.7% |
| Other | 35.7% | Science | 35.8% | Hobbies | 30.2% | Violence | 36.5% | Vulgarity | 40.7% |

- The least attention was given to vulgarity, violence, nudity/sex, religion, and politicians and politics; the most attention went to cooking, culture, hobbies, news, and "other."
- The items which least encourage people to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, violence, computer games, nudity/sex, and politicians and politics; the most encouraging ones included business and economy, technology, culture, history, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, computer games, and nudity/sex; the most encouraging ones were cooking, news, science, tips/advice, and hobbies.

The following was noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging topics stopping people from perusing were hobbies, news, science, culture, and tips/advice; the most discouraging

were computer games, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, vulgarity, and violence.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were science, culture, hobbies, news, and history; the most discouraging items were religion, politicians and politics, computer games, violence, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs with a positive influence from the covers, the results were weakest for vulgarity, politicians and politics, violence, nudity/sex, and computer games, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking, culture, hobbies, news, and science. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news, hobbies, culture and science, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) violence, politicians and politics, computer games, and vulgarity.

This target group was also strongly opinionated in its rejection of such motifs as violence, vulgarity, politics, nudity/sex, and computer games. The last item did not encourage the respondents to peruse or buy a magazine practically at all; moreover, it is a strong demotivating agent (over 31% would not peruse magazines under this influence, and almost 23% would not buy it). Religion was also an issue: almost 18% of university graduates in Poland pay attention to it, but almost 22% would not buy a magazine with this theme. According to expectations, the high-ranking topics were science (encouraging people to peruse the inside of a magazine and to buy that magazine) or news (which, in turn, attracts attention and encourages people to buy). Furthermore, the respondents appreciated culture as well; even though it is not present among the motifs which encourage people most to buy a magazine, it certainly does not discourage them from doing so, and moreover, it attracts attention and promotes perusing the magazine.

In the case of people with vocational training, in terms of a positive influence of cover topics:
- The following items attracted the least attention: vulgarity, sports, religion, politicians and politics, and cooking; the most attention would be drawn to hobbies, fashion, beauty, news, and "other."
- The items which encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, politicians and politics, computer games, nudity/sex, and religion; the most encouraging ones included tips/advice, technology, cooking, culture, and parenting and children.

- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and computer games; the most encouraging ones were automotive, cooking, news, hobbies, tips/advice, and real-life stories.

The following was noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- People were least discouraged from perusing by real-life stories, news, tips/advice, culture, and hobbies; the most discouraging topics were journalism, computer games, politicians and politics, violence, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were tips/advice, hobbies, real-life stories, science, and technology, while the most discouraging items were nudity/sex, computer games, religion, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.

Table 12. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (vocational training) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (vocational training) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 10.1% | Vulgarity | 8.0% | Vulgarity | 17.3% | Real-life stories | 5.8% | Tips/advice | 4.2% |
| Sports | 13.2% | Politicians and politics | 8.5% | Violence | 19.2% | News | 6.8% | Hobbies | 5.1% |
| Religion | 14.4% | Computer games | 9.2% | Politicians and politics | 21.7% | Tips/advice | 8.0% | Real-life stories | 5.4% |
| Politicians and politics | 15.3% | Nudity/sex | 9.6% | Nudity/sex | 22.2% | Culture | 10.6% | Science | 6.1% |
| Food/ cooking | 15.6% | Religion | 13.3% | Computer games | 24.2% | Hobbies | 10.9% | Technology | 6.8% |
| Top 5 responses indicating specific motifs (vocational training) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Hobbies | 25.2% | Tips/advice | 24.9% | Automotive | 33.9% | Journalism | 28.4% | Nudity/sex | 17.0% |
| Fashion | 25.7% | Technology | 27.4% | Food/ cooking | 34.9% | Computer games | 29.1% | Computer games | 19.1% |
| Beauty | 26.3% | Food/ cooking | 28.6% | Hobbies | 36.4% | Politicians and politics | 33.1% | Religion | 21.4% |
| News | 31.5% | Culture | 28.8% | Tips/advice | 40.5% | Violence | 34.3% | Politicians and politics | 21.4% |
| Other | 33.4% | Parenting/ children | 32.0% | Real-life stories | 45.4% | Vulgarity | 40.7% | Vulgarity | 23.9% |

Among the recurring motifs in the range of a positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, politicians and politics, religion, nudity/sex, and computer games, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking, hobbies, and tips/advice. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the real-life stories, tips/advice, and hobbies, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) politicians and politics, computer games, and vulgarity.

Poles with vocational training were encouraged to peruse or buy by topics that are closer to real-life, such as tips/advice, cooking, real-life stories, or parenting. This group certainly does not prefer vulgarity or politicians/politics; however, violence, for example, which is seen so critically by other respondents, does not discourage the members of this group from buying so much (interestingly, more than 19% of the subjects declared that violence encourages them to buy a magazine). The nudity/sex choices are equally interesting: 17% of the respondents would not buy a magazine for this reason, but about 22% would.

In terms of Polish people's education, the differences between the answers given by the particular groups were also clear (assembled in Fig. 3). For example, topics such as cooking, automotive, real-life stories, or celebrities were preferred by people with vocational training, while those who have finished elementary school are least susceptible to those. The latter buy magazines under the influence of the news, where the results were highest among all the groups of subjects. Technology was also a topic they found interesting: this result was equal to or higher than the responses given by other subjects. The Poles with a basic education were not encouraged by history, business, culture, or religion – these motifs scored lowest here. On the other hand, the responses from high school or university graduates were similar[6] – significant differences mainly appeared with such topics as real-life stories, fashion, sports, or beauty (these were preferred by high school graduates in Poland). University graduates would buy magazines slightly more frequently when encouraged by hobbies, news, and – to a small extent – journalism.

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[6] It should be added here that people above the high school education level continue to believe that the press still has a culture-generating function (they give the press equal or higher scores than those given to television), which can also be highly relevant in the context of choosing cover story topics. See Poleszczuk and Anuszewska 5.
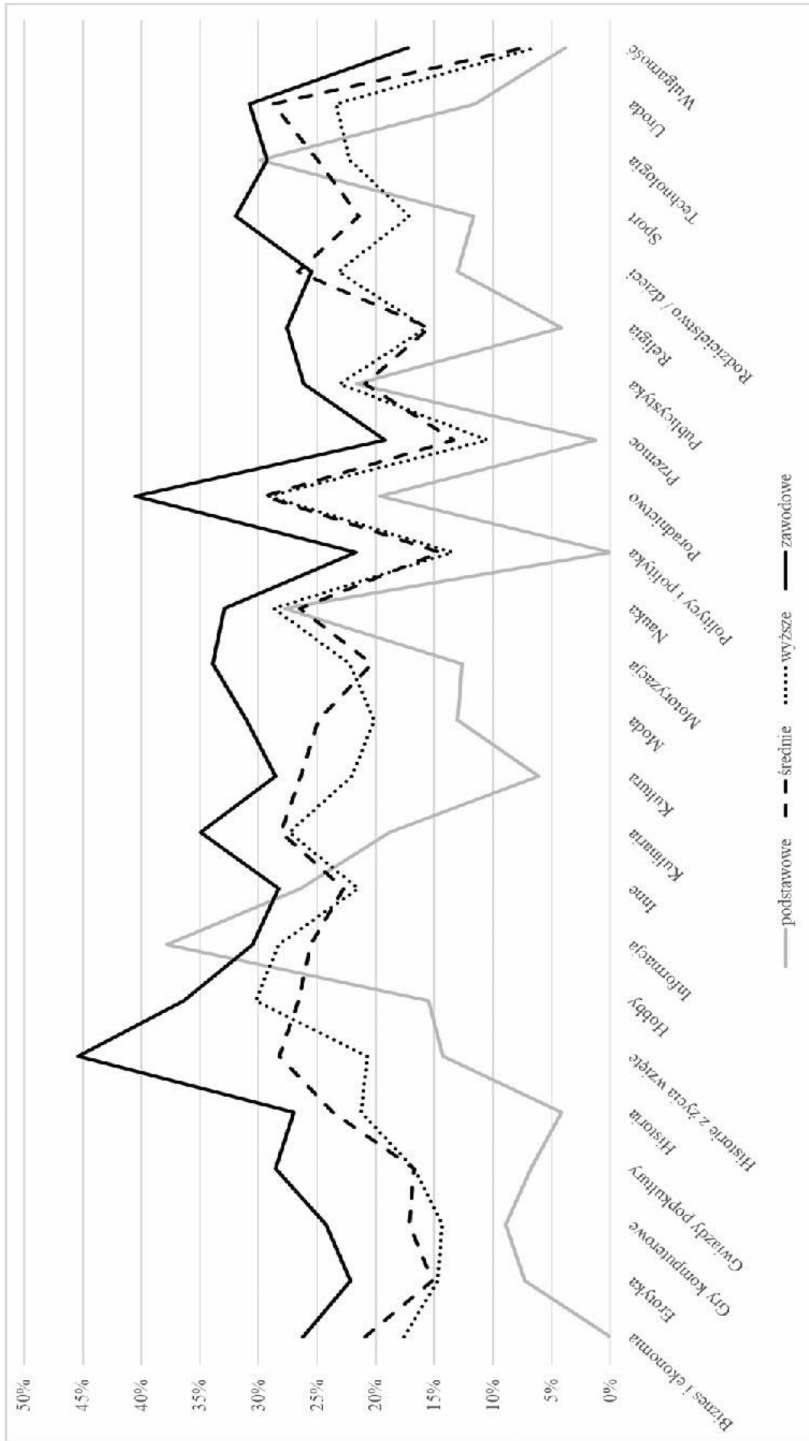
Figure 3. Preferences as to cover topics depending on education – comparison (pro-sales aspect)
Source: own study based on research carried out on a Polish sample of N = 1094 people, selected from the Ariadna panel using the CAWI method. Responders: all respondents

There are certain topics outside all the subjects' ranges of preference. These included politicians and politics, violence, and vulgarity (and, with the exception of people with vocational training, the list also includes religion, sports, and automotive). One more conclusion can be drawn from the diagram: The Polish people with vocational training are most often encouraged by cover topics, as evidenced by the results (which are highest with almost every motif).

### 3.4. Place of residence

The results were studied in terms of five subgroups of place of residence: the countryside, small towns, medium-sized towns, larger towns, and big cities. In the first case (Table 13), in terms of a positive influence from cover topics:

- Sports, vulgarity, politicians and politics, religion, and science attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to cooking, hobbies, parenting and children, culture, and "other."
- The items which encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, nudity/sex, violence, religion, and politicians and politics; the most encouraging ones included business and economy, history, hobbies, tips/advice, and science.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and religion; the most encouraging ones were other, real-life stories, cooking, technology, and news.

The following was noted about the negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were tips/advice, news, hobbies, parenting, and real-life stories; the most discouraging were nudity/sex, vulgarity, religion, violence, and politicians and politics.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were cooking, hobbies, other, science, and parenting; the most discouraging items were politicians and politics, religion, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs in the positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, religion, nudity/sex, violence, and politicians and politics, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking and hobbies. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were tips/advice and hobbies, as well

Table 13. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (place of residence: countryside) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (countryside) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Sports | 11.3% | Vulgarity | 5.5% | Vulgarity | 12.1% | Tips/advice | 13.2% | Food/cooking | 2.6% |
| Vulgarity | 11.9% | Nudity/sex | 6.5% | Violence | 12.8% | News | 13.5% | Hobbies | 6.1% |
| Politicians and politics | 14.0% | Violence | 9.8% | Politicians and politics | 13.6% | Hobbies | 14.8% | Other | 6.1% |
| Religion | 15.3% | Religion | 10.7% | Nudity/sex | 14.4% | Parenting/children | 15.1% | Science | 6.3% |
| Science | 16.1% | Politicians and politics | 10.8% | Religion | 14.7% | Real-life stories | 16.0% | Tips/advice | 6.8% |
| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (countryside) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Food/cooking | 25.9% | Business and economy | 24.2% | Other | 30.2% | Nudity/sex | 33.5% | Politicians and politics | 20.7% |
| Hobbies | 28.7% | History | 24.7% | Real-life stories | 31.0% | Vulgarity | 37.8% | Religion | 21.1% |
| Parenting/children | 29.0% | Hobbies | 24.8% | Food/cooking | 31.7% | Religion | 38.2% | Nudity/sex | 22.2% |
| Culture | 29.7% | Tips/advice | 28.5% | Technology | 35.4% | Violence | 40.7% | Sports | 24.5% |
| Other | 31.9% | Science | 30.1% | News | 36.4% | Politicians and politics | 40.9% | Vulgarity | 32.7% |

as (in terms of the strongest impact) nudity/sex, vulgarity, religion, and politicians and politics.

As it transpires from these results, people living in rural areas do not find it difficult to determine the motifs which discourage them most from buying or perusing magazines (the items selected as demotivating agents would often get poor results in terms of a positive impact on the respondents' reactions). This group of items includes violence, vulgarity, politicians, and nudity/sex. Religion is an interesting option here, as it would rather discourage people from choosing a magazine (approx. 38% of all the answers), while for about 21% of the respondents it would be a good cause for not buying (it encourages about 15% of the subjects to make a purchase). This result is puzzling, as it might seem that the people from the countryside would point to this topic as being among the most effective ones in promoting sales. As a matter of fact, this is a stereotypical attitude,

the case for which is slightly undermined by the reports illustrating the decreasing tendencies for religious affiliation in rural areas (the documents confirm that the percentage of believers is still highest in rural areas, yet certain changes have been observed in this respect for a few years).[7] People living in the countryside respond positively to tips and advice, which would encourage them to peruse a magazine. Furthermore, members of this subgroup had a preference for news and technology, which again has nothing in common with the schematic perception of such regions.[8]

In the case of small towns (Table 14), in terms of a positive influence of cover topics:

- Vulgarity, politicians and politics, business and economy, celebrities, and sports attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to hobbies, religion, parenting and children, cooking, and the "other" category.
- The items which encourage the audiences least to peruse a magazine were computer games, nudity/sex, beauty, violence, and vulgarity; the most encouraging ones included journalism, news, technology, science, and hobbies.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: politicians and politics, vulgarity, computer games, violence, and journalism; the most encouraging ones were beauty, culture, automotive, news, and tips/advice.

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were news, hobbies, science, tips/advice, and other; the most discouraging were violence, fashion, nudity/sex, celebrities, and politicians and politics.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were parenting, fashion, technology, science, and news; the most discouraging items were beauty, sports, business, economy, computer games, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs with a positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, and computer

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[7] CBOS, "Religijność" 2.

[8] For example, where rural areas are associated with education, a lot of reading or innovation only to a moderate extent. See CBOS, "*Wieś polska*" 8–9.

Table 14. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (place of residence: small towns) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (small towns) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 2.6% | Computer games | 7.0% | Politicians and politics | 7.7% | News | 7.7% | Parenting/ children | 7.5% |
| Politicians and politics | 6.1% | Nudity/sex | 9.1% | Vulgarity | 8.3% | Hobbies | 8.3% | Fashion | 10.4% |
| Business and economy | 8.3% | Beauty | 11.8% | Computer games | 10.5% | Science | 9.5% | Technology | 11.9% |
| Celebrities | 9.0% | Violence | 12.5% | Violence | 11.0% | Tips/advice | 11.0% | Science | 12.5% |
| Sports | 11.2% | Vulgarity | 12.9% | Journalism | 12.1% | Other | 11.5% | News | 12.7% |
| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (small towns) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Hobbies | 19.7% | Journalism | 30.1% | Beauty | 29.4% | Violence | 33.2% | Beauty | 29.2% |
| Religion | 20.2% | News | 30.6% | Culture | 29.5% | Fashion | 34.9% | Sports | 29.8% |
| Parenting/ children | 21.3% | Technology | 31.4% | Automotive | 29.7% | Nudity/sex | 35.3% | Business and economy | 30.6% |
| Food/ cooking | 25.8% | Science | 33.3% | News | 36.1% | Celebrities | 40.1% | Computer games | 32.3% |
| Other | 28.7% | Hobbies | 33.5% | Tips/advice | 46.7% | Politicians and politics | 42.2% | Vulgarity | 43.6% |

games, whereas the best results were obtained for hobbies and the news. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news and science, whereas there were none in terms of the strongest impact (it is the first time it occurred throughout the research project).

People from small towns presented an interesting attitude towards religion, which both attracts their attention and does not incite negative reactions (such as discouragement from buying or perusing a magazine). Compared to other audience groups, politicians scored slightly higher, too – they do discourage people from perusing magazines (approx. 42%), yet they are outside the top five topics discouraging people from buying (like violence, which discourages readers from perusing, but much less so from buying). Computer games or vulgarity were perceived less favorably, the latter finding already becoming a standard for the study.

For small towns (Table 15), in terms of a positive influence of cover topics:

- Vulgarity, politicians and politics, religion, violence, and real-life stories attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to history, beauty, news, hobbies, and the "other" category.
- The items which encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, nudity/sex, computer games, violence, politicians and politics, and violence; the most encouraging ones include tips/advice, parenting, cooking, technology, and culture.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, celebrities, politicians and politics, and computer games; the most encouraging ones were tips/advice, cooking, hobbies, science, and real-life stories.

Table 15. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (place of residence: medium-sized towns) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (medium-sized towns) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 12.2% | Vulgarity | 3.8% | Vulgarity | 6.8% | News | 4.6% | Culture | 3.8% |
| Politicians and politics | 16.4% | Nudity/sex | 10.1% | Violence | 13.1% | Hobbies | 6.0% | News | 3.9% |
| Religion | 17.6% | Computer games | 10.2% | Celebrities | 14.1% | Culture | 9.0% | Tips/advice | 4.3% |
| Violence | 17.6% | Violence | 15.3% | Politicians and politics | 14.1% | Tips/advice | 9.3% | Science | 4.4% |
| Real-life stories | 20.3% | Politicians and politics | 16.3% | Computer games | 14.4% | History | 10.0% | Technology | 4.5% |
| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (medium-sized towns) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| History | 30.6% | Tips/advice | 34.8% | Tips/advice | 24.0% | Computer games | 35.0% | Politicians and politics | 17.7% |
| Beauty | 30.8% | Parenting/children | 35.6% | Food/cooking | 24.0% | Politicians and politics | 35.5% | Violence | 17.9% |
| News | 35.1% | Food/cooking | 36.3% | Hobbies | 24.8% | Violence | 36.0% | Computer games | 19.6% |
| Hobbies | 36.2% | Technology | 37.9% | Science | 25.9% | Nudity/sex | 36.9% | Religion | 20.8% |
| Other | 38.2% | Culture | 40.6% | Real-life stories | 27.9% | Vulgarity | 47.6% | Vulgarity | 29.6% |

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were news, hobbies, culture, tips/advice, and history; the most discouraging were violence, computer games, politicians and politics, violence, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.
- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were culture, news, tips/advice, science, technology; the most discouraging items were politicians and politics, violence, computer games, religion, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs within the positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, and computer games, whereas the best results were obtained for hobbies, cooking, and tips/advice. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news, tips/advice, and culture, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) computer games, politicians and politics, violence, and vulgarity.

We can conclude that people living in medium-sized towns do not really like computer games, which discourage them from perusing a magazine (35%) or buying it (almost 20%). In this group, the responses were highly scattered; sometimes the gap between the categories with most and least responses was not significant – for example, real-life stories attracted the attention of approx. 20% of the subjects, whereas approx. 28% of them would buy a magazine under this influence.

It is possible to conclude that people living in medium-sized towns do not really prefer computer games, which discourage them from perusing a magazine (35%) or buying it (nearly 20%).

> In this group, the responses were highly scattered; sometimes the gap between the categories with most and least responses was not significant...

For people living in larger towns (Table 16):

- The least attractive items were vulgarity, nudity/sex, politicians and politics, celebrities, and journalism; the most attractive ones included news, sports, cooking, technology, and real-life stories.

- The items which least encouraged people to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, politicians and politics, violence, computer games, and real-life stories; the most encouraging ones included science, history, business and economy, journalism, and culture.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, religion, politicians and politics, and history; the most encouraging ones were beauty, science, "other", cooking, and technology.

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:

- The least discouraging from perusing were news, hobbies, science, other, and journalism; the most discouraging were nudity/sex, computer games, violence, vulgarity, and politicians and politics.

Table 16. Topics of cover stories vs. demographic category (place of residence: larger towns) in a nationwide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (larger towns) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 7.1% | Vulgarity | 4.5% | Vulgarity | 4.0% | News | 1.6% | Technology | 5.0% |
| Nudity/sex | 12.9% | Politicians and politics | 9.6% | Violence | 6.8% | Hobbies | 4.6% | Computer games | 9.9% |
| Politicians and politics | 14.1% | Violence | 10.3% | Religion | 7.5% | Science | 5.4% | Food/ cooking | 11.9% |
| Celebrities | 15.8% | Computer games | 11.6% | Politicians and politics | 10.0% | Other | 5.6% | Science | 13.6% |
| Journalism | 16.3% | Real-life stories | 13.6% | History | 11.4% | Journalism | 5.7% | News | 14.1% |
| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (larger towns) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| News | 33.2% | Science | 30.5% | Hobbies | 26.0% | Nudity/sex | 26.3% | Politicians and politics | 24.7% |
| Sports | 33.7% | History | 32.7% | Science | 26.1% | Computer games | 32.9% | Religion | 26.1% |
| Food/ cooking | 34.7% | Business and economy | 32.7% | Other | 27.1% | Violence | 38.5% | Real-life stories | 28.7% |
| Technology | 37.1% | Journalism | 34.9% | Food/ cooking | 27.2% | Vulgarity | 41.5% | Nudity/sex | 32.0% |
| Real-life stories | 37.5% | Culture | 36.4% | Technology | 29.2% | Politicians and politics | 41.7% | Vulgarity | 43.0% |

- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were technology, computer games, cooking, science, and news; the most discouraging items were politicians and politics, religion, real-life stories, nudity/sex, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs within the positive influence of cover topics, the results were weakest for vulgarity, violence, and politicians and politics, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking, technology, and science. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news and science, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) nudity/sex, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.

People in larger towns tended to choose technology, which attracts their interest (approx. 37%) and encourages them to buy (approx. 29%) – it may be assumed that magazines are purchased on impulse, without any link to the process of perusing the contents. The cooking motif can also be positioned in a similar context (nearly 35% of all the respondents notice such cover topics, whereas slightly over 27% buy a magazine). Respondents from this group have no preference for religion (26% are discouraged by this topic) or real-life stories (the values are interesting here: apparently, the motif attracts the attention of almost 38% of readers, but it discourages almost 29% from buying).

For people living in larger towns (Table 17):
- Vulgarity, history, science, automotive, and violence attracted the least attention, while the most attention was given to fashion, business and economy, news, beauty, and the "other" category.
- The items which encourage people least to peruse a magazine were vulgarity, computer games, politicians and politics, nudity/sex, and sports; the most encouraging ones included science, tips/advice, culture, technology, and history.
- The following cover topics were least encouraging for people to purchase a magazine: vulgarity, violence, politicians and politics, religion, and technology; the most encouraging ones were sports, real-life stories, science, hobbies, and automotive.

The following was noted about negative influence of cover topics:
- The motifs which would least frequently discourage people from perusing a magazine were news, hobbies, culture, science, and fashion; the most

Table 17. Topics of cover topics vs. demographic category (place of residence: cities) in a nation-wide sample of Poles (N = 1,094) selected by Panel Ariadna with the CAWI method Responders: all subjects

| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (cities) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Vulgarity | 7.5% | Vulgarity | 4.0% | Vulgarity | 6.3% | News | 5.7% | Tips/advice | 5.8% |
| History | 12.8% | Computer games | 10.9% | Violence | 7.1% | Hobbies | 6.3% | News | 6.5% |
| Science | 15.1% | Politicians and politics | 11.8% | Politicians and politics | 11.1% | Culture | 7.0% | Culture | 7.2% |
| Automotive | 16.0% | Nudity/sex | 13.4% | Religion | 11.6% | Science | 8.5% | Science | 7.2% |
| Violence | 16.7% | Sports | 16.0% | Technology | 13.5% | Fashion | 9.8% | Hobbies | 7.7% |
| Bottom 5 responses indicating specific motifs (cities) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Attract my attention | | Encourage me to peruse the magazine | | Encourage me to buy the magazine | | Discourage me from perusing the magazine | | Discourage me from buying the magazine |
| Fashion | 25.8% | Science | 34.4% | Sports | 30.9% | Nudity/sex | 24.2% | Nudity/sex | 20.6% |
| Business and economy | 26.3% | Tips/advice | 37.5% | Real-life stories | 32.5% | Computer games | 25.5% | Celebrities | 20.6% |
| News | 28.4% | Culture | 43.6% | Science | 34.7% | Violence | 30.0% | Religion | 22.3% |
| Beauty | 32.3% | Technology | 45.5% | Hobbies | 35.0% | Politicians and politics | 40.0% | Violence | 24.6% |
| Other | 36.1% | History | 45.7% | Automotive | 35.3% | Vulgarity | 50.9% | Vulgarity | 31.4% |

commonly discouraging items were nudity/sex, computer games, violence, politicians and politics, and vulgarity.

- The worst demotivators for buying a magazine were news, culture, science, and hobbies; the most discouraging items were nudity/sex, celebrities, religion, violence, and vulgarity.

Among the recurring motifs with a positive influence of cover contents, the results were weakest for vulgarity, violence, and politicians and politics, whereas the best results were obtained for cooking, technology, and science. As regards the negative influence of cover topics on audience responses, the recurring items (in terms of the weakest impact) were the news and science, as well as (in terms of the strongest impact) nudity/sex, violence, and vulgarity.

The inhabitants of cities do not pay attention to science, yet they peruse and buy magazines with this topic on the cover (almost 35% of the respondents). Sports, on the other hand, would not so much promote perusing the contents as have a positive effect on buying (nearly 31%), while automotive attracts the
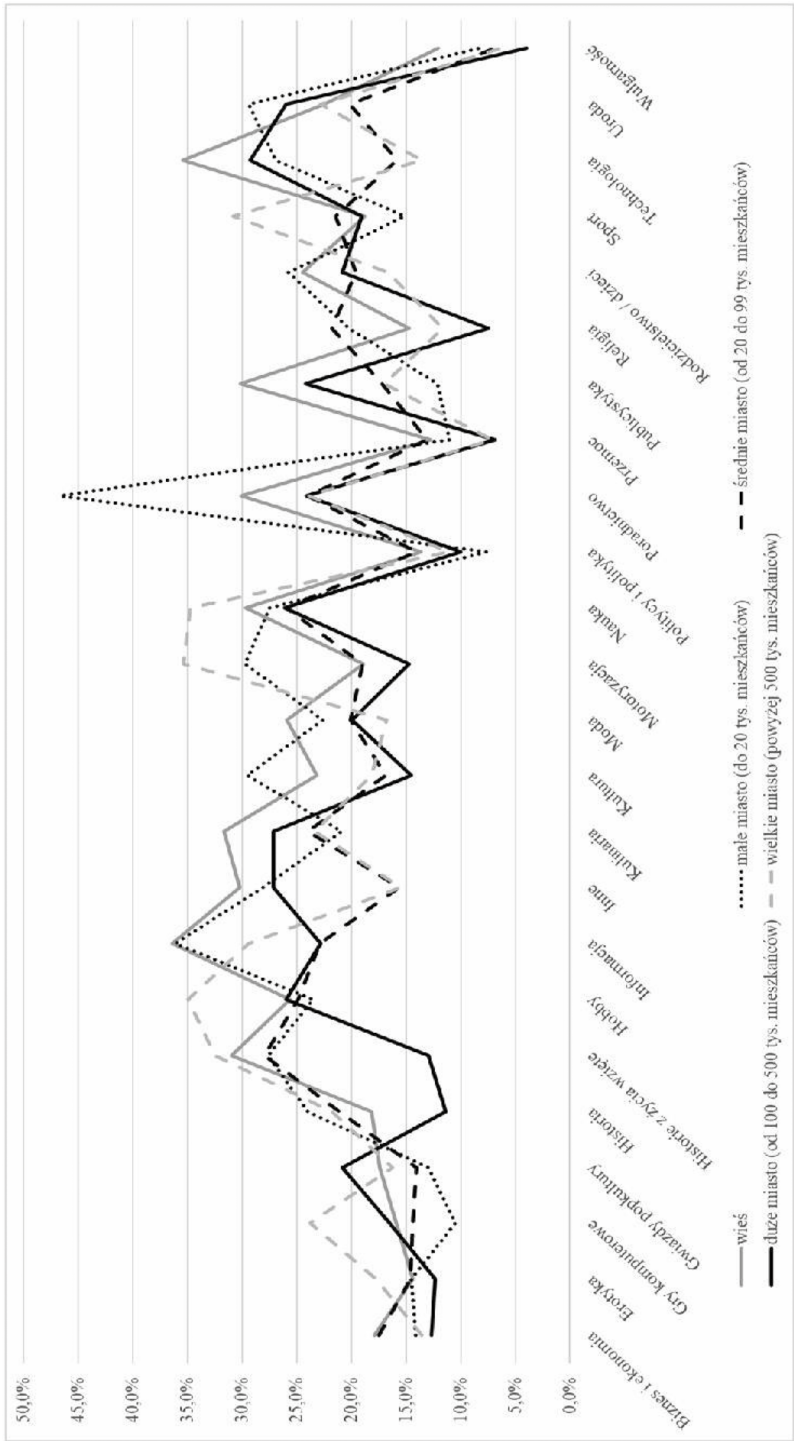
Figure 4. Preferences as to cover topics depending on the place of residence – comparison (pro-sales aspect)
Source: own study based on research carried out on a Polish sample of N = 1094 people, selected from the Ariadna panel using the CAWI method. Responders: all respondents

attention of almost 17% of the subjects, but it provokes purchasing decisions in more than 35% of them. Religion was problematic, as it encourages 11.6% of subjects to peruse a magazine, yet it discourages more than 22% of them from buying.

In terms of the places of the residence of Polish people, the differences between the answers given by the subgroups were also clear (assembled in Fig. 4). Specifically, the inhabitants of cities would most often be influenced by computer games when buying (they are also the most willing to choose sports), and the lowest frequency was recorded among people from smaller locations (the remaining subjects chose relatively similar answers). Technology was perceived differently, as it was the least interesting for residents of cities and medium-sized towns, and the most interesting for those in rural areas and small towns. There was also a difference in approach toward motoring (preferred in the urban areas, followed by small towns, and least popular in cities), journalism (chosen by people in the countryside, followed by larger towns, medium-sized towns, and cities), or religion (ranking lowest among the inhabitants of larger towns and cities, but highest among the people from medium-sized towns). Tips/advice received good scores, as well (the best results in the countryside and small towns), as well as science (which was preferred by urban inhabitants). There were also certain motifs that were ranked worst: vulgarity, violence, and politicians and politics.

## CONCLUSION

All the preset objectives have been achieved in this paper. First of all, the responses of Polish audiences to cover topics were examined and the most popular/least popular topics were demonstrated in terms of gender, age, education, and place of residence of the subjects. The types of reactions are presented as well, with documented positive effects (encouraging to peruse and buy or attracting attention) and negative influence (discouraging from buying or perusing a magazine) of 24 motifs. In addition, every chapter ends with a summary of the specific category, presented as a description and in graphic form, aggregating the sales-promoting impact of the particular issue.

The author confirmed her hypothesis: "The choice of cover topic content is linked to Polish audience responses, encouraging or discouraging the audience from further contact with a specific issue of a magazine, where the readers'

decisions depend on their affiliation to the specified demographic categories (which is directly related to publishing business)." Even though specific data are presented within the paper (tables), it should be emphasized that the responses given by the various demographic groups would vary, particularly in terms of the positive effect of cover topics. A lot of consistency was noted among the motifs discouraging people from perusing or buying a magazine (these were politicians and politics, violence, vulgarity, and nudity/sex); however, as already noted[9] – a negative selection also carries an important message, i.e., a warning of items which would definitely not help to sell a magazine. This is another argument to support the extensive adjustment of cover topics to target groups' preferences, not only by choosing the topic components properly, but also by selecting the right contents. In this perspective, the author is of the opinion that the results are relevant from a business standpoint: firstly, they indicate the tastes of audiences according to their specific demographic category. Secondly, they indicate content which is worth displaying on covers to attract the readers' attention, to encourage them to peruse or buy, or at least not to discourage them.

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[9] See Jupowicz-Ginalska 196–205.

## About the autor

Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska, Ph.D. - one of the few researchers in Poland specializing in mass media marketing. Other topics within her area of research interest include contemporary trends in marketing communication, transmedia storytelling, popular culture, show business marketing, and manipulation. She has authored numerous research papers about media marketing, while her book entitled "Media Marketing" received a key award. She actively participates in national and international conferences, appears in the media as an expert in the field of media and pop culture (including Polsat News 2, Polsat, Polsat Cafe, TVP1, "Rzeczpospolita", "Party"). She is also professionally active in the practical sphere: for 15 years she has been associated with the promotional industry (mainly public relations). She worked, among others in PR agencies, media corporations and public administration. From 2010 to 2017, she was the Dean's Plenipotentiary for Promotion of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science of the University of Warsaw and the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies of the University of Warsaw, incl. organizing the most important events building the image of the Faculty.

**Monika Kaczmarek-Śliwińska**

**University of Technology in Koszalin**

# Managing crisis communication in the social media space in the context of hate speech

## Zarządzanie komunikacją kryzysową w przestrzeni mediów społecznościowych w kontekście zjawiska hejtingu

**ABSTRACT**

Crisis management is often hampered by the occurrence online aggression. Environment of new media and social media is characterized by features which in not-supporting conditions can effectively threaten the crisis management. Hence essential an awareness of the phenomenon, but also potential effects and ways of reacting are being shown. It is worthwhile also having a fact that a presence and an activity are missing the person on the account or isn't guaranteeing the organization avoiding connected problems from online aggression.

**KEYWORDS:**
online aggression, crisis management, social media

**ABSTRAKT**

Zarządzanie sytuacją kryzysową często utrudnione jest przez zjawisko hejtingu, który staje się głównym lub dodatkowym aspektem negatywnych zjawisk w otoczeniu osoby lub organizacji. Środowisko nowych mediów i wyrosłych na ich gruncie mediów społecznościowych charakteryzują się cechami, które w warunkach niesprzyjających mogą skutecznie zagrażać zarządzaniu sytuacją kryzysową. Stąd istotną okazuje się świadomość zjawiska, ale także potencjalne skutki oraz sposoby reagowania. Warto też mieć na względzie fakt, że brak obecności i aktywności osoby lub organizacji nie gwarantuje uniknięcia problemów związanych z hejtingiem.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
hejting, zarządzanie sytuacją kryzysową, media społecznościowe

"Hate speech" is defined as any of the various forms of online utterances or publications that are considered aggressive because of the form and/or a lack of reasonable argumentation. Most of them are texts (such as comments), but there are also graphics (e.g., famous memes). This phenomenon can refer to, or affect, anyone who communicates through the Internet, whether anonymous, private individuals, organizations, celebrities, famous institutions, or well-known brands.

While reading or viewing a post, it is often difficult to distinguish between hate speech and criticism. There are two main attributes that constitute the difference: the reasoning and the form.

Firstly, criticism should refer to facts and events, often documented or verifiable with citations of or links to sources of information. Secondly, criticism is supposed to be polite and non-infringing.

On the other hand, hate speech communicates unsubstantiated claims and can be overly emotional, rude, or even illicit (infringing on the rights of the addressee).

Now, from the point of view of the audience, these two types of utterances can have different effects. An attack on a public figure, institution, or organization can propagate to broad circles of the public and can cause anything from a minor problem to a major crisis.

An "ordinary problem" caused by hate speech for an organization, brand, or public figure can be considered a natural part of their being public, but a "crisis," defined as a "time when the mission, vision, or goals of the entity or person affected becomes threatened,"[1] can put an end to their very existence or career. It is important to notice the point at which a problem turns into a crisis because this escalation calls for managerial measures that are crucial for protecting the future, the image, and the reputation of the entity or person concerned.

Therefore, distinguishing between hate speech and criticism and between its consequences (problem or crisis) is essential to managing the content of social media by those affected by them.

## LEGAL ASPECTS

The hate speech we encounter online takes two main forms: text (comments) and graphics (memes).

Janina Fras distinguishes between the following four types of hate speech:[2]

1.  Abuse – an utterance or behavior that offends another person
2.  Insult – a negative opinion expressing emotions or values, intended to humiliate another person

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[1] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 13.
[2] Dobek-Ostrowska, Fras, and Ociepka, 96.

3. Libel – a negative opinion about another person, containing a false claim that inspires moral contempt
4. Invective – an offensive allegation, abuse, or insult

This classification applies both to textual and graphic assaults.

Each of them can be recognized as an offence according to the Criminal Code or the Civil Code: an offense against dignity, an offense of defamation, or an offense against personal rights.

According to the Criminal Code:[3]

- Art. 212(1): Whoever slanders another person, a group of persons, an institution, a corporate entity, or an unincorporated organization for a behavior or attribute that can humiliate them in view of the public opinion or can put them at risk of losing trust that is essential for a job, profession, or activity is punishable by a fine or restriction of liberty.
- Art. 212(2): If the perpetrator of an act defined in Art. 212(1) committed the act using mass media, they are punishable by a fine, restriction of liberty, or a prison sentence of up to one year.
- Art. 213(2): None of the acts defined in Articles 212(1) and 212(2) is recognized as an offense if the publicly raised or broadcast allegation is true and the allegation:
  – involves a public officer or
  – serves to protect a legitimate public interest.

Where an allegation involves private or family life, the proof of truth may be sought only where the allegation was supposed to prevent a threat to the life or health of a person or to the depravation of a minor.

- Art. 214: The exclusion of incrimination under Art. 213 is not a waiver of the criminal liability of a perpetrator attracted by the form of raising or broadcasting the allegation.

Further, violations involving hate speech may be prosecuted under the Civil Code,[4] Articles 23 and 24 of which refer to personal rights:

- Art. 23 names the following personal rights: "health, freedom, dignity, free conscience, name or nickname, image, privacy of correspondence,

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[3] Criminal Code.
[4] Civil Code.

inviolability of home, and creativity (in the domains of research, art, inventions, and improvements).

- Art. 24 defines legal measures against the violation of these rights:
  - Art. 24(1): A person whose personal right has been, or may become, threatened by someone else's activity may demand discontinuation of the activity, unless it is not unlawful. If a violation has been committed, the person may demand the perpetrator to cause remedial of the consequences of the violation, particularly by making a statement adequate in terms of its content and form. The person may also demand pecuniary compensation for themselves or a contribution to a specific social purpose, pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Civil Code.
  - Art. 24(2): If the violation of the personal right has caused damage to property, the person harmed may demand a remedy on general principles.
  - Art. 24(3): The foregoing regulations are without prejudice to the rights provided for in other laws and regulations, including, without limitation, the Copyrights Law or the Inventions Law.

Going back to the Criminal Code:

- Art. 190 applies to offenses against freedoms and covers much more than the forms of hate speech described above:
  - Art. 190(1): Whoever threatens another person by expressing an intention to commit an offense to the detriment of that person, or their most closely related person, and the threat is perceived as reasonably credible, is punishable by a fine, restriction of liberty, or a prison sentence of up to 2 years..
  - Art. 190a(1): Whoever, by persistent harassment of another person or their most closely related person, gives them a sense of being threatened, justified by the circumstances, or significantly invades their privacy, is punishable by a prison sentence of up to 3 years.
  - Art. 190a(2): Whoever uses an image or the private data of another person and purports to be that person to cause damage to property of, or personal harm to, that person is liable to the same punishment.[5]

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[5] Criminal Code.

- Art. 216 refers to the offense of defamation:
  - Art. 216(1): Whoever insults another person, whether in the person's presence or absence, either publicly or with an intention to reach the person with the insult is punishable by a fine or restriction of liberty.
  - Art. 216(2): Whoever insults another person through mass media is punishable by a fine, restriction of liberty or a prison sentence of up to 1 year.[6]

As shown above, contrary to common opinions, there are legal instruments in place against hate speech. Thus, a person or organization harmed by it should know how to use these remedies; for instance, which law to choose (criminal or civil) or how to formulate claims.[7] Unfortunately, most social campaigns speaking on the subject are confined to just defining and condemning hate speech, without mentioning the legal instruments and the consequences of using them.

## HATE SPEECH-FACILITATING FEATURES OF THE NEW MEDIA

Among all media where hate speech is theoretically possible, it is the "new" or "social" ones, with their mass availability and the unprecedented freedom that give the problem a menacing dimension. Martin Lister and his colleagues pointed out three particularly important attributes of social media[8]: digitality, transformability, and interactivity of information. Going further, Adam N. Jonson described a phenomenon of disinhibition, Danah Boyd studied online audiences, and Michel Walrave and Wannes Heirman described aggressive behavior in terms of the "cockpit effect."

The first of Lister's attributes, digitality, means that information exists in an intangible form; in contrast to its physical manifestations, it can be stored more conveniently and for longer, it is generally accessible, and it is cheaper to produce and modify or otherwise process.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] For more see Głowacka 11.

[8] Pyżalski 20–24.

> Because it exists in a digital form, information is transformable, which is the second attribute of social media highlighted by Lister and his team. Particularly graphic content is susceptible to manipulation into hate speech because photographs and other images can be easily downloaded (often in violation of copyrights) and reworked or captioned with text.

And, finally, we have the third of Lister's attributes, interactivity, as a hate speech facilitator. Jan van Dijk examines four facets of interactive communication: multilateralism, the free choice of synchronicity or asynchronicity, the free choice of the role (sender/recipient), and the mental link with interaction partners (the understanding of their actions and contexts).[9] Although these possibilities might seem to benefit both parties of a communication exchange evenly, van Dijk notes that "the balance of power tips in favor of the recipient" yet admits that "this potential is not used to the full in the contemporary digital media, so the sender's message continues to prevail."[10]

Two other, apparently conflicting, possible facilitators of hate speech are "dissociation" and "networking." The former means that the communicating parties do not meet face to face, instead they use electronic devices (PCs, smartphones, or tablets) to share content in cyberspace.[11] The latter consists in the building of a networked public,[12] centered around an online forum, such as a social networking service. In certain circumstances, this public can be an ideal environment for hate speech.

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[9] Ibidem 23.
[10] van Dijk 23.
[11] Pyżalski 25.
[12] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 67.

Next, there is the disinhibition phenomenon described by A. N. Jonson. This situation occurs when "a user behaves in cyberspace as he or she would have never done in the 'real reality' because of the assumed or actual absence of social control mechanisms."[13] This sense of liberty, combined with a (mostly false) presupposition of anonymity and the "cockpit effect," can make a perpetrator of hate speech feel safe and confident that his or her actions will go unpunished.[14]

The cockpit effect takes its name from the experience of bomber pilots.[15] Just as the pilots could not see the vastness of the suffering and destruction they caused, someone who spreads hate speech cannot see the suffering of his or her victim.

## HOW HATE SPEECH CAN CAUSE A SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS

Certain relationships developing in online social media can lead to a crisis. Manuel Castells notes that the Internet is a low-cost environment for disseminating information or doing business, offering a lot of opportunities for sharing contacts and ideas within online communities, which would be difficult to achieve in the real world, even if ties established between the communicating parties are weak and can be broken at any time.

According to Edwin Bendyk, even these weak ties can bond online communities and provide people of different social statuses with access to information.[16] In many cases such a social mix could not come to existence in the real world. The disadvantage for, or potentially a threat to, a person or organization who maintains a social platform is that this "social inclusion" can extend to ill-disposed or even hateful individuals. Accordingly, the prevention and management of crises triggered by hate speech should be strongly focused on screening the public.[17]

Potential perpetrators of hate speech can come from inside or outside an organization, so both proactive and reactive crisis management measures should include fact-finding about those who wish to join a social medium.

Krystyna Wójcik defines the environment of an organization in the context of image-building activities as "a public that already is, or may become, important for

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[13] Pyżalski 42.
[14] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 67.
[15] Pyżalski 138.
[16] Szpunar 100.
[17] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 67.

the organization because of the public's influence on the achievement of targets by the organization and because of the organization's reliance on contributions from, and resources of, the public."[18] It is obvious that such an environment can attract individuals or groups pursuing incompatible goals or representing unacceptable attitudes, from the point of view of the organization, which can invite criticism or even hate speech.[19] And the environment can evolve, not only because of the churn within the environment, but as a consequence of a change within the organization itself, creating a headache for those within the organization who are responsible for public communication and image protection. In fact, any instance of inspiring a member of the public, for better or worse, can trigger an attack on the organization. This is why the environment should be monitored to minimize such risks.[20]

Again, this monitoring of the environment for the risk of hate speech can follow the classic, most natural, distinction between the "inner" and the "outer."[21] The inner environment is involved in the pursuit of the organization's goals, typically formally (e.g., through an employment contract). It consists of people who work today and who worked in the past for the organization at any level, in any internal unit, as well as their relatives and friends. Hateful utterances made by them are often provoked by communication problems within the organization. Members of the outer circle have a different kind of relationship with the organization: it is mostly informal and based on either congruent or conflicting interests. The latter scenario can inspire criticism or, in the event of an escalation of bad feelings, stir hate speech.

## SUGGESTION FOR A HATE SPEECH TYPOLOGY

An attempt to identify causes of hate speech and find countermeasures could benefit from a systematization of the phenomenon.[22] Among many possible factors, the following three have been considered as an input to such a study: subject matter, focus, and authors.

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[18] Wójcik 64.

[19] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 60.

[20] Ibid.

[21] For more on the environments in crisis management see Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations organizacji" 61–64.

[22] Compare the proposed typology to the typology of victims and the nature of political content of social media in Kaczmarek-Śliwińska and Pyżalski (65).

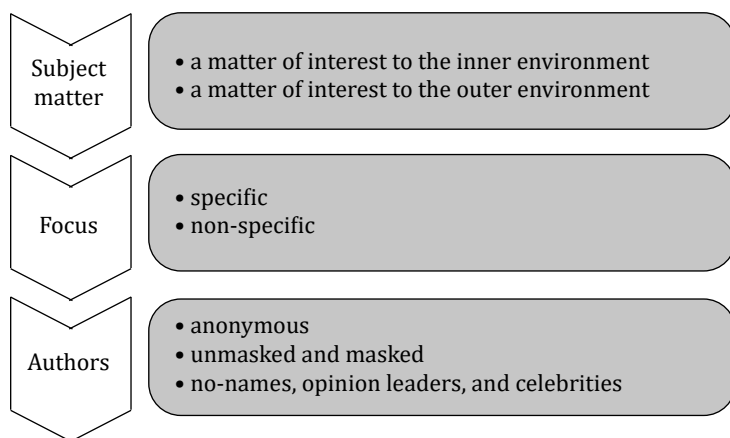| | |
|---|---|
| Subject matter | • a matter of interest to the inner environment<br>• a matter of interest to the outer environment |
| Focus | • specific<br>• non-specific |
| Authors | • anonymous<br>• unmasked and masked<br>• no-names, opinion leaders, and celebrities |

Fig. 1. Hate speech typology based on subjects, targets, and sources

The subject matter can depend on the mutual proximity of the communicating parties (the arms' length as a cut-off measure) and on the focus. Considering the former criterion, the subject matter can be

- interesting to the inner environment, which is mostly the case with less controversial matters that are important to a small group of stakeholders or
- interesting to the outer environment, typically engaging for a large community and having the potential to get through to "institutional media" and spark a crisis.

The focus can be placed on

- a single or specific matter or
- a number of matters, in which case the wider public may be concerned and the risk of a crisis may be higher.

Finally, from the point of view of hate speech authorship, we might be dealing with different identity profiles, such as

- anonymous authors (e.g., on a forum that does not require registration), typical for online mimicry and mimesis,[23]

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[23] Online communication mimicry is defined as the online activities of individuals with a concealed or false identity, who intend to inspire a behavior or conviction in the target audience. Online communication mimesis consists of building a non-authentic environment in online communications. These activities are used to pass unethical communication aimed at discrediting a brand, product, service, person, or organization (Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations w przestrzeni" 63–66).

- people with either genuine or false identities (e.g., on a service that requires registration), or
- individuals unknown to the larger community, opinion leaders, and public figures (celebrities, politicians, journalists, etc.).

## HOW TO MANAGE HATE SPEECH IN A CRISIS

Emergency planning for a crisis should consider the consequences of exposure to hateful utterances and both preventive and corrective measures.

Possible consequences include all kinds of problems that an utterance can cause to a person, brand, organization, or institution. While crisis managers do their best to silence the problem, the perpetrator works to the contrary. In an extremely bad scenario, the crisis can escalate and spread onto other business areas or reverberate loudly in institutional and/or social media.[24]

An outbreak of hate speech should trigger preventive and corrective measures, which can throw a wrench in the works of the organization. The first response can be often handled by a dedicated unit (such as the PR team), but if the situation turns into a real crisis, the organization will need to establish a crisis center or appoint a dedicated team of experts.

However, no matter how well-qualified or skillful the problem-handlers may be, they will work under pressure and stress because their actions will be reactive, that is, unplanned for. Also, they will be distracted from their core activities, which can have a disorganizing or otherwise detrimental effect on the overall performance of the organization.

A hateful attack can harm the image of the organization. If we define an "image" as a totality of the public perception of the organization within the time continuum, each "hate point" can send the ratings down. If such hate events are sporadic, the damage can be made up for by an appropriate anti-crisis campaign. It is worse if such exposure is permanent or planned for (for instance by the competition): this can destabilize, harm, or even ruin an image.

Hate speech can affect not only the future, but also the present of the organization. If the organization takes measures that benefit its standing, but encounters internal and/or external opposition, the organization may revise its action plan and take a step back.

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[24] Note the variety of attitudes of the recipients towards situations that can turn into a crisis and the causes and consequences of scandals. (See Kepplinger 12).

One more interesting thing worth mentioning about hate speech is the fact that an organization may face it even if it is absent in social media. Indeed, the level of activity of an organization in social media can be correlated to the magnitude of the risk, but inactivity or even absence is not a guarantee that there will be no hate speech; therefore, in either case, media should be monitored for hate events and their trends.

Regarding responses to hate, there are no proven patterns of action that could eliminate the phenomenon or even mitigate the reputational damage caused by it. Such activities, well-judged to maximize synergies and eliminate incoherencies, should be a part of the crisis management plan.

The following, for instance, can be done to face a crisis caused by or contributed to by hate speech:

- making no visible response for the inner and/or outer environment: working "in the background," with no comments or statements to silence the attackers
- substituting the subject matter, raising a different topic as a shield
- demanding that the perpetrator (or social medium operator) remove specific comments or block the commenting feature (under Art. 21 of the Criminal Code)

One final thing worth considering is outsourcing a crisis management consultant to eliminate the risk of acting under emotions.

## CONCLUSION

Apart from creating a number of great opportunities, the "new media," including social media, have brought to the world new phenomena with the potential of steering a person or organization into a crisis.

Hate speech is impossible to eradicate. Safeguards – such as social media policies, education campaigns, or legal instruments – are often ineffective because social media is an environment full of chaos and, incidentally, the same chaos is the most noxious part of any crisis.[25] This is why the keywords include prevention, immunization against hate speech, media monitoring, early warning, and countermeasures.

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[25] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska, "Public relations w przestrzeni" 129–139.

To cite the classic authors:

- Stanisław Lem: "Each new technology, without any exception, has the heads of benefits and the tails of new, hitherto unknown sores."
- Henry Jenkins: "When people take media into their own hands, the results can be wonderfully creative; they can also be bad news for all involved."

This is why we should learning about the new media and be consistent in identifying good communication practices.

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## About the autor

Monika Kaczmarek-Śliwińska is a doctor of economic sciences; a communications and PR coach and consultant (image-building strategies, conventional and new media, and crisis management); the author of 3 monographs on online PR and more than 90 research and journalistic papers; and a coordinator and member of communication and new media research teams. Visit www.monikakaczmarek-sliwinska.pl, paczakutek.blox.pl, or monikakaczmareksliwinska.natemat.pl for more information.

**Witold Kawecki**

**Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie**

# The Commercialisation of Contemporary Culture

## Komercjalizacja współczesnej kultury

### ABSTRACT

Nowadays, consumption is becoming the actual state of culture, in which human activity is subordinated to the market. This process is sometimes referred to as the supermarketisation and commercialisation of culture. It is the transfer of behaviour patterns that are typical of economic relationships onto the cultural behaviours of people. The commercialisation of culture means guiding oneself in life by the criteria of trade, in which artistic goods and services are treated like commodities. From such a perspective, culture becomes a matter of taste, personal choice determined by nationality, wealth, social class, and education and is more and more strongly shaped by the market with all the resulting consequences.

**KEYWORDS:**
cultural supermarket, consumerism, globalisation, cultural identity, dialogue, evangelisation of cultures

### ABSTRAKT

Konsumpcja staje się współcześnie rzeczywistym stanem kultury, w której aktywność człowieka podporządkowana jest rynkowi. Proces ten nazywany bywa supermarketyzacją i komercjalizacją kultury. Jest to przeniesienie wzorów zachowań charakterystycznych dla relacji ekonomicznych na kulturowe zachowania ludzi. Komercjalizacja kultury jest kierowaniem się w życiu kryteriami handlowymi, w których dobra i usługi artystyczne traktowane są jak towary. W takim ujęciu kultura staje się kwestią gustu, osobistego wyboru warunkowanego przez przynależność narodową, stopień zamożności, otoczenie społeczne, wykształcenie i jest coraz bardziej kształtowana przez rynek z wszystkimi negatywnymi konsekwencjami tego stanu rzeczy.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
supermarket kultury, konsumpcjonizm, globalizacja, tożsamość kulturowa, dialog, ewangelizacja kultur

Contemporary researchers analysing culture more and more frequently come to the conclusion that societies are currently developing *horizontal* communication, neglecting its *vertical* dimension. One example of such a social group is young people, who are able to quite easily communicate with their peers, but who have more difficulty communicating with the generation of their parents and

grandparents. As described by the sociologist of culture and social communication Kazimierz Krzysztofek, youths are ceasing to understand the code of their own culture, which is the basic condition for establishing contact through communication and generating community bonds.[1] The cultural code is destroyed by the fact that everything labelled "cultural industry and services" (audio-visual production, the tourist industry, the heritage industry, history, science, sex, cuisine, travel, style, fashion, the art of presentation, beauty, sport, etc.) is being included in the commercial circulation. This takes place through the media, which fall into their own trap, creating a categorical imperative and the dictate of promotion – which sometimes transforms into the cult of marketing – selling any cultural production without selecting a more ambitious repertoire, promoting advertisements. All this is a symptom of the destruction of the cultural code, without which these actions themselves stop being understandable.

The rapid development of the *push*[2] culture – as it seems – refers to the intergenerational transmission of culture and changes the cultural policy from the traditional one to a multimedia culture. On a mass scale one can notice the encroachment of the consumption worldview, which presents values that are practically tangible[3] as values that are ultimate (not of a transcendent nature). The consequence of this state is the marketisation and commercialisation of culture. Contemporary society is frequently referred to as a consumption society because consumerism is its dominating characteristic; it is the remedy to fear (consumption allows one to forget about problems which should be faced); it is a lifestyle focussed around fashion, which is defined and imposed through the media (the desire for commodities is a product of society); it is a form of spending one's free time (shopping is becoming not only a form of entertainment, so-called shoppertainment, but it is also becoming a mini-holiday);[4] it is the pursuit of pleasure

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[1] Krzysztofek, Kazimeirz. "Ekspansja kultury mediów a międzypokoleniowy przekaz kultury." *Kultura polska w nowej sytuacji historycznej*, edited by Jerzy Damrosz, Warsaw, 1998, p. 39.

[2] T. Goban-Klas (1995) uses the name *push culture* in place of the *culture of choice* (*pull*) to denote what is contemporarily happening in culture, i.e. moving from creativity to pure production, from creating value to producing value. Cf. Krzysztofek 45.

[3] Zeidler-Janiszewska, A. "Formy praktyki artystycznej wobec przemian współczesnej kultury." *Kultura polska w nowej sytuacji historycznej*, edited by Jerzy Damrosz, Warsaw, 1998, p. 118.

[4] Visiting shopping centres which sprawl out over hectares is like arriving in a city or country with all possible attractions available in miniature. Consumption is being surrounded

(hedonism); it is a way of fulfilling one's civic duties (a person who does not consume is not a good citizen); it is a kind of a new religion; and finally, it is an ideology which is strongly linked with lifestyle (people purchase new things not because they really need them, but in order to be compliant with the social standard in terms of possessions).

> One can say that consumption is becoming the actual state of culture, in which whole areas of human activity are subjected to the market. Thus, we are dealing here with the supermarketisation and commercialisation of culture, i.e. with the transfer of behaviour patterns which are typical of economic relationships (purchase/sales, supply/demand, customer/service) onto the non-economic behaviours of people, including those related to culture.

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with the atmosphere of magic, which is why sales must be accompanied by various kinds of attractions, in order to charm the customer.

[5] Szlendak, T. *Supermarketyzacja. Religia i obyczaje seksualne młodzieży w kulturze konsumpcyjnej*, Wrocław, 2004, pp. 58–100.

goods and services undertake work when it is profitable for them. In other words, commercialisation means treating cultural goods and services as commodities which, through various institutions, are supposed to reach end-consumers.[6]

In such a context, culture is becoming a problem to an increasing degree. On the one hand, each of us identifies with a specific national culture (even if we change our place of residence); on the other hand, however, we reach for various elements from the global *cultural supermarket*. Culture is more and more becoming a matter of taste, a personal choice, though after all, still a choice that is conditioned by one's nationality, wealth, social class, education, etc. Moreover, today, culture is more and more strongly shaped by the market. We are not talking here only about the market of material objects, but also about the cultural supermarket, which can provide us with information and cultural products of any provenance. This supermarket has got a clear influence on people and their cultural identity; Theodore H. Von Laue even calls it "the human condition at the end of the 20th century". The author writes in reference to this topic that

> in the world which combines all cultures, religions, and historical experiences which have been gathered for thousands of years, the whole cultural heritage of humanity is visible. (...) In great metropolises, religions and lifestyles from various parts of the world are competing with each other. The world has become a department store stuffed with valuables created by people. (...) The contemporary generation are people who were born to buy – or at least watch the shop windows in the huge world supermarket, in which the selection of commodities constitutes a challenge and overwhelms the buyer.[7]

In the cultural supermarket seemingly everyone can do what they are willing and believe in anything they want – though on the condition that they do not directly harm other people. In the cultural supermarket we theoretically experience the freedom of choice, although, objectively, this choice is not free at all.[8] At the

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[6] In reference to commercialisation in culture, see B. Tatarewicz, "Komercjalizacja w kulturze w krajach gospodarki rynkowej. Czy bez uszczerbku dla sztuki?" *Komercjalizacja w kulturze. Szanse i zagrożenia*, edited by S. Golinowska, Warsaw 1992, pp. 150–158.

[7] von Laue, Theodore H. *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective*, New York, 1987, p. 339.

[8] Mathews, Gordon. *Supermarket kultury. Kultura globalna a tożsamość jednostki*, Warsaw, 2005, p. 249.

moment of making the choice we have already been shaped by the existing world (i.e. by culture). This world, to a large extent, influences the way we try to shape our life. The community in which we live – i.e. politics, economy, morality, and religion – greatly determines our choices.

The principles of this specific supermarket's functioning are frequently similar to the principles for the market of material goods. One can say that there is strict correlation between a material commodity and a product of culture. The assortment of the products on offer changes and the "cultural products" also change. The societies whose material products are easily accessible on global markets have got a greater influence on culture, although this is not necessarily very high culture. One example may be the strong American market, which significantly influences the type of music which is popular and promotes film stars, art celebrities, and sport stars in other parts of the world. The source of this phenomenon – according to many researchers analysing culture – is capitalism and the economic transformations associated with it. It is capitalism, through the logic of money, supply, demand, and the constant circulation of commodities and services, that creates the contemporary – postmodern – cultural condition.[9] In the cultural supermarket, just like in the market, there is no longer any other criterion than money, choice, and taste. A person does not feel like a creator. He or she is only a consumer.

The conclusion for a recipient of culture which comes to mind based on our analysis is the ability to properly choose and select from the overproduction of the cultural offer. Choice is necessary here in order to have the feeling of satisfaction and not become lost in the world of contradictory sensations, feelings, and experiences, to be able to create (and this is becoming increasingly problematic) one logical and satisfying coherence of life, cutting off from its fragmentariness, episodic nature, and ambiguity.[10]10 Let us add, at the same time, that good choices are possible with an appropriate value hierarchy. The recipient of culture has to possess a sense of being rooted, a foundation, a "key", according to which he or she wants – and knows why he or she wants – to choose. In the cultural

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[9] Ibidem p. 259.

[10] Chrostowska, K. "Problem z określeniem własnej tożsamości w społeczeństwie postindustrialnym." *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo w dobie globalizacji*, edited by A. Bączkiewicz, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 219–225.

supermarket people do not stop looking for their identity, including that associated with nationality and the homeland. The homeland is the place towards which we feel the greatest sense of belonging. The supermarket greatly weakens that rooting in the homeland. As Gordon Mathews writes in his renowned book,

> national cultural identity undergoes erosion under the influence of the cultural supermarket. The symptoms of the activity of the market which may be considered as violating the sense of national cultural identity are visible and audible in the whole world: American music on the radio, Japanese comic books flooding East Asia, Walkmans, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Michael Jordan as symbols of a global reach.[11]

> The supermarketisation of culture, i.e. downgrading it to the level of the market, deprives its recipients of experiencing authentic "astonishment" and "mystery", a reflection on life and the world. It can also form the belief that a person does not actually belong to any culture and has the right to choose who he or she wants to be. As a result of supermarketisation, culture becomes culture without effort, ludic culture, i.e. fun, infantile entertainment, the pursuit of sensation.

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[11] Mathews 37.

already mentioned, the cultural industry, which guides itself according to the principles of supply and demand, produces cultural goods in accordance with the tastes of the recipients – though not necessarily ones which are valuable in the artistic sense – and creates a specific type of human in culture. According to the typology of Zygmunt Bauman,[12] it creates a *tourist*, for whom culture is collecting sensations; a *stroller*, for whom culture is a gigantic container filled with trinkets; a *vagabond*, who spends his or her life wandering and does not even know what he or she is looking for; and a *player*, who cannot divide necessity from coincidence, value from anti-value. However, let us ask, is this authentic creation of culture? Is the market supposed to be the only place where a person can discover his or her identity and integrity? The answer is clear. Only by creating authentic culture does a person develop themselves and their nature.[13] People are capable of humanising the world, that is, creating a new synthesis of spirit and matter which does not exist in nature.

One of the characteristic features of the turn of the millennium is the search for one's own cultural identity. Perhaps this is taking place in the face of the omnipresent globalisation trends and the pressure from the giant pop culture. The contemporary individual feels uprooted and lonely, anonymous and alienated, not only in the scope of his or her internal life, but also in the geographical sense, in which the known cultural and territorial borders are becoming blurred. Irrespective of the unavoidable universality and pan-culturalism, globalisation and the homogenisation of contemporary processes, a person has the need to belong to a concrete culture of a local nature. It needs to be noted that identity and the sense of possessing one's "own home"[14] are important in every cultural space.

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[12] Bauman, Zygmunt. *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 7 ff.

[13] The questions of how to create such a culture, how to bring up to transforming cultures, and how to learn cultural animation, are interestingly answered by Mario Pollo, a specialist in cultural animation, in the book *Animazione culturale. Teoria e metodo*, Rome 2002.

[14] P. Sztompka mentions two meanings of the cultural notion of *home*. In the first sense, it is an organisational and institutional structure which may be the object of "institutional engineering", intentional construction, in accordance with the adopted design, as, for example, the functioning of institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, European Courts, the European Central Bank, etc. In the second meaning, it is a community of values, patterns, rules, ideals, beliefs, aspirations, and dreams shared by a given community – for example, by Europeans – and these values constitute the domain of culture (Sztompka, P. "Integracja europejska jako szansa kulturowa. O moralności, tożsamości i zaufaniu." *Kondycja moralna społeczeństwa polskiego*, edited by J. Mariański, Krakow, 2002, p. 505.

A human deprived of their roots will not be fully human. The desire and the need of their soul is to be of the same identity with the heritage of their "own home".[15] In this context the process of globalisation – which is present in all aspects of the life of the contemporary person, demonstrating strong tendencies towards unification – constitutes a threat to the sense of that identity.

Therefore, we stand today in the face of another threat in the cultural space, a threat that is strictly associated with the one discussed above, namely, with the hybridisation of a global culture. This idea, as in case of the biological notion of a hybrid as being a rather undefined form, is understood as a culture which is not the continuation of any previous culture, but only a melting pot, a blend of various cultures of an undefined quality. Without doubt, the hybridisation of global culture is a process which raises justified concerns about cultural identity in the face of the invasion of pop culture, Americanisation, and the McDonaldisation of the world. Heading towards a global culture for everyone may turn out to be heading towards a culture for nobody. The domination of global culture may lead individuals and whole nations to abandon their own culture, the unique spirit which is present in every language, and from "atmospheres" and products which are specific to various nations.[16] It is worth adding that another element which may be a threat is the separation of the cultures of the globalisation period. This threat is caused by the encounter between different cultures – natural for globalisation – which, instead of leading to an exchange and permeation of content from one culture to another, much more strongly leads to a "clash of civilisations", perpetual conflict and confrontation between cultures, and to cultural separatism. Such separatism is detrimental for cultural dynamism – as indicated by L. Dyczewski – because no culture is self-generated. The development of culture requires contact with many cultures, a dialogue with them; otherwise the result is stagnation.[17]

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[15] For John Paul II, culture is a "human's home" which defines behaviour and lifestyle, a whole set of factors achieved by generations, the awareness of particular people, and the values cultivated by them – customs, language, art, literature, institutions, and structures of social life. It is an organised system of social coexistence with its rights and principles of development.

[16] Stolarczyk, I. *Dylematy globalizacji. Kryteria wartościowania zmian społecznych w kontekście nauczania społecznego Kościoła*, Tarnów, 2003, pp. 148–151. See also *Religia i kultura w globalizującym się świecie*, edited by M. Kempny and G. Woroniecka, Kraków, 1999.

[17] Dyczewski, L. "Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa w globalizującym się świecie." *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2000 issue 1, p. 32.

Thanks to the process of globalisation – perhaps slightly paradoxically due to the elements which we have noted earlier – cultures also get closer to one another according to the principle of intercultural dialogue. This dialogue[18] leads to mutual enrichment, therefore, also to the dynamisation of culture-creating actions, highlighting the fundamental values which are common to everyone; on the other hand, it allows one to experience one's distinctiveness, uniqueness, and identity. Becoming familiar with other cultures does not have to mean separation and a sense of threat to ones' own culture. To the contrary, it may be an inspiring meeting which broadens one's knowledge and cognition. Therefore, for culture, globalisation may represent not only a challenge, but – in Bauman's understanding – a "matrix of possibilities" leading to creating unique identities according to the principle of different choices and combinations. This matrix is abundant cultural material from which local cultures may draw. However, this will not homogenise cultures, but will reinforce cultural diversity.[19] In such a case sociologists apply the notion of "cultural diffusion", which consists in the controlled flow of content and values, absorbing or rejecting the influences from other cultures in order to adopt the proper aspects of globalisation.[20] This matrix of possibilities and cultural diffusion is the basis for intercultural dialogue, which is the ability of the cultures of the world to coexist. Thanks to this dialogue, cultures reinforce their importance and their influence on society and, at the same time, strengthen their own identity through contact with other values, ideas, and experiences.[21] The creative dialogue between cultures leads to cultural pluralism, which is not a vision of global culture, but the coexistence of various cultures and the opportunity for constant enrichment of one's own culture. It has to be said that in this aspect globalisation may play a positive role of a tool that unifies cultures around common values.

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[18] "Społeczna nauka Kościoła pojmowana jako dialog." *Chrześcijanin w świecie*, 1971 issue 3, pp. 10–11.

[19] Bauman, Zygmunt. "Globalizacja, czyli komu globalizacja a komu lokalizacja." *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1997, issue 3, p. 61.

[20] Sztompka, P. "Teorie zmian społecznych a doświadczenia polskiej transformacji." *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1994, issue 1, p. 12.

[21] Stolarczyk, I. *Dylematy globalizacji. Kryteria wartościowania zmian społecznych w kontekście nauczania społecznego Kościoła*, Tarnów, p. 216.

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> It appears as the result of grassroots initiatives
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Culture cannot be imposed top-down. It appears as the result of grassroots initiatives and spontaneous experiences, traditions, and behaviours – the ritualisation of everyday life. However, it is possible to influence culture by working on its identity through literature, art, philosophy, journalism, etc. The pluralism of national cultures has developed on the foundation of the heritage of values rooted in the Gospel, giving rise to the civilisation of nations and creating their identity. Identity is understanding one's own roots, traditions, and spirituality. As we have demonstrated, the European democracy, the social and political order, are based on the Gospel. From no lesser thinkers than Spinoza, Descartes, Kierkegaard, Shakespeare, Dante, Norwid, Dostoevsky, and Ortega y Gasset, Europe drew its spirit from the Gospel and the Blessings, from the abundant activity of the Church and monastic institutions.[22] Therefore, Europe cannot be a purely economic structure; it must become a Christian civilisation based on the dignity of the human being, the freedom and responsibility of both the

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[22] For more on the historical influence of monasteries in shaping political culture and Christian civilisation, see Kawecki, W. "Zakony a świat polityki." *Europa consecranda*, edited by K. Wójtowicz, Krakow, 2004, pp. 129–137.

individual and social initiative, the bloom of all moral energies of the European nations.[23]

As we know, contemporary Europeans are critical and they question all axioms,[24] including the meaning of Christianity in history. However, this is not a questioning which is a condition for seeking the truth, but a proposal of theses which one tries to prove. In this context, Krzysztof Zanussi emphasised that the thesis that Christianity lost its inspiring power in culture is impossible to prove as long as there are Christians in the world and – following the great Russian art-ist Andrei Tarkovsky – he repeated that "humanity is not so much threatened by nuclear extinction, but by the death of the last people who are believers, and to-gether with their death, the whole European culture will end".[25] One can say that a Europe which is afraid of its Christian roots is in an informed way resigning from its identity, and at least – as defined by P. Sztompka – the "positive identity", in which *we* is more emphasised than *they* and solidarity more than an opposi-tional conflict. In positive identity, *foreigners* are not marginalised, but through the prism of pride of one's own achievements and values, one is open to other values, eliminating xenophobia, intolerance, and stereotypes.[26]

In the book *Senza radici*,[27] the problem of the European identity crisis was discussed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – today's Pope Benedict XVI – and the president of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera. While searching for the causes of this phenomenon, they stated that this crisis is the effect of the negative influ-ence of relativism in post-conciliar theology, the West's boredom with its own values, and the self-censorship which it imposed on itself, because it was afraid

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[23] Schuman, R. "Est- il trop tard pour faire l'Europe?" *Quelle Europe? Recherches et débats*, Paris, 1958, issue 22, pp. 227–230.

[24] The evidence for a thesis formulated this way may be, for example, the discussion re-lated to the constitutional treaty and to the possibility to refer in it to Christian roots in the *Invocatio Dei*. In the end, such a statement was not included there; the reference to God and religion was omitted.

[25] Zanussi, Krzysztof. "Europa ducha w kulturze inspirowanej Ewangelią." *Europa wspól-nych wartości. Chrześcijańskie inspiracje w budowaniu zjednoczonej Europy*, edited by S. Zięba, Lublin, 2004, p. 28.

[26] Sztompka, P. "Integracja europejska jako szansa kulturowa. O moralności, tożsamości i zaufaniu." *Kondycja moralna społeczeństwa polskiego*, edited by J. Mariański, Krakow, 2002, p. 512.

[27] Pera, Marcello and Ratzinger, Joseph. *Senza radici. Europa, relativismo, cristianesimo, islam*, Milan, 2004.

to say that its culture is better than others (for example, Islam). In consequence, the European countries did not want to agree to refer to Christian values in the European Constitution. They also allowed religious freedom to be equated with the freedom of sexual orientation. The West is afraid of assessing other cultures because it remains under the influence of relativism, which entails the conviction that there are no fundamental values and that it is impossible to sufficiently prove that something is better than something else.

As emphasised by Ratzinger and Pera, relativism assumes that, above all, there is pluralism, i.e. the multitude of ideas, values, assessments, lifestyles, directions, philosophies, ideas, religions etc.; therefore, it is impossible to evaluate one culture in comparison with another, for example Christianity and Islam.[28] Relativism in the scope of theology wants to convince us that all religions are equally good and that there is no difference between them. This also means that the founders of these religions are equally important. One would, therefore, have to revise the sentence uttered by Jesus, "I am the way and the truth and the life", because it could be considered as bearing some features of religious fundamentalism. In such a way of thinking, there is an evident confusion of neutrality with secularism. One can therefore ask why the lay worldview should dominate over the religious one, and, moreover, in the disguise of neutrality? In this context, Ratzinger underlined that along with the victory of the technical and secular world, European values – including culture and faith – are replaced by value systems from other worlds: the pre-Columbian America, Islam, and Asian mystics. Furthermore, in Europe there is a strange reluctance towards its own culture and its own future. Children, which could be the hope of the future, are perceived as a threat to the present.[29] There is specific "reluctance towards God", while, after all, the world without God has no future.

One cannot responsibly negate the fact that all the achievements in the field of architecture, literature, and philosophy which Europe prides itself on today have their roots in Christianity. Believers, atheists, and agnostics all benefit from them. Unarguably, Christianity has been shaping Europe for centuries, and if it was not for Christianity, Europe would not be what it is today.[30] Precisely,

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[28] Ibidem 13–16.
[29] Ibidem 59–60.
[30] Legutko, R. *Ostatni przesąd Europy*, ROL, 20 Dec. 2003, no. 296.

multiculturalism, if we support it, calls us, Europeans, to enter ourselves anew. Pera noted that "there is an ugly wind blowing over Europe. This refers to the conviction that it is enough to wait, and problems will disappear on their own. Or that it is enough to accede to the demands of those who persecute us to defend ourselves from oppression. It is the same wind which was blowing in Munich in 1938." In response, Ratzinger writes that "the West does not love itself anymore: In its own history it only sees the things which deserve condemnation and which are destructive, and it is no longer able to understand the things that are great and pure."[31] The crisis of European culture is the crisis of Christian culture. Scepticism or relativism going as far as nihilism, existential sadness – claimed P. Poupard – is a challenge for Christianity and its spirituality, which should return to the truth about Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humanity and the centre of the universe and of history. Atheism should therefore be contrasted with Christian faith; secularisation should be compared with the cosmic vision of creation and the renewing liturgy based on God's Word and His grace; industrialisation and urbanisation should be contrasted with living and brotherly Christian communities.[32]

While summing up the condition of current culture, it has to be stated that the evangelisation of cultures should contemporarily aim to transform its negative characteristics towards a deeper acknowledgement of the culture of human rights, the culture of brotherhood, and working out the category of love (caritas) as a cultural value. The message of the Gospel and Christianity have always presented and disseminated human rights as being universally applicable. The idea of human rights had its foundation in the Christian dignity of every human, and in its theological justification it referred to the Revelation, i.e. to the concept of humankind created by God in His image, and referred to Christ incarnated in human form as the Saviour of the world. In Him, every human is destined for the glory of God and for immortality. This is the source of the inviolable human dignity which is the origin of all human rights. They have a cultural, social, and political dimension, but also a religious and even Christian dimension. The culture of brotherhood and solidarity is based on spiritual, religious, and ethical values which originate from the Gospel, adding significant stimulus for cultural

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[31] Pera and Ratzinger, op. cit.; Ratzinger, Joseph. *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, Siena 2005.

[32] Poupard, P. *L'eredità cristiana della cultura europea*, Rimini, 2007, p. 33.

and social dynamism.[33] Also, the Gospel love which according to John Paul II is a "mighty power hidden in the heart of cultures" should become cultural pedagogy and effective social activity in the spirit of servanthood, respect, honesty, and professional competence.[34] The new culture which is needed by the world should be based on peace, solidarity, justice, and the respect for the rights and dignity of humankind, as well as the liberation and integral development of every individual and every nation. It has to take the individual into consideration for the very fact that they are human and – as the Church defines human – they are the "way" for the Church. The vision of a human being is supposed to be integral and supernatural, located in God's plan of salvation, not deprived of the religious and spiritual values which humanise culture.

## About the autor

Father Witold Kawecki, CSsR, PhD, UKSW Professor – professor in theological sciences in the field of the theology of culture; organiser and director of the UKSW Institute of Knowledge about Culture; director of the Chair of Dialogue of Faith with Culture; editor-in-chief of "Homo Dei" and the director of the Homo Dei publishing house in Krakow, 1997–2002; co-founder of the scientific journal "Kultura-Media-Teologia"; and retreat preacher in Poland and abroad. Fields of work include the theology of culture, the ethics of the media, political culture, the sociology of religion. He has authored 16 books (e.g. "Dlaczego Kościół broni życia", "W stronę trzeciego tysiąclecia", "Dylematy moralne współczesnego człowieka", "Ocalić człowieka – ocalić kulturę", "Jan Paweł II – człowiek kultury", "Kościół i kultura w dialogu", "Portrety Jana Pawła II", "Słowo w kulturze współczesnej", and "Dokąd zmierzamy") and numerous articles. He is a French, Italian, Spanish, and Polish translator, a member of the Catholic Association of Journalists, of the Association of Polish Moral Theologians, of the Polish Association of Cultural Studies, of the Scientific Committee of the „Kultura-Media-Teologia" journal, and of the International Council of the Europe of the 21st Century Series, and an Associate of Radio Poland and of Polish Television.

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[33] John Paul II, The Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Krakow 2005, no. 33.
[34] Ibidem 47.

**Marek Kochan**

**Department of Journalism, SWPS University**

# Crisis communication and the potential worsening of crises

## Komunikacja kryzysowa jako czynnik rozwoju kryzysu

**ABSTRACT**

The topic of this article is crisis communication in the media and in politics. The author discusses the definitions of a crisis and the rules of crisis communication, then analyses several case studies of crisis communication when the crisis was worsened rather than reduced. Six mistakes in crisis communication are analysed in the article: 1) falsehood, 2.) missing the allegation, 3) aggression, 4) lack of empathy, 5) message inconsistency, and 6) missing the expectations of the audience. In the final part of the article the author discusses the issue of creating effective crisis communication and its rules.

**KEYWORDS:**
media crisis, political communication, crisis communication, corporate image, personal image, political image

**ABSTRAKT**

Tematem artykułu jest komunikacja kryzysowa w mediach i w polityce. Autor, wychodząc od definicji kryzysu wizerunkowego i opisywanych w literaturze reguł komunikacji kryzysowej, analizuje zachowania, które zamiast redukować skutki kryzysów – intensyfikują je.
W tekście omawiane są na konkretnych przykładach następujące błędy komunikacji kryzysowej: 1. Mijanie się z prawdą, 2. Brak odniesienia się do zarzutów, 3. Agresja w komunikacji kryzysowej, 4. Brak empatii, 5. Niespójność komunikatu, 6. Pójście pod prąd oczekiwaniom opinii publicznej, a więc lekceważenie zaniepokojenia odbiorców.
W końcowej części tekstu autor wskazuje zasady, których przestrzeganie wzmacnia skuteczność komunikacji kryzysowej.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
kryzys medialny, komunikacja polityczna, komunikacja kryzysowa, wizerunek firmy, wizerunek osobisty, wizerunek polityczny

**INTRODUCTION**

An image crisis is usually defined as a threat to the company: an event (or a set of events) that negatively affects its functioning and puts it in a negative light,[1]

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[1] Kamiński 62.

threatening its activities and disrupting the balance[2] or the normal rhythm of its functioning and having a significant impact on the shape of the processes that take place inside it,[3] or jeopardising the achievement of the mission and objectives of a public organisation, brand, or person.[4]

Meanwhile, when thinking about the crisis, another element is equally or perhaps more important: the possibility of taking action not only to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis, but even to benefit the company's image. These two dimensions of the crisis (threat and opportunity at the same time) are visible in the way the word is written in Chinese and Japanese. 'Crisis' is composed of two signs: one means 'danger', 'imminent, inevitable ruin' and the other means an 'opportunity' opening up in the future.[5]

This opportunity is linked to the actions that the company will take to resolve the crisis, or in other words, a 'crisis is a problem that needs a response', preferably immediately.[6] The reaction should concern both the problem and potential source of the crisis, preferably before it is made public (then the image crisis can be avoided: an unpublished problem does not turn into a crisis), and – in a situation where negative events are already made public – communication which is meant to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis and possibly turn them into image gains. Obviously, this is not always possible, so sometimes the maximum objective is only to limit the negative effects of the crisis.

The subject of this text is crisis communication from the point of view of solving or potentially worsening a crisis. On the basis of a case-by-case analysis, I would like to indicate these communication behaviours which, instead of reducing a crisis, escalate it. In the summary of the article, however, the aim will be to indicate the principles of crisis communication, compliance with which may reduce the probability of a crisis developing.

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[2] Smektała 65.
[3] Tworzydło, "Procedura" 77.
[4] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska 54.
[5] Walas-Trębacz and Ziarko 18.
[6] Cornelissen 249.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

Researchers dealing with image crises dedicate a great deal of attention to communication mechanisms, in particular, the rules that companies should follow in order to minimise the negative effects of crises and, as far as possible, turn the threat into an image benefit.

Some people believe that such principles do not exist and that there is no single good communication pattern, that only good and bad practices can be identified, taking into account the nature of the organisation, the social and public context, and the predispositions of those who communicate or the specific moment of a crisis situation.[7] However, the majority of researchers and specialists are of the opinion that it is possible to define rules whose observance affects the effectiveness of crisis resolution. These principles are sometimes formulated in different ways, but there are recurring motives. Usually, the need to tell the truth, to give only verified information, is emphasised,[8] which also means that facts[9] or obvious things cannot be denied.[10] The second thing is speed, communicating straight away;[11] the third is treating the media in an open and collaborative manner, providing regular information, and keeping them up-to-date.[12] Finally, the style of communication should have the following characteristics: passing on short, untraceable information,[13] avoiding inconsistencies (within the messages and between different actors representing the same organisation), as well as discourse and speculation – responding only after verifying the facts[14] – communicating in a confident and faithful manner, and avoiding technical jargon.[15] It is also a mistake to show aggression or excessive emotions towards journalists (and, more broadly, towards various representatives of public opinion, such as Internet users), as this may cause another crisis situation.[16]

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[7] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska 159.

[8] Kamiński; Smektała; Tworzydło "Procedura"; Kaczmarek-Śliwińska.

[9] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska 160.

[10] Kamiński 65.

[11] Regester and Larkin; Kamiński; Smektała.

[12] Tworzydło; Smektała; Regester and Larkin.

[13] Tworzydło 193.

[14] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska.

[15] Smektała.

[16] Smektała 163.

An important issue, which is addressed in different ways, is the attitude when communicating: not limiting oneself to facts, but also showing that one understands the point of view of the victims,[17] the seriousness of the situation, and the public's concerns; expressing sympathy for the victims (if any) and their relatives, if any, and expressing regret and repentance for the mistakes made,[18] that is, to put it concisely, showing 'a human face' during the crisis.

However, communication should not be confined to expressing sympathy; it should address the correction of mistakes, lessons learnt for the future, and try to promise to help and remedy the situation.[19] The crisis involves both a real problem and communication. These areas must be interconnected. At the same time, it is necessary to solve the problem and communicate, and it is best to communicate how the company deals with remedying the situation. Neither communication itself (when the problem is not solved) nor the actions without communication alone, when the public is unaware that they have been taken, will solve the crisis.

It is impossible to discuss in this article the numerous typologies of crises, many of which relate to their causes.[20] Companies most often perceive the sources of image crises as disturbances in their normal functioning (such as accidents, technical problems, threats to consumer health, environmental threats, poor financial condition, embezzlement, dismissal, mistreatment of employees, violations of the law, etc.). Among the causes of crises in the media indicated in the study, the most frequent were the quality of products (30%), accidents at work (15%), breakdowns (7%), consumer dissatisfaction (11%), and negative comments in social media (11%).[21]

Today, however, it is very often the communication activities of companies, institutions, and public persons that are the area in which the crisis occurs. There are many examples of the fact that the source of a crisis situation is no longer so much the real activities of companies or their employees as the ill-prepared acts of communication, which provoke indignation and opposition from the public. Crises caused by inappropriate communication can have a real impact on the functioning of a company or institution (political party or government), through

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[17] Smektała 163.
[18] Kamiński; Smektała; Regester and Larkin.
[19] Kamiński; Smektała.
[20] Cf. Kaczmarek-Śliwińska 73–88.
[21] http://nextday.pl/blog/kryzys-wizerunkowy/

a boycott by consumers or a drop in support, and in some cases can even threaten the existence of an organisation.[22]

> The source of the crisis situation is no longer so much the real actions of companies or their employees as the improperly prepared communication, which provokes indignation and opposition from the recipients.

An example of this is the campaign of Empik at Christmastime, where the images of two controversial people were used: Adam 'Nergal' Darski, known for his anticlerical views and famous for his public burning of the Bible, and Maria Czubaszek, declaring that she had had two abortions and is satisfied with it. Although these public figures probably have their own groups of admirers, their views are not shared by Empik's mainstream clients. The reaction to the campaign was negative, and it resulted in a consumer boycott[23] and a wave of animosity, which was revealed in the memoirs linking the figures of Darski and Czubaszek with quotations from their statements with the slogan, 'Empik invites you for Christmas shopping' (Nergal: 'I showed God the middle finger', 'I don't like the Decalogue';[24] Czubaszek: 'I always said, God, how wonderful that I did it' [about her two abortions][25]).

The second similar example is an unfortunate advertisement of Żytnia vodka, or more precisely, a post on the company's Facebook profile, run by an external marketing agency. In the post, probably with the intention of making it humorous, a photo from the 1982 demonstration in Lubin, depicting demonstrators fleeing a pacified demonstration and carrying someone shot by the Civic Militia, was used

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[22] Cornelissen 247.

[23] https://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/klienci-empiku-krytykuja-kampanie-bozon-arodzeniowa-z-nergalem-i-czubaszek-nie-ma-mowy-o-bojkocie.

[24] http://niezalezna.pl/61247-nergal-i-czubaszek-w-wigilijnej-reklamie-empik-na-celowniku-internautow.

[25] https://www.pch24.pl/obroncy-zycia-pikietuja-przeciwko-promocji-marii-czubaszek-,32203,i.html.

(without the author's consent); below was an inscription on the red bar: 'Hangover? Screenplay by Żytnia' ['KacVegas? Scenariusz pisany przez Żytnią'].[26] The inappropriateness of using this particular photograph in an advertisement for vodka and with such a caption provoked opposition from the public, including the families of the people depicted in the photograph, and from the Solidarity trade union, which brought a lawsuit against the producer of Żytnia. The company terminated the contract with the marketing agency, which fired the worker responsible for the post (interestingly, a history graduate), who also had a case in court for defaming the memory of the demonstrators. The case echoed loudly in the media and became an example of ill-considered marketing activities generating huge image losses.

The third similar example is an advertisement (in the form of a Facebook post) of the energy drink 'Tiger', referring with an offensive gesture to an anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising (a hand with the middle finger protruding, decorated with a red ribbon under the inscription '1 August – Memorial Day', and below the outline of a tiger with a speech balloon saying, 'screw what was, it's important what will be' ['Chrzanić to, co było, ważne to, co będzie']).[27]

In this case, the advertising agency used the provocation to draw attention to the product. However, it underestimated the reaction of the public, which forced the producer of Tiger, Maspex Wadowice, to apologise publicly and to commemorate the Warsaw Uprising.

These examples were described and analysed in scientific publications[28] and in the media, including the marketing press, so this article is presented only as a sketch, as an example of the thesis that communication which is inappropriate in form or content may become the cause of a crisis.

Monika Kaczmarek-Śliwinska mentions some factors which could have contributed to the escalation of this crisis: 1) actions on the part of competitors, 2) the economic, social, or political situation, or 3) emotions that may accompany a crisis situation.[29] There is another factor to be added to this list: crisis commu-

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[26] https://dziennikpolski24.pl/zdjeciem-ofiary-zomo-promowali-wodke-w-sieci-wideo/ar/6241488.

[27] http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/media/artykuly/555912,tiger-maspex-napoj-promocja-na-1-sierpnia-srodkowy-palec-na-plakacie.html.

[28] In terms of Tiger, see e.g. Kopeć-Ziemczyk (35–54) as well as an article written a year later by Tworzydło ("Skutecznie" 1–14).

[29] Kaczmarek-Śliwińska 106.

nication alone, which does not meet the expectations of the public – often it is precisely this communication that can escalate the crisis.

This is the main subject of the article. On the basis of the principles of crisis communication discussed above, it is possible to point out a few mistakes which may lead to a crisis being aggravated. These include giving false information, the lack of polemics with accusations, an aggressive style, the adoption of an impatient attitude towards the victims of the crisis, and communication which is inconsistent either internally or with the expectations of public opinion. Later in the text, individual errors in crisis communication are discussed on the basis of examples. Each of them is analysed, focussing on presenting the essence and background of the crisis and on the content and form of crisis communication, analysed from the point of view of effectiveness in solving a crisis.

Six errors in crisis communication will be discussed on the basis of an analysis of six image crises:

1. Falsehood (Kamil Durczok)
2. Missing the allegation (Bartosz Jóźwiak)
3. Aggression (Jarosław Kuźniar)
4. Lack of empathy (Elżbieta Bieńkowska)
5. Message inconsistency (Ryszard Petru)
6. Missing the expectations of the audience (Beata Szydło)

## 1. Falsehood: Kamil Durczok-TVN

The crisis involving Kamil Durczok, a TVN journalist and the head of *Fakty* (Facts), the station's flagship news programme, was linked to accusations of mobbing and harassment, which were brought against Durczok in a series of three weekly publications in the weekly magazine *Wprost*. The weekly described cases of harassment 'in one of the television stations'. In the first story, the name of Kamil Durczok was not mentioned, but there was speculation in the media that it was about the head of *Fakty*. The second story[30] described the case of a flat containing 'white powder', erotic gadgets, and Kamil Durczok's personal belongings. His presence in the flat was recorded by the police when they were called by the owners of the flat, who were unable to collect the rent from the woman who was renting it, the

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[30] *Wprost* no. 8/2015 10–15.

journalist's friend. The publication cast a shadow over Durczok's image, presenting his personal life in a negative light.

The context of the case was the sale of TVN by its owners and the negotiations on the terms of the transaction and the valuation of the company being conducted at that time. The crisis of the journalist – the boss and the head of TVN's flagship news programme – certainly hit the image of the station and reduced its value. After the second publication, Kamil Durczok was suspended from his duties as the head of *Fakty* and on the morning of Monday, 16 February he gave an interview to Dominika Wielowieyska from the radio station *Tok FM*.

In the interview, to a direct question asked by a journalist whether he had molested his subordinates, Kamil Durczok stated, 'I can say with all firmness and clarity that I have never harassed any of my subordinate employees. I have never harassed any woman.' When the journalist repeated the question in another form, quoting the legal definition of harassment and asking whether Durczok could say with absolute certainty that he had not violated the rules, he replied, 'I can say with absolute certainty that I have not violated these rules.' Later in the interview he also stated: 'I have never been a harassing boss.'[31]

As a result of the case, TVN's chairman of the board appointed a committee to investigate allegations of bullying and harassment at TVN. A press release was issued on 7 March 2015, summarising the committee's work. It stated that:

> The Commission has been conducting its activities through interviews with 37 current and former employees and collaborators of the 'Fakty TVN' editorial team and has identified cases of undesirable behaviour, including bullying and sexual harassment. (...) The Commission found that three people were exposed to undesirable behaviour. As compensation, TVN S.A. will offer these persons up to 6 times their monthly salary. (...) The company and Mr Kamil Durczok reached a mutual decision to terminate their agreement with immediate effect.[32]

It can therefore be said that the narrative of Kamil Durczok, who completely denied the actions he was accused of, was already untenable, particularly because the weekly magazine quoted the testimony of a particular person he was

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[31] Durczok.

[32] https://prasa.tvn.pl/informacje-korporacyjne/komunikat-prasowy-podsumowujacy--prace-niezaleznej-komisji-badajacej-zarzuty-mobbingu-i-molestowania-w-tvn,160957.html.

harassing and the text message that he had allegedly received from the head of *Fakty*. It could therefore be assumed that the editorial staff had evidence that could be presented in court. Despite this fact, Kamil Durczok took the magazine and four journalists to court in connection with *Wprost*'s publications, claiming PLN 2 million in damages from the story about harassment and mobbing.[33] He lost the trial in May 2018.[34] In August 2018, *Wprost* published an article entitled 'Durczok: A broken dam of silence', which referred to the reasons for the verdict, confirming the journalist's guilt, and providing further facts about the harassment and bullying of his female colleagues.[35]

Perhaps Kamil Durczok did not realise that his behaviour could be regarded as bullying and sexual harassment. However, he must have been aware that the events referred to in the publication, described there in these categories (verbal abuse, SMS) took place. By denying them, he was therefore not truthful.

The journalist's behaviour violated a basic principle of crisis communication: the need to tell the truth. His behaviour lacked not only a confession of the alleged acts, but also an expression of some kind of repentance and apology to the people who had been hurt. Crisis communication was completely ineffective: not only did it not limit the crisis, but it contributed to the journalist's loss of credibility (when shortly afterwards, TVN itself confirmed the truth of the accusations). The journalist became the subject of numerous publications presenting him in an unfavourable light. His image was ruined and his career as a journalist ended in a way, because despite several attempts, Durczok has not regained his former meaning and position.

## 2. Missing the allegation: Bartosz Jóźwiak

The crisis of Bartosz Jóźwiak, a member of the Kukiz 15 political party, began with the publication of an article in the daily newspaper *Fakt* [Fact] on 13 March 2018 entitled 'The MP lives with his lover. And he does it with our money.' ['Poseł

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[33] http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,130517,18283477,Kamil_Durczok_walczy_o_odszko-dowanie__Chce_9_mln_zlotych.html. Durczok also filed a second lawsuit in connection with a publication about an alleged escape from the friend's flat, where drugs and harsh pornography were found, claiming PLN 9 million in damages.

[34] https://www.rp.pl/Dobra-osobiste/305159975-Kamil-Durczok-przegral-z-Wprost-ws-publikacji-o-mobbingu-i-molestowaniu-podwladnych.html.

[35] Wprost, no. 35/2018 16–18.

mieszka u kochanki. I to za nasze']. The tabloid reported that the MP was renting a flat from his good friend for PLN 2,200 and also hires it in the MP's office for PLN 3,000. The publication was illustrated with photographs showing a close or even intimate relationship between the married MP and his friend,[36] and it included a copy of the rental contract for the flat.[37]

The crisis therefore had two elements: a moral one (an alleged affair of an MP with a colleague) and ethical: the renting of a flat was legal, as was the employment of a member of personnel in a Member's office, but the whole thing raised moral questions, particularly in connection with the alleged close relationship between a Member and a colleague, as shown in the photos.

Mr Jóźwiak quickly made a statement on his Facebook profile at 4.02 a.m. on the same day, in which he referred to the matter. The article was interpreted by the MP as an attack on his family, as a result of the fact that he was dealing with important matters, such as the Act on Gambling and making appeals in the case of 'Totalizator Sportowy', thus infringing on the interests of powerful lobby groups. He declared that despite the attacks, he would continue to strive for the truth, as he takes his mandate seriously.

Only six lines of the 54-line-long statement can be considered an indirect reference to the allegations of *Fakt*:

> I do not recognise this form of journalism and do not intend to argue with insinuations or someone else's phobias, which present agreements (which are normal, correct agreements submitted to the Sejm) as sensations, and which are supposed to create an aura of some irregularities and hit my family with a mysterious slander.[38]

Therefore, there was no comment on the topic of a relationship with his colleague, and the matter of renting a flat from a colleague was considered to be in line with the rules and not requiring an explanation.

In subsequent speeches, the Member explained the relationship with his female colleague – 'we are friends, but she is not my lover', 'It happened that she slept in the flat I rented' – which only heightened the conjecture. Two days later,

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[36] https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/posel-kukiz15-bartosz-jozwiak-mieszka-u-kochanki/nj232sf#slajd-1.

[37] Ibidem.

[38] https://pl-pl.facebook.com/JozwiakBartoszUPR.

the leader of the group, Paweł Kukiz, also referred to the matter, distancing himself from the issue of relations with a colleague: 'I will not go into the subject of the "lover" because I have no information on the relationship between the MP and his assistant and, to be honest, I have little interest in it.' At the same time, he condemned renting the flat from her as reprehensible if legal: 'It is certainly morally questionable for me to rent a flat from a loved one using public money.' Kukiz declared that he would look at the public money spent by his fellow party members and that if he noticed something 'ethically wrong', he would exclude them from the party.[39] As a result, seven days after the outbreak of the crisis, Bartosz Jóźwiak terminated his tenancy agreement.

The MP's crisis communication can therefore raise two reservations: the first is the failure to address the problem in his first statement (the matter came back anyway, and he had to explain himself when he could have settled the matter initially). The second is the lack of rapid action to alleviate the problem itself, i.e. terminating the flat tenancy (because the public was more sensitive to the issue of money than to the issue of an MP's alleged intimate relationship with a colleague). Had Bartosz Jóźwiak quickly addressed the allegations and solved the problem of the contract, the crisis would have been shorter and more limited in range.

### 3. Aggression (Jarosław Kuźniar)

The image crisis of Jarosław Kuźniar was the result of an interview between him and the presenter of the biweekly newspaper *Grazia*, published in the 16 March 2015 issue. Thus, it was a typical crisis caused by unfortunate co-communication. In this interview, the journalist and TVN presenter probably wanted to advertise his new travel agency, Go For World, which offers trips to exotic places. In order to make himself credible as an experienced traveller, he shared his recipe for travelling with children:

> It is not difficult to pack for a trip with a child; you do not have to take baths, chairs, and God knows what else. A car seat? There is no point. We did not take any gadgets to Canada or the USA. We went to Walmart, bought everything we needed, and at the end of the journey we returned it all, saying that it did not suit us. And that's it.[40]

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[39] https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/afera-wokol-mieszkania-dla-kochanki-posla-jozwiaka-kukiz-stawia-ultimatum-6230449204029057a. Accessed 15 October 2019).

[40] *Grazia* 32.

Another quote from Jarosław Kuźniar's speech, placed on the cover of the magazine as an announcement of an interview, sounded ironic: 'Life in the media can end in a second. If you judge someone, you must be crystal-clear yourself.'[41]

The case provoked controversy, as the behaviour of Kuźniar, who advertised abusing WalMart's rules (and presented it as evidence of cleverness, something he wanted to boast about in particular) was considered inappropriate, and a wave of animosity from Internet users crashed down on the journalist.

The reaction to this crisis was the statement that Jarosław Kuźniar published on his blog:

> I fall asleep at the end of the world with a head full of rutted faces. Common, wrinkled, tired people smelling of sadness, tobacco, and alcohol. It is up to you how much of this you will accept. After how many kilometres will you break? 2,000, 3,000, 9,000? The trans-Siberian railway slows down thinking, judging others, teaches humility, distance, a simpler world. If you want to persevere strong in this very monotonous journey, you have to ignore the sadness of most Eastern passengers. An extremely valuable experience on the day when the venom of internet illiterates is bubbling again. You just roll off me like water off a duck.[42]

This speech not only lacked self-reflection and reference to the accusations, but its main message was aversion, or rather aggression, towards those who criticised Kuźniar's behaviour.

Such a reaction only exacerbated the problem: the aversion to the journalist increased, the Internet became flooded with memorials stigmatising Jarosław Kuźniar's stinginess, and a hashtag was even created (#sekretykuzniara), gathering memes whose main subject were various embarrassing ways to save money.[43]

The crisis was worsened by communication errors and had a negative impact on the journalist's professional and personal image (he was later referred to on the Internet as the 'King of Embarrassment' and the 'First Polish Churl', in reference to the contemptible term with which the presenter described people who behaved inappropriately during the journey, e.g. eating a homemade egg

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[41] Ibidem 1.

[42] https://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/po-niefortunnej-wypowiedzi-jaroslaw-kuzniar-antybohaterem-rekordowej-serii-wpisow-na-twitterze#; https://www.fakt.pl/kobieta/plotki/kuzniar-odpowiada-internautom/e05epfx.

[43] https://demotywatory.pl/4474805/Jaroslaw-Kuzniar Accessed 15 October 2019).

sandwich on a plane). It likely also limited the number of clients for the travel agency advertised in that interview.

The subsequent attempt to alleviate the crisis, based on the otherwise interesting idea of developing the hashtag, was also ineffective. In a short video, less than one minute long, Kuźniar suggested that ideas for economical travel should be shared at www.sekretykuzniara.com, that users should choose the best of them, and Jarosław Kuźniar promised to take care of the bonuses:

> Let this be a place where you can leave your own ideas on how to make your journey easier, not to cheat anyone, because that is not what it was all about, not to lie to anyone, because that is not what it was all about, but how to make your life easier on your journey, especially if you are not alone and have companions on your mind.[44]

In this statement there was an attempt to address to the accusations, admittedly without aggression, but also without repent or noting the mistakes he had made. The idea of running the website did not work out; there was probably no-one willing to participate in the competition. The harm caused by inappropriate communication at the beginning of the crisis was reduced over time as a result of the subsequent numerous media activities of Jarosław Kuźniar, which covered up the negative content resulting from the crisis;[45] however, a different response at the beginning of the crisis could certainly have significantly reduced its scope and effects.

## 4. Lack of empathy: Elżbieta Bieńkowska

On 20 January 2014, the railways went down due to icing on the catenary line, causing delays of many hours. The passengers spent long hours inside frozen trains. This aroused great interest in the media, which published, among other things, shocking photographs of the frozen toilets. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure was then Elżbieta Bieńkowska, who accepted the invitation to the programme *Fakty po faktach* [The Facts After the News] on TVN that evening. Referring to the railway situation, Elżbieta Bieńkowska said:

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[44] http://admonkey.pl/sekretykuzniara-com-jaroslaw-kuzniar-przekuwa-w-atut-wpadke-z-walmartem.

[45] Four years after the crisis, this topic became practically invisible when the journalist's name is searched in Google, and the statement does not appear in the compendium Wikiquote.org, so we can say that the crisis was neutralised.

> **Passengers can only be told something like: sorry, that's the climate we have**, well, unfortunately, I can tell you and the audience that 4,000 trains have left the track today and two are stuck because of the icing on the network. There is nothing we can do about it, and it happens everywhere, but PKP Intercity has done everything it can to secure those passengers there for almost the whole day, because they have been standing on those trains for a very long time, so that it will end when it ends, that is, when they get to the station. **This was not an extremely dramatic situation.** Of course, this can be shown on television, a few people on trains, a dozen or so. But I will say it again: 4,000 trains, two... (...) I know that maybe it is not very media and television-like. But almost every person in Poland, and you and I, are aware that winter is in Poland, and that if there is **winter in Poland, it will sometimes happen** that something.[46]

This statement underestimated the problem of passengers on frozen trains. It referred to common sense and was probably intended to calm the mood by placing the blame for the railways' problems on the climate. At the same time, there was no apology or compassion in any form, which were probably the things the recipients expected. Elżbieta Bieńkowska therefore showed an extreme lack of empathy. The speech also contained the characteristic and thus bearable phrase 'sorry, that's the climate we have', which aptly summarised her line of argumentation, sounding arrogant and disrespectful, even perceived as derision about the frozen passengers.[47] This phrase has been added to numerous comments and memoirs ridiculing Elżbieta Bieńkowska's[48] behaviour, and in time also to the common language as 'winged words' ('*sorry, that's the climate we have*' – you have to get over it, no-one will feel sorry for you, it's just like that).

The unfortunate explanation resulted in a drop in support for the political party Civic Platform by 4 percentage points, which was a very tangible loss – an image loss at the expense of inappropriate crisis communication.[49]

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[46] https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/mroz-zatrzymal-pociagi-sorry-mamy--taki-klimat,389583.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[47] https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/bienkowska-szydzi-ze-zmarznietych-pasazerow-aa-BiN3-rs9E-J2xx.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[48] https://natemat.pl/89287,elzbieta-bienkowska-o-paralizu-kolei-sorry-taki-mamy-klimat-internet-bezlitosny-dla-wicepremier. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[49] https://www.rp.pl/artykul/1082153-Platforma-placi-za-Bienkowska.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

## 5. Message inconsistency: Ryszard Petru

The crisis associated with Ryszard Petru, then head of the Modern Party, related to his 2016–17 New Year's Eve trip to Madeira. Since December, the opposition parties occupying the chambers of the Sejm had been continuing their protest of the changes introduced by the government of the ruling party, Law and Justice. To emphasise the seriousness of the situation, the opposition used very harsh rhetoric ('the fall of democracy', etc.). Petru, as one of the opposition leaders, also protested, but at one point he disappeared and was not present in the public space until a picture of Ryszard Petru and his colleague Joanna Schmidt, sitting next to him and staring at him, was published on Twitter. In addition, it pointed to intimacy and was seen as revealing an affair between Petru and Schmidt.[50] It was known that Ryszard Petru had a wife and two children, while Schmidt had a husband and three children (as it later turned out, she had already been separated from her husband).

The case was publicised on Monday, 2 January 2017. On the same day, an interview with Ryszard Petru – held on the Thursday before New Year's Eve – appeared on the website '300polityka', in which the leader of the Modern party said that politicians are not allowed to go on holiday as long as the occupation of the Plenary Hall lasts, until 11 January – unless for 2 days.[51]

The matter became the topic of the day, and Ryszard Petru was unreachable, not answering phone calls. The only message from his side was a text message to the radio station RMF FM: 'Shifts were arranged. I had mine on Christmas Eve.' At 10.00 a.m., Katarzyna Lubnauer, Vice President of the Modern party, said, 'I do not know where Richard Petru is now. It is difficult for me to comment on this, because I do not know what he was doing.' At 01.00 p.m., Lubnauer stated, 'It was a previously planned trip.' When questioned by journalists as to whether it was a business trip or a private one, she answered: 'For important party matters, let's say.' Journalists asked further about which party matters were being dealt with. 'These are the party's affairs," Lubnauer replied.[52]

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[50] https://polskatimes.pl/ryszard-petru-i-joanna-schmidt-relaksuja-sie-na-maderze-podczas-protestu-opozycji-w-sejmie/ar/11648468. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[51] http://300polityka.pl/news/2017/01/02/nie-chce-byc-koniunkturalny-o-kluczowym-2017-300polityka-rozmawia-z-ryszardem-petru. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[52] https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/ryszard-petru-wjechal-za-granice-nowoczesna-tlumaczy,703930.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

On 3 January 2016, Ryszard Petru appeared in the media and stated:

This absence in the last few days was planned. Let me remind you that I was there on Christmas Eve and on 30 December too. The day after Christmas Eve, I was also a moment in protest in the Sejm, so it was planned earlier. **I must admit that this is an embarrassing situation.** That the president should nevertheless be there. The second issue is the fact that, **the trip was of a private nature, it was financed with private money**, no money was spent there from public or party money. I want to answer any questions about political issues, **but I do not want to answer any questions about non-political issues, that is to say private ones**.

Petru noted the awkwardness of the situation (leaving during the protest), but did not apologise or express regret. He focussed on the financial issues, refuting the possible accusation of financing a private trip with party money, but omitting the moral issue and the issue of the alleged (and later confirmed) relationship with Joanna Schmidt, which was of much greater interest to the public.

The larger problem, however, was something else: the contradiction of his explanations (a private, privately financed trip) with what Katarzyna Lubnauer had said the day before (a business trip).

The lack of coordination of the crisis messages had a negative impact on the image of the party and undermined its credibility. The photo of Petru and Schmidt became a hit, it has been rewritten in numerous memes and even videos published on Youtube.[53] In addition, the lack of commentary on the relationship between Ryszard Petru and Joanna Schmidt, who was so engaging with public opinion, made the subject even more attractive and caused a wave of publications. The image of Petru as the party leader, one of the main opposition politicians, suffered. He presented himself as a man for whom going out with his lover is more important than public affairs, even in a situation presented as a 'threat to democracy'.

At least in theory, things could have turned out differently. Rapid and consistent communication could have reduced the extent of the crisis, and the official disclosure of the affair (which happened after some time) could have made Richard Petru's image more attractive. The head of the Modern party, previously perceived as a technocrat and a somewhat stiff man (or, for a change, funny, as

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[53] Np. przeróbka przeboju zespołu Akcent „Przez twe oczy zielone": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWZhBxMDXHc, prawie 466 tysięcy unień Accessed 15 October 2019.

the author of many unfortunate statements), could have shown a 'human face' and aroused emotions and perhaps also the sympathy of voters, letting himself be known as a man who follows his feelings, capable of heart-breaking. Meanwhile, the lack of communication and the publication of uncoordinated messages (Katarzyna Lubnauer's 'business trip' narrative, improvised and probably not consulted with Ryszard Petru) increased the scale of the crisis and, in the long run, caused Petru to lose his position as head of the party and marginalised Ryszard Petru as a politician.

## 6. Missing the expectations of the audience: Beata Szydło

The crisis involving the Prime Minister and then Deputy Prime Minister Beata Szydło was linked to the awarding of bonuses to members of the government for 2017. Twenty-one ministers received bonuses ranging from PLN 65,100 to PLN 82,100; twelve ministers in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister received from PLN 36,900 to PLN 59,400; and Prime Minister Szydło herself received PLN 65,100 (in this case, she was the person who awarded herself the bonus as the Prime Minister). The matter was disclosed and publicised by the media, arousing public outrage: both the very fact of that members of the government were awarded bonuses and their amounts were criticised. This caused a serious crisis in the government: some ministers started to return the bonuses, others donated them to charity. In the end, everyone was forced to give the money to Caritas. Before this happened, some defended the bonuses, arguing that they were due for their hard and efficient work, all the more so because the salaries of the members of the government are relatively low in relation to their duties and responsibilities.

The case of the bonuses was defended by Beata Szydło, who had previously decided to award them as prime minister (she was already deputy prime minister in Mateusz Morawiecki's government at the time the case was revealed). The case was the subject of a parliamentary speech on 22 March 2018. At the beginning of the second half of the speech (6'12'' of 10'28''), Beata Szydło said:

Yes, it is true that **ministers and deputy ministers in the Law and Justice government have been rewarded for their hard and honest work and this money was simply due to them**. These were official awards. The bonuses were awarded within the framework of the budget adopted in this Chamber, not watches from their fellow businessmen. These people have worked hard and are working so that all Poles can enjoy the development of Poland, not selected interest

groups. We want further development, we want Poland to continue building its strong position in the world and in Europe. We think about the challenges that lie ahead of us. **Our mistake, and here I am addressing our fellow countrymen, the Poles, was that at the beginning of our term of office we did not talk to you about how to reward honest and hard-working officials.** But I hope, I firmly believe, that this subject will be put in order and closed at this time.[54]

The speech was badly received by the public, particularly the phrase that the bonuses 'were simply due to' the ministers,[55] whether 'that money was simply due' to the 'ministers of the Law and Justice government'.[56] In view of the general animosity towards politicians, the communication that 'bonuses were simply due' must have aroused that animosity, especially when compared with the sums, which were relatively high in relation to the average salary and higher than the annual income of most citizens. The argument that the bonuses were officially and legally awarded also did not reach the public. This confirms the principle of crisis communication, which was not mentioned at the beginning, but is well known: moral evaluation is often more important than legality itself; it is not enough to comply with the rules, and the judgement of public opinion, based on a common understanding of appropriateness and ethical behaviour instead of legal codes, must be taken into account.

Perhaps the word 'bonus' itself, associated with exceptional achievements that go beyond good performance, also had some meaning. In the common sense, work is paid for and the reward must be particularly justified, especially when it is so high.

The form of the speech was also critical of this. It was accompanied by the hustle and bustle of the Chamber, and the speech was interrupted both by the cries of the coalition members, chanting 'Beata, Beata!', and of the opposition, crying, 'give the money back!' As a result, Beata Szydło, addressing the opposition which was attacking her, spoke in a raised voice with an aggressive tone, and her facial expression showed negative emotions.[57]

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[54] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hASj19ZuHs. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[55] Np. dziennik Rzeczpospolita: https://www.rp.pl/Rzad-PiS/180329721-Beata-Szydlo-Nagrody-ministrom-sie-nalezaly-Za-ciezka-uczciwa-prace.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[56] https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/beata-szydlo-o-nagrodach-dla--ministrow-rzadu,824216.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

[57] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hASj19ZuHs. Accessed 15 October 2019.

It seems that this could have had a deeper meaning. Beata Szydło, while defending the city and listing the achievements of her government to justify their reward, was in fact defending her achievements as prime minister, though she had been dismissed from this post a few months earlier, under circumstances that were not entirely understandable to the public, without a clear, concrete reason.

In general, it can be said that the rational narrative of the bonuses, linking them to the merits of officials in implementing the government's programme for the benefit of its citizens, collided frontally with the tabloid narrative, which was critical of the bonuses ('politicians hand out money to themselves, thinking they simply deserve it') and shared by a large proportion of the public.

In Beata Szydło's speech, there was a kind of repentance (admitting a mistake), but not in the context of awarding the bonuses (which perhaps the public expected), but in terms of raising the subject of officials' salaries. As a result, the government of Law and Justice recorded a large drop in the polls, reaching 12%,[58] and echoes of the issue of the bonuses, despite giving them back, appeared much later.

## CAUSES OF THE DISRUPTION TO CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Looking at these and many other cases, it is not difficult to see that crisis communication requires a great deal of caution. On the one hand, it is necessary to act quickly, but on the other hand, acting too spontaneously and ill-considered can also cause problems, especially when the communication is accompanied by emotions or aggression (Kamil Durczok or Jarosław Kuźniar). One should not acknowledge one's mistake too early, but it is also not worth defending one's position against the facts or against public opinion, as this only increases the image losses associated with the crisis (Kamil Durczok, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, or Beata Szydło). Often, withdrawing earlier and making a decision spontaneously and not under pressure from public opinion can significantly reduce the extent of the crisis (Bartosz Jóźwiak or Beata Szydło). Finally, it is important to coordinate messages, to establish from the beginning a narrative which is true and, at the same time, possible to defend (Ryszard Petru).

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[58] https://fakty.tvn24.pl/sondaze-dla-faktow-tvn-i-tvn24,106/duzy-spadek-poparcia-dla-pis-sondaz-dla-faktow-tvn-i-tvn24,825496.html. Accessed 15 October 2019.

> One should not acknowledge one's mistake too early, but it is also not worth defending one's position against the facts or against public opinion, as this only increases the image losses associated with the crisis.

In many cases, the source of perturbation is the lack of empathy and consideration of the ordinary viewer's optics, which results in crisis messages diverging from public expectations (Kamil Durczok, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Bartosz Jóźwiak, Ryszard Petru, or Beata Szydło). A serious problem is the lack of reference to the accusations, sending messages in a certain way unreleased, not in dialogue with the media or ordinary recipients (Jarosław Kuźniar, Bartosz Jóźwiak, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, or Ryszard Petru) and the desire to defend one's own position at all costs (Kamil Durczok or Beata Szydło).

As the above analyses have proved, control over the form of the message also counts – not only the avoidance of emotions and aggression, but also the use of appropriate linguistic formulas, as it is often misused words that can exacerbate the situation; sometimes the very form of expression evokes negative reactions from the audience (Jarosław Kuźniar, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, or Beata Szydło).

When considering the causes of similar disruptions in crisis communication, time pressure and psychological factors should be highlighted. Time pressure combined with the element of surprise makes it difficult to make rational decisions, causing paralysis (and procrastination with communication) on the one hand, and a tendency to send public messages that are wrongly considered, unproven, and formulated in the heat of the moment, on the other hand. Another factor hindering a proper reaction is the psychology of someone who is suddenly in the centre of media attention. An emergency situation can arouse anxiety, fear, guilt, and helplessness.[59] The associated pressure, the feeling of being attacked, sometimes leads to a persistent defence of one's position – even against reason,

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[59] Tworzydło, "Zarządzanie" 54.

against the facts, and sometimes in an aggressive form. This attitude can be called 'siege mentality'.[60]

Sometimes the background to such behaviour is the fact that the media have discovered shameful details of the lives of public figures or institutions. The crisis is associated with disintimisation: the details of one's personal life or professional activity come to light in a troublesome way (Kamil Durczok, Bartosz Jóźwiak, Ryszard Petru, and in a sense Jarosław Kuźniar). A person affected by the crisis sometimes counts on the fact that their actions, which do not comply with social rules, will remain hidden if they are not talked about, or if they are denied – even when it can be assumed that such denial only makes the matter worse. A public admission of guilt and an apology to the victims or the public (which usually helps to extinguish the crisis) is associated with a high psychological cost; the fear of compromise often leads to passing the truth (Kamil Durczok), denying even what has already been proven (Bartosz Jóźwiak), and sometimes to aggression (Jarosław Kuźniar).

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOLVING CRISIS SITUATIONS

The causes of the crisis communication disruptions described above are an argument in favour of using professional support from consultants and PR agencies in such situations, the role of which is to assess the situation soberly and emotionlessly, to develop an optimal message in a given situation, and to prepare the person affected (or representatives of the institution whose image is at risk) for contact with the media. Barriers that make this difficult, and sometimes even impossible, may be costs (not everyone can afford such services); a lack of trust in consultants (who need to be honestly told what the facts are in order to develop a communication strategy – some people are afraid of revealing embarrassing details); a belief that their own competence in the field of communication is sufficient to cope on their own (it is not a coincidence that two of the described crises concern very experienced journalists); or vice versa, a lack of sufficient familiarity with the media and understanding of the nature of threats related to improper communication (Elżbieta Bieńkowska or Ryszard Petru). Hence the

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[60] Bridgemann 194–195.

recommendations to prepare people who would have to give their statements to the media in a hypothetical crisis situation, in advance through crisis training.[61]

> One can gain from a crisis, but only if the crisis communication of a company, organisation, or public figure complies with the rules and is thought out in content and form.

Such training can help to tame the pressure from the media, reduce mental discomfort during a real crisis, and thus facilitate effective communication. By the way, they can also raise awareness of the need for professional support when a crisis occurs – because a person inside the situation often cannot properly assess it and choose the optimal communication strategy.

As pointed out in the introduction, one can gain from a crisis, but only if the crisis communication of a company, organisation, or public figure complies with the rules and is thought out in content and form. Starting from the cases of crisis communication disruptions discussed in this article, one can be tempted to formulate demands for such communication. They can be contained in a few key words: truth, empathy, dialogue, flexibility, coordination, and composure. Omitting one of these factors usually leads to an escalation of the crisis.

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[61] E.g., Hyslop 152–161.

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## About the autor

Marek Kochan, M.Sc., professor at SWPS University. He is employed at the Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of SWPS University. Scientifically and practically, he deals with rhetoric and eristics, image, business and crisis communication, media language, and debates, among other topics. He is the author of several dozen scientific works, including books entitled *Pojedynek na słowa. Techniki erystyczne w publicznych sporach* and *Slogany w reklamie i polityce*, and editor and co-author of the volume *Sztuka debaty*.

email address: mkochan@swps.edu.pl, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9502-6171

**Grzegorz Łęcicki**

**Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie**

# "He who lives by the sword…"
# The images of death in Japanese samurai films

## „Kto mieczem wojuje…"
## Obrazy śmierci w japońskich filmach samurajskich

**ABSTRACT**

Samurai Japanese film as a specific kind of film. Analysis of chosen images of death in representative samurai films. Comparison of the ideology of samurai films with values of Western culture formed by the Decalogue and the Gospel.

**KEYWORDS:**
samurai film, images of death, ethics of the Decalogue and the Gospel

**ABSTRAKT**

Ukazanie specyfiki gatunku japońskiego filmu samurajskiego. Analiza wybranych obrazów śmierci w reprezentatywnych filmach samurajskich. Konfrontacja ideologii filmów samurajskich z wartościami obecnymi w kulturze zachodniej, ukształtowanej przez Dekalog i Ewangelię.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
film samurajski, obrazy śmierci, etyka Dekalogu i Ewangelii.

One of the most characteristic film genres, which gained popularity all over the world after the Second World War, is the samurai film, obviously from Japan. There are many elements that contribute to the global fascination with this genre; the most characteristic, distinctive, and exciting ones are the spectacular fencing duels with the use of a special weapon: the samurai sword.

The global success of post-war Japanese cinema, and especially of the samurai film, was decisively influenced by the work of the brilliant director Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) and the phenomenal actor Toshiro Mifune (1920–1997), an excellent actor who played the roles of warriors and knights.[1] Kurosawa's work –

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\* This article was published in parallel in *Humanitne studie na aktualne problemy sucasnej spolocnosti*, edited by Beata Akimjakova, Ruzomberok 2011, pp. 69–82.

[1] "Kurosawa Akira." *Słownik filmu*, edited by R. Syska, Krakow, 2005, pp. 330–331; "Mifune Toshiro." Ibidem., p. 353. Mifune played the main roles in the following films: *Rashomon*,

*Rashomon* (1950), *Seven Samurai* (1954), and *Kagemusha* (1980) – have gained the favour of critics, won recognition and awards at international festivals (Golden Lions in Venice, Oscars in the USA, and a Golden Palm in Cannes), and enjoyed extraordinary popularity among audiences. *Seven Samurai* is not only a canon of Japanese film, but also a global masterpiece of cinematography.[2]

Although Kurosawa's samurai films were set in the old days and in a country exotic to Western culture, critics and audiences found in them a universal message, common to all mankind; a peculiar cultural convergence, resulting from human nature and the universality and similarity of existential experiences, was illustrated by the Japanese director's adaptation of Shakespeare's works into the language of samurai film: the shocking *Throne of Blood* (1956) was a successful adaptation of Macbeth and the large-scale film *Ran* (1985) was a new production of King Lear.[3] Samurai films, first screened in cinemas and then broadcast on television in various countries, often constituted a significant media message showing the global audience the worldview, mentality, traditions, and national values of the Japanese people and the specific cultural heritage of their country.

## SAMURAI ETHOS AND THE SWORD

In order to fully understand samurai films, it is essential to have knowledge about Japanese history, culture, and civilisation. Its history reveals its uniqueness and the old feudal and social structure, in which a warrior caste was an exceptional group. A Japanese knight – a samurai – was most often the main character of the films about the old times of the Land of the Rising Sun, in which – during the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600–1868) – about 80 per cent of the population were peasants. Samurai were an exceptionally privileged social group: they did not perform any physical work, but only had to practice martial arts as knights on duty with their feudal lords (*daimyo*). The symbol of the social status of knights was the samurai sword. Within the class of warriors there were also various divisions; a miserable group were the *ronin*, lonely, homeless knights, deprived of

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*Seven Samurai*, *Samurai – as Miamoto Musashi*, *Throne of Blood*, *Yojimbo*, *Sanjuro*, and *Ran*; he also played significant roles in *The Sword of Doom* and *Red Sun*.

[2] "Siedmiu samurajów." *Słownik filmu*, op. cit., pp. 569–570.

[3] "Kurosawa Akira." op. cit., p. 331.

stable sources of income, who retained the privilege of wearing two swords as a sign of nobility, but were often despised and treated as outcasts.[4]

Samurai, who accounted for about 6%–7% of the Japanese population, mostly lived in cities and towns or, by the orders of feudal lords, in the duke's settlements; they held various functions as clerks, policemen, law enforcement officers, and even students.[5] The two swords, which the hereditary warriors had the right and duty to wear, were not only dangerous weapons of war, but were also often regarded as works of art.[6]

"The sword has a unique place in Japanese culture."[7] The evolution of the production of this weapon led, through various improvements, to the creation of a slightly curved, single-edged blade; this type of weapon is called a sabre, but due to the nature of Japanese fencing, it is more appropriate and justified to call it a sword. It was surrounded by an unusual cult, unprecedented anywhere in the world.[8] The fascination with the sword gave it a symbolic meaning; in the shine of its head it saw the values which were the foundation of the samurai's honour: purity, simplicity, and fidelity.[9]

The unprecedented role and importance of weapons is evidenced by the Japanese sword being called a samurai's soul. The sword was a symbol of his power and valour, as well as a tool for shaping his personality; fencing, as the most cherished way of fighting, became a way to achieve physical and spiritual perfection. The ideal illustration of exemplary fencing was the ability to knock down an opponent with one blow.[10]

The specific link between the original martial arts developed in the East and the religions, beliefs, and worldviews there must not be overlooked. The sword was surrounded by respect and gained prestige because, according to Japanese beliefs, it was a gift from the gods and belonged to the insignia of imperial power.

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[4] Tubielewicz, J. *Historia Japonii*, Wrocław, 1980, pp. 275–280.

[5] Gordon, A. *Nowożytna historia Japonii. Od czasów Tokugawów do współczesności*, translated by I. Merklejn, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 29, 37–38; Tubielewicz, J. "Samuraj." *Kultura Japonii. Słownik*, Warsaw, 1996, pp. 267–268; Henshall, K. G. *Historia Japonii*, translated by K. Wiśniewska, Warsaw, 2011, p. 76.

[6] Tubielewicz, J. "Miecz japoński." *Kultura Japonii…*, op. cit., pp. 198–201.

[7] Polak, K. *Leksykon broni japońskiej*, Warsaw, 2007, p. 7.

[8] Ibidem.

[9] Hakusui, I. *Miecz samurajski*, translated by M. Matusiak, Bydgoszcz, 2009, p. 13.

[10] Śpiewakowski, A. *Samuraje*, translated by K. Okazaki, Warsaw, 2007, p. 59.

Improvement in fealty was one of the ways of striving for salvation, understood in terms of Buddhist ideals as a liberation from temporal conditions and an experience of enlightenment. Thus, some warriors practiced asceticism; the masters of martial arts there were also monks, because schools for the use of weapons were also located in Buddhist monasteries. Fluency in the art of fencing, the desire to get to know oneself deeply, and to exist in accordance with the laws of nature was a conglomerate of the way of the sword (*kendo*), resulting from the interpenetration and combination of Shintoistic, (Zen) Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian ideas. A specific mysticism of sword and feudalism emphasised the fact that fencing is an exercise of life energy, and in combat the most important thing is not the weapon, but the man who through long practice achieved extraordinary physical fitness, being a testimony of perfection, self-control, and inner harmony.[11]

> The way samurai behaved was regulated by a specific code of ethics (*bushido*); it emphasised nobility, and in the face of the feudal lords it emphasised the ideals of loyalty, fidelity, and even filial love. A samurai should be honourable, brave, reserved in his behaviour and speech, persistent, and always ready to die.

The process of forging the sword contained religious or, more precisely, magical elements; it was believed that the armourer was to be helped by good spirits and even gods; amulets were used to protect the forge from evil spirits. The art of fencing was also interpreted as a gift of bloody deities interfering in human conflicts and teaching their faithful followers the secrets of swordsmanship.[12]

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[11] Tokarski, S. *Sztuki walki. Ruchowe formy ekspresji filozofii Wschodu*, Szczecin, 1989, pp. 56, 69–75.

[12] Zwoliński, A. "Sztuki walki. Kendo." *Leksykon współczesnych zagrożeń duchowych*, Krakow, 2009, pp. 533–536, 541–542.

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## THE EFFECT OF IMPERFECTION

The heroes of samurai paintings are both historical and fictional characters. The most famous authentic figure, repeatedly shown in film, is Miyamoto Musashi, the most perfect swordsman of medieval Japan. He was a painter, a writer, and the creator of the original technique of fighting with two swords, who was invincible in more than sixty duels and called "the holy sword" (*kensei*). Legend has it he lost a battle with an old monk and was enlightened at that time, because there was only one thing he lacked: the experience of losing. As Musashi claimed, victories in swordplay duels raised doubt in him: for he was always wondering whether he had reached perfection or whether he had won thanks to the weaknesses of his opponents.[14] Death therefore reveals a kind of imperfection in the rivals of the master swordsman, who set himself an inner illumination for life. His opponents appear to be inferior warriors not because of their combat skills and lack of training, but above all because of their moral condition. However, most of the films about Musashi remain in the convention of a historical-adventure spectacle, which overshadows the inner vision of battle as a way of reaching perfection, enlightenment, and salvation.[15]

## THE WAY OF BRINGING BACK JUSTICE AND SOCIAL ORDER

Among the fictional characters who are the protagonists of samurai films, there is the lonely *ronin*, often cynical, but not without a sense of honour and justice. In Kurosawa's film *Yojimbo*, Mifune portrayed a warrior who is somewhat forced by

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[13] Tubielewicz, J. "Bushido." *Kultura Japonii*…, op. cit., pp. 38–39; Śpiewakowski, A. op. cit., p. 13.

[14] Tokarski, S. op. cit., pp. 63–64.

[15] See e.g. the Oscar-winning Samurai film *Miamoto Musashi*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki in 1954. Factual information about the films comes mainly from the relevant pages of the website www.filmweb.pl.

circumstances to fight a gang terrorising a town. Betrayed and beaten, he barely escapes with life and hides in a small temple. He no longer has his sword; a knife is all he has left. He realises that he would be doomed to lose a potential fight because the leader of the gang has a weapon even more effective than a sword: a revolver. However, the lone *ronin* practises stubbornly throwing the knife and secretly receives an old sword from the intimidated inhabitants; once he learns about the imprisonment of the man who helped him, the samurai sets off for the village. The final sequence of the film shows the victorious fight of the *ronin* against the bandits.[16] A precise throw of the knife into the hand of the hermit holding the revolver reduces the thugs' advantage, and the samurai – a master of fencing – flashes his sword and takes down almost all the bandits one after another. The painting, full of symbolic content, shows the struggle of good against evil, the pursuit of perfection, and the desire to restore order and justice. Death inflicted by a sword seems to be the proper punishment for the thugs; the scene in which the samurai, with one precise cut, frees the man who helped him from his ties is significant. The sword, an instrument of death and punishment, turns out to be an instrument of liberation in this case. The words spoken by the *ronin* at the end of the film about order and leaving the scene of the struggle resemble the classic images of lonely sheriffs in westerns.[17]

A specific continuation of *Yojimbo* was *Sanjuro*, another work by the duo of Kurosawa and Mifune. This time, the *ronin* is entangled in a political conspiracy, helping rebels fight against corrupt officials. In the final duel, Sanjuro – like a true master – kills his opponent with one cut.[18] A lone samurai and his sword become the servants of justice, meting out punishment and defending a just cause. The death of the criminals is therefore again shown as a way of restoring social order.

## DEFENCE AND NECESSARY EVIL

The most outstanding work by Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai*, is a story about a group of *ronin* who, for a song, undertake to defend a poor village against forty bandits stealing crops from the peasants. The victory over the robbers is paid for by

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[16] Kurosawa, Akira, director. *Yojimbo*, 1961.
[17] Zinnemann, F., director. *High Noon*, 1952.
[18] Kurosawa, Akira, director. *Sanjuro*, 1962.

the death of four samurai.[19] Undertaking a fight when outnumbered, and against a dangerous opponent, because they had three rifles, is a clear illustration of not only the chivalrous ideal of defending the oppressed, but, above all, of the ethical principle of taking the side of the good and risking one's own life in the fight for justice. The protagonist of the film, an old, experienced samurai, an excellent warrior and swordsman, is at the same time a sage. He has not only a wealth of combat experience, but also wisdom, which manifests itself in perfect knowledge of human nature; this profound spiritual knowledge contributes decisively to the victory of a handful of knights over a band of cruel robbers. Death as the only means of defence and the beginning of a new one in a sense is shown as a necessary evil; the last words of the old samurai were, "We have survived again. We have lost again. The villagers have won." The young knight's choice of a further path, that is, either to continue the path of the sword or to abandon it for the love of the village girl, illustrates the eternal dilemma of choosing the right means to achieve one's goals. The words of the samurai are accompanied by an image of the graves of the fallen knights and the men and women working in the field.[20] It is difficult not to see in this depiction a criticism of combat as a way of life and an affirmation of everyday, ordinary effort as a creative element of human and inner development.

## THE SYMBOL OF THE STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY

The vision of struggle and death as the only way to restore social order is rooted in the Japanese tradition of public service and moral obligation. However, the Samurai code of conduct (*bushido*) has been criticised; the downfall of the knightly class was shown in *Harakiri*.[21] Its director, Masaki Kobayashi (1916–1996), in his next film, *Samurai Rebellion*, included a critique of tradition and the old cultural norms. The brilliant dramatic structure, depicting the conflict between a noble samurai and a cruel duke, was not only an allegorical picture of the clash of an outstanding individual with a dehumanised system of feudal power, but also a demonstration of the inner tension that resulted from the choice between

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[19] "Siedmiu samurajów." *Słownik filmu*, op. cit., pp. 569–570; Płażewski, J. *Historia filmu 1895–2005*, Warsaw, 2008, p. 245.

[20] Kurosawa, A. *Seven samurai*, op. cit.

[21] Kobayashi, M., director. *Harakiri*, 1962.

absolute obedience and unfaithfulness to the sovereign, loyalty to him and love and the desire to defend family happiness, dignity, and honour.[22]

In *Samurai Rebellion*, a feudal lord of the Sasahara family, a noble old samurai, (excellently portrayed by Mifune), defending the dignity of his family, rebels against the local ruler and takes up a battle he is doomed to lose.[23] The battle for dignity – despite the death of the samurai, his son, and daughter-in-law – was not fruitless: the surviving granddaughter is rescued by an old nurse, who – we may assume – will pass down to the child the memory of the family drama and the villainy of the ruler and the heroism of the grandfather, master of the sword.

## SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED

One of the characteristic heroes of samurai films is the figure of a blind man, a masseur, and a phenomenal swordsman. The blind warrior – Zatoichi – has been repeatedly shown in film.[24] He is not a nobleman, a samurai, so he has no right to carry a knightly weapon; he uses a simple sword hidden in a cane – the equipment of a blind man. He defends simple people from bandits, thus bringing upon himself the revenge of various gangs; however, he emerges victorious from all the fights and oppression. The advantage of the Zatoichi stems not only from his original way of fighting and masterful swordsmanship but, above all, from the fact that he recognises the surrounding reality better than the sighted. Death inflicted from the hand of a seemingly helpless blind man is sudden, unexpected; it strikes the wicked, punishing their iniquity and crimes. The tradition of the historical spectacle provides a background to show the eternal struggle of good against evil, humility against pride, and weakness and delusion against truth.[25]

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[22] "Kobayashi Masaki." *Słownik filmu*, op. cit., p. 326; Płażewski, J. op. cit., pp. 354–355.

[23] Kobayashi, M., director. *Bunt*, 1967.

[24] Cf. *The Tale of Zatoichi*, directed by K. Misumi, 1962; *Zatoichi*, directed by K. Misumi, 1967; *Zatoichi*, directed by J. Sakamoto, 2010. Since the beginning of the 1960s, more than twenty films about Zatoichi have been made in Japan, and television has broadcast a series with approx. one hundred episodes about him.

[25] *Zatoichi*, directed by T. Kitano, 2003; Płażewski, J. op. cit., p. 731.

## REVENGE HAS THE FACE OF A WOMAN

A specific heroine of samurai films is a killer woman. Yuko Koshima, the Lady Snowblood, when asked who she is, answers that she is vengeance for the fate of the defenceless, who had suffered from the guilt of a man who had just been reached by her sword, hidden in the handle of her umbrella. Destined from the moment she was born to avenge her parents and brother, trained by a monk, she was supposed to forget about love and hatred, to think only of revenge, to be aware that she is not a person, but a beast, a demon, and that even the Buddha has turned his back on her. So she is determined to pursue the path of revenge, to kill all those who took part in the extermination of her family. The contrast between the abomination of crime and bloody revenge and goodness and beauty is highlighted by the fact that the title character is an exceptionally beautiful girl, with delicate, subtle features and a sensitive soul, who does not do evil unnecessarily. Her large eyes are sad; crying in the cemetery she expresses sorrow for the chance of family happiness lost due to the villains. However, the beautiful Lady Snowblood knows neither mercy nor forgiveness; she even kills the guilty party who expresses grief and repentance, confessing that from the day of the crime he has been plagued by remorse, begging for forgiveness and for his life to be spared.[26] Entangled in political intrigues, she helps with her unparalleled art of swordsmanship in the fight against a wicked authority.[27]

The figure of the killer-girl also appears in the new wave of samurai cinema. Azumi, together with a group of boys who, like her, are orphans, is brought up and prepared by a master samurai for the role of a professional killer; she is to have a heart of stone which should not know mercy. The last attempt before undertaking the mission, that is to say the assassination of evil magnates, is to kill the friend with whom she was trained. Azumi kills the boy, then turns out to be a ruthless, perfect, invincible warrior.[28]

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[26] *Lady Snowblood*, directed by T. Fujita, 1973.

[27] *Lady Snowblood II*, directed by T. Fujita, 1974.

[28] *Azumi*, directed by R. Kitamura, 2003; *Azumi 2: Death or Love*, directed by S. Kaneko, 2005.

**THE QUINTESSENCE OF EVIL**

One of the most brutal and bloody samurai films, *The Sword of Doom*, depicts a samurai angry to the bone, ruthless, cruel, cynical, and subject to the basest lusts and instincts; Tsukue kills an innocent man randomly and provokes a fight in which many knights die. Nothing has any value to him but improving his combat skills, for which even his father, who was also his first fencing teacher, curses him. The final scene of the duel, or rather a pure slaughter, takes place in a burning house, as if an image of hell, where only evil, violence, blood, and death are present.

One of the most interesting and suggestive scenes is the fight between the Grandmaster of the Sword, Shimada, and a large group of samurai. Shimada – the best swordsman in Japan at that time – defeats all the attackers. To their leader he says angrily, "through your careless audacity, I have had to sin by killing"; to Tsukue, who looks away, he says, "a soul is enchanted by the sword. He who studies sword fighting reaches deep into the soul. An evil heart leads a wicked sword." Tsukue decides not to duel with master, Shimada, because he realises that he would not have a chance of winning. The sword of doom is a drastic image of the dark corners of human nature, alienation, a sense of meaninglessness, and the spiral of evil intensified by pride.

**SAMURAI FILMS AS ARTISTIC INSPIRATION FOR WESTERN CINEMATOGRAPHY**

The comparison of Christianity with the ideology contained in samurai films can take place mainly on a moral level; however, such an analysis must also take into account the historical dimension, namely the Japanese Middle Ages, as the background for most samurai images.

Thanks to samurai films, Japanese cinematography has had a significant impact on the work of Western directors. The famous adaptation of *Seven Samurai* became a familiar-committees of the western: *The Magnificent Seven*; the adaptation of *Yojimbo* that was the motion picture *A Fistful Of Dollars*, in which the figure of a nameless gunfighter was played by Clint Eastwood; the image of a blind sword master, Zatoichi, was recreated in the motion picture *Blind Fury*; and the figure of a female avenger, warrior, and master of martial arts appeared in the *Kill Bill* series. A successful attempt to combine a samurai film with a western was the film *Red Sun*, directed by Terence Young (1915–1994), the creator of three James Bond films (*Doctor No* [1962], *From Russia with Love* [1963], and *Thunderball* [1965]) and starring a selection of world cinema stars: Toshiro Mifune, Charles Bronson, Ursula Andress, and Alain Delon. The most important attribute and symbol of samurai films, i.e. the historical sword, became a model of a sword of light, i.e. the noble weapon of Jedi knights from the famous film saga by George Lucas, *Star Wars*; the figure of Obi-Wan Kenobi also reminds one of Japanese fencing masters, whose art is the effect of inner perfection.[29]

## THE DECALOGUE AND THE GOSPEL TOWARDS THE IDEOLOGY OF SAMURAI FILMS

The various images of death which appear in Japanese samurai films, outlined and enumerated earlier, are a consequence of a certain tradition, worldview and mentality. It is definitely different from Western civilisation and customs, decisively shaped by the heritage of Greek, Roman, biblical, and, above all, Christian culture. The Decalogue and the Gospel have formed in Western civilisation a certain hierarchy of values, an ideal of behaviour, and a way of perceiving God, mankind, and the world.[30]

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[29] Cf. *The Magnificent Seven*, directed by J. Sturges, 1960; *A Fistful of Dollars*, directed by S. Leone, 1964; *Blind Fury*, directed by P. Noyce, 1989; *Kill Bill vol. 1*, directed by Q. Tarantino, 2003; *Kill Bill vol. 2*, directed by Q. Tarantino, 2004; *Red Sun*, directed by T. Young, 1971; *Star Wars*, directed by G. Lucas, 1977.

[30] It should be remembered here that from the very beginning of the existence of mass media (which in some way include film), the Church has been watching them carefully, taking the view that their action cannot be reduced to the logic of the market alone, but should comply with moral law and rich in content containing humanistic and Christian values. Where it was contrary to human dignity and fundamental human rights, the Church held ritualistic positions. See A. Adamski, Bł. ks. Ignacy Kłopotowski (1866–1931) as an educator of conscious, critical and active media audiences, "Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej" 2010 nr 1, p. 76.

The comparison of Christianity with the ideology contained in samurai films can take place mainly on a moral level; however, such an analysis must also take into account the historical dimension, namely the Japanese Middle Ages, as the background for most samurai images. The individual films discussed above will therefore be compared to biblical norms and ideals, especially evangelical ones, as well as to the specific ways in which they were made during the European Middle Ages.

Although there are also themes in Western culture about the uniqueness of some kind of weapon (such as King Arthur's Excalibur, the swords of Lancelot, Count Roland, Charlemagne, or Szczerbiec – known from Polish history, and from literature – Zerwikaptur (Coif-snapper) of Longinus Podbipięta from *With Fire and Sword* and Scyzoryk of Gerwazy from *Pan Tadeusz* [Master Thaddeus]), they are not identified (like a samurai sword) with the soul of a warrior, despite its symbolic meaning. The Church's teaching clearly, unambiguously, and firmly distinguishes spiritual from material things and personal from subjective matters. Thus, a weapon is an ordinary, although sometimes symbolic item (like coronation swords), but only a tool. Christianity emphasises the importance of human free will, which can use tools as a means to do good or evil. In the Middle Ages, the Church raised knights to use their swords only to defend peace and order; the ceremony of fitting in as a knight was religious in nature.[31] The Church imposed penance for the task of death during a battle;[32] it even reminded the crusaders that killing enemies is a sin.[33] The various rituals accompanying the knight's fitting in, as well as the concepts of God's peace, asylum, and a just war were to tame the class of warriors, limit violence and injustice, and protect the vulnerable and most exposed to lawlessness.

Thus, the church showed the example of a noble warrior, knight, and protector of women, children, widows, and orphans. The conditions proclaimed by the Church for a just war, the preservation of God's peace, and the observance of truce and holy times and places were intended to mitigate as much as possible the effects of numerous wars and to reduce the number of private wars. One of the most important demands was to avoid unnecessary violence, atrocities,

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[31] Flori, F. *Rycerstwo w średniowiecznej Francji*, translated by A. Kuryś, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 112–116.

[32] Barber, R. *Rycerze i rycerskość*, translated by J. Kozłowski, Warsaw, 2000, p. 269.

[33] Aumann, J. *Zarys historii duchowości*, translated by J. Machniak, Kielce, 1993, p. 137.

repression, and looting; this demand was to protect civilians, especially women, the elderly, children, widows, and nuns, as well as other non-combatants, namely clergy, hermits, pilgrims, merchants, shepherds, farmers, and their goods. The rules of knightly orders, established during the Crusades, also contributed to the civilisation of the warrior class. Such values of the knightly ethos as honour, pride, and courage were enriched with tenacity and discipline, and above all with values that had an evangelical basis: modesty, humility, obedience, and piety.[34]

> The lack of respect for life can be regarded as one of the fundamental differences between the Japanese society shown in samurai films and the Western culture shaped by Christianity.

Fighting, which has always involved some kind of evil, including the greatest evil – murder – has not been understood by the Church as a way of achieving perfection and salvation. In antiquity, the Church advised the faithful against professional military service, because this profession could be associated with killing.[35] The message of the Gospel shows the vision of salvation as a gift and, at the same time, as a task that requires an appropriate moral condition, a specific way of dealing with emergencies and everyday life. The teaching of the Church strongly emphasises that only good can build and be a creative force in mankind, our hearts and consciences, while evil is always destructive and leaves deep wounds

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[34] Cf. Contamine, P. *Wojna w średniowieczu*, translated by M. Czajka, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 274, 279–293; Barber, R. *Rycerze i rycerskość*, translated by J. Kozłowski, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 268–270; Flori, J. op. cit., pp. 102–103; Kusiak, F. *Rycerze średniowiecznej Europy łacińskiej*, Warsaw, 2002, pp. 10–13, 46–49, 71; Sire, H. J. A. *Kawalerowie maltańscy*, translated by H. Szczerkowska, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 34–35; Bordonove, G. *Życie codzienne zakonu templariuszy*, translated by A. Loba and M. Loba), Poznań, 1998, p. 34; Militzer, K. *Historia zakonu krzyżackiego*, translated by E. Marszał and J. Zakrzewski, Krakow, 2007, pp. 14–17; Ossowska, M. *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany*, Warsaw, 1973, p. 99.

[35] Hamman, A. G. *Życie codzienne pierwszych chrześcijan*, translated by A. Guryn and U. Sudolska, Warsaw, 1990, p. 75.

in the human soul. Therefore, Christianity opposes the vision of necessary evil and the principle that the goal sanctifies the means. For Christianity, killing as an illustration of its own perfection is not only a caricature of goodness, but above all, it is against the precept of the Decalogue.[36]

The lack of respect for life can be regarded as one of the fundamental differences between the Japanese society shown in samurai films and the Western culture shaped by Christianity. In the face of the phenomenon of violence, the Church has preached the doctrine of necessary defence and just war. It instilled in its rulers a sense of responsibility for the countries and people entrusted to them, and it stressed the importance of justice and the need to protect the weak.[37] In the hierarchy of knightly virtues it emphasised the importance of honour, but not as the most important value, for this has always been salvation and love of one's neighbour.

The feudal order, obedience to a feudal lord and even to a king, was not absolute by nature either, but was the consequence of a particular worldview in which the commandments of the Decalogue and the ideals of the Gospel were fundamental, overarching values. In the face of the wickedness of their actions, the rulers of their subjects could declare their obedience to him. The Church taught kings and princes sensitivity of conscience, called for the observance of God's laws, and proclaimed responsibility to the Creator and Saviour for their conduct and rules.[38]

The hierarchical social structure formed over the centuries in Western civilisation affirmed the class of warriors. However, Christianity also emphasised the value of all honest work in its spiritual dimension; in a system of feudal submission and coercion, it tried to weaken oppression and severity and defended the dignity of every human being.[39]

One of the most frequent motifs in samurai films is revenge. Christianity, on the other hand, aware that every evil can result in another evil, rejected vengeance as a motive for human behaviour; it even extended the call for loving one's neighbour to one's enemies and preached the principle of overcoming evil with

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[36] Wj 20, 13.

[37] *O dwunastu stopniach nadużyć*, translated by S. Bełch, London, 1996, pp. 51–53.

[38] Łęcicki, G. *Światło Ewangelii. Wpływ Kościoła oraz chrześcijaństwa na rozmaite dziedziny życia, kultury i cywilizacji*, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 98–105.

[39] Ibidem, pp. 72, 76–77.

good.[40] The commandment to love one's neighbour has resulted in the formation of a mentality and morality that affirms the idea of mercy, pity, and forgiveness, especially towards sinners, who repent their evil deeds.[41]

Duels are an extremely spectacular element in all samurai films. Impressive battle scenes, the poignant swish of a sword, and the original art of fencing create dynamic, expressive, and suggestive images. In this context, the Church's struggle to ensure that fighting, and thus violence, is not a way to settle disputes should be emphasised. The Church has consistently condemned duels and imposed sanctions on those taking part in them.[42] In medieval Europe, the testimony and demonstration of knightly skills were tournaments, which evolved into courtly spectacles. The Church condemned the tournament battles, as they were associated with fatal accidents and distracted knights from participating in crusades.[43] The Church's preaching of respect and sanctity of life also prohibited suicide.[44] The ritual suicide of samurai – *harakiri* or *seppuku* – is therefore foreign to Western culture and ethics.[45]

Christian education has always aimed to educate the good and the righteous; the overriding value of love of one's neighbour excluded and condemned the deliberate formation of sinful and evil behaviour. The Church has called for the imitation of Christ, moral perfection, mercy, and generosity – even towards wrong-doers.[46]

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[40] Cf. Prz 25,21; Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12: 19–21; "Zemsta." *Encyklopedia biblijna*, translated by zb, edited by P. J. Achtemeier, Warsaw, 1999, p. 1371.

[41] Cf. Delumeau, J. *Wyznanie i przebaczenie. Historia spowiedzi*, translated by M. Ochab, Gdańsk, 1997, pp. 17–20; "Miłosierdzie." *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, translated by K. Romaniuk, edited by X. Leon-Dufour, pp. 482–483.

[42] Woods, T. E. *Jak Kościół katolicki zbudował zachodnią cywilizację*, translated by G. Kucharczyk, Krakow, 2006, pp. 220–222.

[43] Brzustowicz, B. W. *Turniej rycerski w Królestwie Polskim w późnym średniowieczu i renesansie na tle europejskim*, Warsaw, 2003, pp. 70, 77–78, 139–146.

[44] Woods, T. E. op. cit., pp. 218–219.

[45] Frederic, L. *Życie codzienne w Japonii u* progu *nowoczesności 1868 -1912*, translated by E. Bąkowska, Warsaw, 1988, pp. 145–146.

[46] Cf. Luke 6:27–38; Sikorski, T., and Zubierbier, A. "Miłość." *Słownik teologiczny*, edited by A. Zuberbier, Katowice, 1998, p. 293; Vauchez, A. *Duchowość średniowiecza*, translated by H. Zaremska, Gdańsk, 1996, p. 126–27; Idem. "Święty." *Człowiek średniowiecza*, translated by M. Radożycka-Paoletti, edited by J. Le Goff, Warsaw–Gdańsk, 1996, pp. 407–409.

Christianity, by proclaiming equal dignity for both sexes,[47] has shaped a new female ideal. The cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the perfect model of piety, motherhood, and mercy, had the greatest influence on the formation of the medieval ideal of a Christian woman. Imitating the heroic trust in God, the boundless maternal love of Mary to her Son, and emphasising her qualities as Comforter and Guardian, influenced the profile of both the folk religiousness and the piety of women from higher social strata and ruling families.[48] The ideal of a good, right-wing, merciful woman therefore ruled out vengeance and killing as a motive for behaviour. The pattern of friendship formed in Western civilisation emphasised mutual help, solidarity, and trust;[49] it therefore ruled out murdering one's friends.

These Christian values are in clear contrast to many of the ideas contained in samurai films. It should be stressed, however, that this type of media message does not fully reflect the historical truth. Contrary to reality, in samurai films, religious elements appear sporadically and rather marginally, while the truth about samurai religiousness is deeper and more complex; inflicting death was not an act of indifference; even tempered samurai became monks to pray for their victims; the cult of the dead and the pursuit of unity and harmony with nature were an important factor in samurai piety.[50]

In samurai films, however, one can also find intuitions and images close to the Western, Christian understanding of spiritual reality. The inner bondage to evil or the pride shown in *The Sword of Doom* are not far from the reality known to the Church. The ideals of helping the weak and the oppressed, defending order and justice – presented in the films *The Seven Samurai*, *Sanjuro*, and *The Guard* – are consistent with the demands placed on Christian knights. Film stories about Lady Snowblood and Azumi are very different from the educational and moral demands of Christianity and contradict the ideal of femininity proclaimed by the Church. The most significant difference, however, is the relationship to life; the lack of respect for life, as clearly shown in the films about Musashi and Zatoichi,

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[47] Galatians 3:28.

[48] Rajman, J. "Kobieta." *Encyklopedia średniowiecza*, Krakow, 2006, p. 493; Idem. *Maria, Najświętsza Maria Panna, Matka Boża*, p. 613.

[49] Ozorowski, E. "Przyjaźń." *Słownik podstawowych pojęć teologicznych*, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 231–232.

[50] Cf. Frederic, L. *Życie codzienne w Japonii w epoce samurajów 1185-1603*, translated by E. Bąkowska, Warsaw, 1971, p. 135; Śpiewakowski, A. op. cit., p. 14.

may be due to the belief in the repetition of lives that contradicts the Christian doctrine of the one-off nature of human life.

Christianism interprets human life and conduct in an eschatological perspective; it shows humanity's personal responsibility to God for the way we live our temporal existence.[51] The vision of death, judgment, eternal salvation, or condemnation has had a significant impact on the understanding of death. Since ancient times, the Church has called on the faithful to prepare for the end of the earthly pilgrimage and prayed for a sudden and unexpected death that would make reconciliation with God and neighbour impossible; the Christian *ars moriendi* taught responsibility and living death with dignity as a transition to a new life.[52]

An analysis of the various images of death presented in samurai films reveals significant differences in worldview, morality, and mentality from the hierarchy of values formed in Western culture under the influence of Christianity. These differences may seem less and less clear, however, because in the current era of a globalised media message there has been a departure from the traditional morality shaped by Christianity.[53]

## About the autor

Grzegorz Łęcicki – born in 1958 in Warsaw. He holds a PhD in theology and is a press and radio journalist, an academic teacher teaching journalism at the Institute of Media Education and Journalism at the Faculty of Theology of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and the Warsaw School of Humanities named after him. He is the author of over 10 books, including 5 on the life and ministry of the Holy Father John Paul II, biographies of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Father Zdzisław Peszkowski, Bolesław Prus, and, recently, "*Wyjątkowy poradnik szczęścia małżeńskiego*" [An Exceptional Guide to Marital Happiness].

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[51] *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, pp. 1006, 1013–1014, 1021–1035, Poznań 2002, pp. 251, 253–258.

[52] A. Adamski points out that death is not the end of a person's story, whether an atheist or a believer. For an atheist, the recording of their image, for example on a photograph (or film), is a way to survive in human hearts and memory. From the point of view of a Christian, at the moment of death, a person's story passes into another dimension – the eternal "now" and the way of cognition, which does not need to refer to the senses ("Fotoreportaż jako forma narracji." *Mistrzowie literatury czy dziennikarstwa?*, edited by K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, W. Furman, and J. Snopek, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 147–148.

[53] Peeters, M. A. *Globalizacja zachodniej rewolucji kulturowej. Kluczowe pojęcia, mechanizmy działania*, translated by G. Grygiel, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 41–43.

**Magdalena Szpunar**

**Jagiellonian University**

# On the essence of mindfulness in an inattentive world

## O istocie uważności w nieuważnym świecie

### ABSTRACT

The article deals with issues related to the practice of mindfulness. The history of the models is presented, but the focus is on the importance of the process of correcting defects and thinking. The practice of mindfulness, understood as the process of accelerating out of negative mental ruts and the burden of ruminative thinking, has contributed to improving the quality of life and the overall general understanding of the well-being of individuals.

### KEYWORDS:

mindfulness, high-speed societies, narrative mode, mental ruts, ruminative thinking, mental well-being

### ABSTRAKT

W artykule zostaje podjęta problematyka związana z praktykowaniem uważności. Przedstawiona zostaje historia pojęcia, ale przede wszystkim jego znaczenie w procesie korygowania wadliwych modeli myślenia i funkcjonowania. Praktykowanie uważności rozumiane jest jako proces uwalniający od negatywnych kolein umysłowych i obciążającego myślenia ruminatywnego, przyczyniający się do poprawy jakości życia i polepszenia ogólnego dobrostanu jednostek.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

uważność, społeczeństwa wysokich prędkości, tryb narracyjny, koleiny umysłowe, myślenie ruminatywne, dobrostan psychiczny

> *We live longer but less thoroughly, and we speak shorter sentences. We travel faster, farther and more often, and we bring slides instead of memories.*
>
> Wisława Szymborska

We live in a 'high-speed society',[1] which makes us act in a manner that is automated and lacks attention and reflection, trying above all to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in every field of our activity. As we live more and more

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[1] Rosa 3–33.

quickly, we function inattentively, and we are usually chronically dispersed and absent. The permanent rush makes us distracted because too many stimuli compete for our attention. As we find it difficult to maintain concentration and focus, we make more mistakes and wrong decisions. In a state of constant tension, it is difficult for us to control our emotions and the constant flow of thoughts. The remedy in this quite exhausting and *de facto* dysfunctional situation for an individual is to practice mindfulness. It not only corrects the flawed models of our thinking and functioning, but above all it contributes to improving our quality of life and, therefore, our general well-being.

Mindfulness has been popular in Western culture since the late 1970s, and it has been maintained in Eastern cultures for 2,500 years.[2] In ancient texts, mindfulness appears in the context of dealing with pain (both physical and mental) and as a practice for maintaining mental well-being.

The topic of mindfulness in journalism is usually understood in three ways: as a certain theoretical construct (the idea of mindfulness), as practices for maintaining mindfulness (e.g. meditation), and as psychological processes.[3] A review of the definition of mindfulness allows us to treat it as a state of consciousness, or meta-consciousness. Mindfulness can be understood as a state of consciousness for which emotional stability, sensitivity, and emotional maturity are appropriate. Attention processes are understood as systematic training which results in deepening one's own consciousness, modelling (or rather correcting) one's own automatic behaviour, and – last but not least – developing a positive attitude towards oneself and others. What should be considered particularly valuable in mindfulness training is the possibility of regulating one's own emotions, directing attention, extinguishing memory processes (especially the negative or ruminating ones), and working out a decency that allows one to take a glance at oneself, rejecting negative, self-judging perspectives.

The popularisation of this concept should be attributed to Jon Kabat-Zinn,[4] who understands mindfulness as an judgment-free consciousness of what is happening at a given moment. In this context, James M. Dunn writes about 'bare

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[2] Holas, "Mindfulness a depresja" 35.

[3] Germer.

[4] Kabat-Zinn.

attention',[5] which allows us to experience our own thought processes without changing, categorising, or valorising them. For the sake of mindfulness, it is important to try not to reject or deny one's own emotions, whatever they might be. Rather, it is about looking kindly at them, accepting them in an affirmative way, without expressing any valorising judgment or referring to oneself and one's 'Self'. Thoughts and emotions, even if they concern the Self, neither have to specify nor define it. In other words, one should not immediately make a negative use of them and contribute to a pejorative self-valorisation.

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The process of decentration, which means the ability to refrain from identifying with one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, is very important in achieving mindfulness.[6] Decentration allows one to separate one's own thoughts and feelings, which involves deep insight and self-reflection. In other words, mindfulness is an experience that allows one's own thoughts, feelings, and impressions to be accepted with openness and curiosity[7] without experiencing a valorising automa-

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[5] Dunn.
[6] Kuyken et al. 1105–1112.
[7] Bishop et al. 230–241.

tism. We can say that mindfulness allows cognitive distance. It allows us to experience what we might call a 'childlike delight' inherent in the early stages of child development, but generally absent in the later stages of life, through ubiquitous attitudes of certainty. John Keats interestingly described this state as a 'negative capability', which means accepting uncertainty and doubt without having to immediately seek facts and a cause. This creates an accepting attitude towards what is happening, creating such an important space between the stimulus and the reaction to it, freeing us from the negative automatism of reaction.

There are many definitions of mindfulness. We will refer to a few of them in order to better understand the essence of the key category for our deliberations. There are explanations that treat mindfulness as an invaluable observation of an emerging stream of stimuli (both internal and external);[8] others specify an awareness of current thoughts, feelings, and surroundings and an acceptance 'of this awareness with openness and curiosity, without judging'.[9] Others in turn indicate a full awareness of what is happening at the moment 'without any filters or assessment lenses. It can be used in any situation (…) mindfulness is cultivating mind and body awareness and living here and now'.[10] Finally, it can be described 'as awareness and acceptance of a current experience'.[11] A review of the definition of mindfulness allows one to differentiate between three of its key dimensions: intentionality, which means an intentional directing of attention, underestimating acceptance, and focus on the present (topicality).

It is important to point out that there are significant differences between people when it comes to the distinction of mindfulness – some have it as a matter of course, while others who are a bit less attentive can acquire it through mindfulness training. It turns out that people who have high levels of mental well-being, self-esteem, and a positive assessment of their quality of life are usually more attentive.[12] Research indicates that being attentive increases our ability to regulate our emotions and our self-acceptance.[13] People who are attentive to stressful situations deal with them more neutrally, tend to avoid them, and try to resolve

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[8] Baer 125–143.
[9] Hawn and Holden.
[10] Stahl and Goldstein.
[11] Siegel.
[12] Brown and Ryan 822–848.
[13] Jimenez et al. 645–650.

them constructively once they appear.[14] Equally important is that practising mindfulness makes it possible to stop the so-called flight of ideas and general anxiety.[15] Having said that, a low level of attention is usually associated with high levels of stress and general individual psychopathology.[16]

> Almost half the time our mind is functioning in a state of 'being busy', immersing itself in the uncontrolled thinking that I propose to call 'thinking diarrhoea' by analogy to the phrase 'verbal diarrhoea'. An important practice developed in mindfulness training is rejecting the drifting narrative of the mind, which always finds an object of reflection. Such a 'talkative' mind usually works in a habitual way, using cognitive scripts known to it. This unstructured, free thinking usually directs our thoughts towards the negative, guiding our consciousness towards ruminative ruts.

Different kinds of associations, feelings, and thoughts (*wandering minds*)[17] constantly recur through the mind and field of attention of every person, which is appropriate for the standard mode of the mind (*default mode*). The inclination of the mind to 'wander' is a natural process and affects 46.9% of our time on av-

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[14] Weinstein et al. 374–385.

[15] Gu et al. 1–12.

[16] Cash and Whittingham 177–182.

[17] Herbert Simon pointed out that the wealth of information implies a poverty of attention. Attention, although crucial in the process of assimilating new information, is a poorly developed resource. The abundance of information reaching us makes the human mind seek ways to deal with excess stimuli. This entails indifference to this information, which it treats as over-programmed. For more on this subject, see Szpunar.

erage.[18] Therefore, almost half the time our mind is functioning in a state of 'being busy', immersing itself in the uncontrolled thinking that I propose to call 'thinking diarrhoea' by analogy to the phrase 'verbal diarrhoea'. An important practice developed in mindfulness training is rejecting the drifting narrative of the mind, which always finds an object of reflection. Such a 'talkative' mind usually works in a habitual way, using cognitive scripts known to it. This unstructured, free thinking usually directs our thoughts towards the negative, guiding our consciousness towards ruminative ruts.

The ability to recognise negative patterns and thought processes within oneself, such as rumination, allows one to nip them in the bud, shifting one's attention to what is happening at a given moment,[19] and not to what we are currently thinking, not letting ourselves be overwhelmed by negative thinking. As research shows, excessive reflection and anxiety can easily lead to a variety of mental problems, with depression and anxiety behaviour at the forefront[20] – hence the importance of focussing not on thoughts, but on the body and its sensations in terms of attention.

Depression is usually attributed to two factors – cognitive responsiveness, understood as reacting to small mood changes combined with negative thinking,[21] and the previously mentioned ruminative style of thinking. Rumination is usually defined[22] as persistent, negative thinking which is repetitive, intrusive, and beyond our control. People characterised by ruminative thinking tend to assume that it will solve their problems, although the exact opposite happens.[23] Ruminant people tend to worry too much; they repeatedly and persistently analyse many life situations. In each of these situations, they find fault or misconduct in themselves, and self-blame is their dominant thinking strategy. It is important for such people to 'switch' from thinking about to experiencing directly – their body, for example. In their carefulness, therefore, it is important to be more deeply rooted in the body, not in what they think. Thoughts should not be treated as facts or dogma relating to the Self, but rather as certain events in the mind that do not

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[18] Killingsworth and Gilbert.
[19] Piet and Hougaard 1032–1040.
[20] Querstret and Cropley 996–1009.
[21] Segal et al. "Mindfulness-Based".
[22] Brinker and Dozois 1–19.
[23] Lyubomirsky and Nolen-Hoeksema 176–190.

necessarily valorise the Self. Even if they are negative, they should be seen as mere thoughts, not an image of oneself.

Attention training studies show that it improves the mental well-being of people with depression, and by developing their ability to enjoy life and see the positive aspects of everyday life, it minimises the negative effects of depression.[24] It is worth noting that the meta-analysis, which covered over 12,000 patients, has proved[25] that attention training in the treatment of depression has proved to be as effective as psycho-education, cognitive-behavioural therapy or pharmacotherapy.

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[24] Geschwind et al. 618–628.
[25] Khoury et al. 763–771.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) uses a mindfulness-based stress reduction method combining elements of Jon Kabat-Zinn's concept[26] and selected elements of cognitive-behavioural therapy.[27] It integrates observing breathing, body scanning, elements of yoga or meditation, psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioural therapy techniques – which are characteristic of mindfulness[28] – as well as informal mindfulness practices, which may be manifested, for example, by the careful performance of domestic activities. In the course of training, it is crucial to develop a greater awareness of one's own feelings and thoughts, as well as to learn new ways of responding to them, mainly through acceptance and compassion, rather than fighting against or rejecting them.[29] As Paweł Holas aptly puts it, 'An accepting, compassionate, and open-minded attitude towards all experiences, including the painful ones, has a paradoxically transformative power – it gives space and the possibility to change a habitual response'.[30]

MBCT training allows people with a tendency for depression to avoid self-blaming strategies that can induce depressive thinking.[31] As a result, habitual reactions, known as 'mental ruts',[32] are replaced by conscious responses to the emotions concerned. In other words, we can say, following Krystyna Pospiszyl, that mindfulness helps to 'straighten faulty thinking'.[33] Zindel V. Segal et al. perceives this category similarly, and considers that it allows 'disconnecting from useless modes of mind when necessary and turning on more useful ones'.[34] The reduction of the automatic response allows an awareness of choice and a space to respond to occur, which is the result of reflection, not the effect of automatism resulting from a stimulus and a thoughtless response to it.

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[26] Kabat-Zinn 33–47.

[27] Beck et al.

[28] Cognitive-behavioural therapy is one of the most effective methods of therapy, willingly used by psychotherapists in Poland as well. It is this type of therapy that proves to be the most effective in the fight against depression and also anxiety disorders. The key techniques for CBT include the safe place C technique. Herbert, J. Young's change protocol, working with the List of Important Life Events, reconstruction and reparenting.

[29] Holas, "Mindfulness a lęk" 35–38.

[30] Holas, "Wstęp" 20.

[31] Feldman and Kuyken 143–155.

[32] Williams et al. 275–286.

[33] Pospiszyl 92.

[34] Segal et al., "Antidepressant monotherapy" 1256–1264.

Mindfulness allows one to 'be above the situation', which is referred to in the literature as the ability to self-distance,[35] self-distance,[36] self-disconnecting,[37] or prescinde from being oneself.[38] These processes, however, have nothing in common with dissociation, which means dissociation, which means dissociating or detaching one's own experience from consciousness.[39] This fact of being above the situation means taking a distanced attitude that is appropriate for an observer, being rather aside than in the middle of a situation. This state of 'being alongside' makes it easier to distance oneself and engage less intensively, which is particularly important in difficult situations. It is important to focus on what one experiences rather than on what one can intellectually work out and interpret.

Neuroscience research clearly indicates that the human mind works in two modes – the (narrative) action mode and the 'being' mode.[40] The mode known as being is considered more useful for practising mindfulness. In this mode, the mind focusses on perceiving and accepting a given moment. The mode of being makes sure that

> feelings do not immediately trigger automatic sequences of actions in the mind or body to stop pleasant feelings and get rid of unpleasant ones. This necessarily entails a greater capacity to tolerate unpleasant emotional states, which is not accompanied by the immediate activation of habitual patterns of mental or somatic action to avoid or alleviate these states.[41]

In opposition to it is the action mode, also known as the narrative mode, which enables planning, action, and verbalisation as well as comparison. The action mode causes the mind to see the difference between what it sees as desirable and how it assesses a given situation. This implies the automatic induction of negative emotions, as well as certain habitual scripts that allow for the reduction of this discord.

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[35] Wolicki 77.
[36] Popielski.
[37] Frankl.
[38] Szajda 35.
[39] Drat-Ruszczak 623.
[40] Farb et al. 313–322.
[41] Segal et al. 66.

What we call the neuroplasticity of the brain is responsible for the process of changing our modes of thinking. This means the brain is constantly able to produce new neurons and neural connections up to the stage of old age.

> According to research, every episode of depression shifts the threshold for it to occur. In other words, as time goes by it takes less and less to lower one's mood and thus cause depression. People who have had episodes of depression are more likely to think negatively about themselves and their future than people who have not experienced depression at all.

In recent research, it was pointed out that the brain is developing at all ages and that people practising long-term meditation can change the structure of their brain and how it works.[42] For example, the disappearance of grey matter, which is specific to ageing, can be stopped precisely by systematically practising mindfulness.[43]

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There is quite a general consensus among psychologists to recognise mindfulness training as a stress buffer and for dealing with difficult situations. It should be remembered that social support plays an important role in reducing stress, as it

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[42] Dunn.
[43] Doidge.
[44] Post 149, 999–1010.
[45] 46
[46] Teasdale et al. 615–623.

reduces the negative aspects of difficult experiences.[47] Therefore, if we perceive the people around us as supportive and helpful, emotional tension in a difficult situation will be reduced quickly, which is conducive to overall health.[48] Therefore, *mindfulness* is thought to be of great importance in such situations, which allows one to perceive a given situation as milder, with some distance to it, and, consequently, one can be less negatively involved in it.

People suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder experience a reduction in the volume and density of grey matter in the hippocampus, due to excessive and prolonged cortisol secretion.[49] Eight-week stress reduction training contributes to a significant increase in the density of grey matter, the left hippocampus, and the anterior cingulate, which is associated with pain and depression.[50] In the case of meditation practitioners, changes have been identified in the part of the brain responsible for observing internal sensations. Meditation prevents the negative impact of stress on the brain 'which has important consequences for many mental disorders in which the hippocampus structure and function play an important role'.[51]

There are a number of studies confirming the effectiveness of attention in reducing overall stress, alleviating both mental and physical pain, and minimising the negative effects of depression, thereby increasing an individual's overall mental well-being and self-complacency. Mindfulness allows us to look at ourselves from a distance, from the point of view of an observer, freeing ourselves from negative mental ruts and overwhelming ruminative thinking. The human mind functions almost half the time in a state of drifting thinking diarrhoea, so mindfulness allows one to calm down and free oneself from the cycle of thoughts and the intrusive rethinking of the same thing. Mindfulness allows one to recognise negative patterns of thinking, redefining them so that they no longer play a self-destructive role. Mindfulness allows us to correct even what we usually consider automatic and impossible to change. The mere perception of excessive thinking made possible by practising mindfulness is valuable, because it usually leads meandering minds to self-blaming and negative self-valorisation and, consequently,

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[47] Cohen and Wills.
[48] Creswell et al. 560–565.
[49] Bremner et al.
[50] Holzel et al.
[51] Lazar 327.

to depression. Mastering the ability to regulate one's own emotions, to direct attention, and to extinguish memory processes, especially the negative, ruminating ones, allows one to function more cheerfully and kindly towards oneself and others.

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## About the autor

Magdalena Szpunar – associate professor and D.Sc. in sociology specialising in media science, sociology of the Internet, and new media. She works at the Institute of Journalism, Media, and Social Communication of the Jagiellonian University, where she heads the New Media Department. More about the author at: www.magdalenaszpunar.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-1245-5531

## Karolina Świrska-Czałbowska

**Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University**

# The image of Poland and Poles in European public discourse: An analysis of polls and articles from the Western press, 2004–2017

## Obraz Polski i Polaków w europejskim dyskursie publicznym. Analiza wyników badań opinii publicznej i artykułówz prasy zachodniej w latach 2004–2017

### ABSTRACT

The concept of this paper is to present how Poland and the Polish people were perceived in the "old" EU countries prior to the Polish accession to European Union and how the Polish people were evaluated in the context of the "eastern enlargement." The article is an attempt to answer whether the image of Poland has changed due to the inclusion of Poland in the European institutions, and to what extent, as well as how the 13 years in the EU structures have influenced the perception of our country, amongst both the EU political elites and ordinary citizens. The sources used include public opinion polls, both Polish and international, as well as articles, mainly from the English-language press.

### KEYWORDS:

European integration, Polish image, cultural stereotypes, dynamics of change

### ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest pokazanie wizerunku Polski i Polaków w krajach „starej Unii" oraz zanalizowanie jak Polacy byli oceniani przed akcesją do Unii Europejskiej w 2004 roku i jak są postrzegani obecnie. Niniejsze studium próbuje pokazać, czy w wyniku włączenia polski do struktur europejskich wizerunek naszego kraju się zmienił i na ile; jak nasza ponad 13 letnia obecność w strukturach unijnych wpływa na postrzeganie naszego kraju zarówno wśród elit politycznych państw unijnych, jak i zwykłych obywateli. Wykorzystane są badania opinii publicznej, polskie i międzynarodowe, jak również artykuły prasowe, głównie z prasy anglojęzycznej.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

integracja europejska, wizerunek Polski, stereotypy kulturowe, dynamika zmian

> "Europe is something distant, which you have to reach,
> and which you also have to deserve…
> It is also something precious and classy: elegant attire,
> unique appearance, and even the way people smell"
>
> Slavenka Drakulić "Cafe Europa"

Poland became a member of the European Union in May 2004. It had long been obvious for the societies of the old EU Member States and for their governments that the extension of the EU borders toward the east would pose new challenges. Changes were envisaged for the European Union itself, as it was at the time, and for the rules dictating the Union's functioning, causing a lot of concern among the inhabitants of many Member States. Concern and uncertainty were present on both sides, that is, among the candidate Member States and the old EU-15 Member States. Therefore, it is reasonable to try to present the image of Poland and the Polish people in the "old EU" Member States against the background of the "expansion to the east," and to investigate any changes of this image as a consequence of Poland's accession to the European structures.

The earlier expansion projects – the expansion "to the north" in 1973, "to the south" in 1981 and 1986, and to the "neutral states" of 1995 – did not give rise to so much controversy. The countries that joined the strong and rich Union did not differ significantly from the existing Member States in terms of affluence and civilization advancement (the differences were not particularly significant during the expansions "to the north" and the "southern states"). At the time of the "expansion toward the east" of 2004, however, the situation was different: the new EU member states had only entered the Western path of development less than twenty years before, and they still failed to match the EU member states in terms of the condition of their economy, their political maturity, or their political traditions.

The candidate states' evaluation criteria were also subject to a lot of changes and verifications. As Lena Kolarska-Bobińska wrote on the eve of the integration: "politics and 'soft', non-legal candidate assessment criteria are starting to play a more and more important role in the integration process, not defined or verified, typically based on the stereotypes of countries and societies, as well as the traditions of the historical relations among the states. Hence, it becomes essential to define the image of Poland and the Polish people currently prevailing in the EU Member States, as it promotes the right information and lobbying policies and

because integration primarily implies a close cooperation among the populations, regions, organizations. ... One way to advance our country's position is to change the perception of Poland. This is because the perception of reality is as important as 'hard' facts, ratios, and numbers."[1,2]

Wally Olins, a British expert in nation branding, head of Saffron Brand Consultants, a consultancy that was working together with *Instytut Marki Polskiej* [the Polish Brand Institute] on rebranding Poland, claimed that a good corporate brand is an asset and a value that translates into net profits. Moreover, a well-conceived and perfected image of a state plays a key role in economic and political international relations. Without such an image, gaining foreign investors' confidence and making a presence on the international stage is challenging. Olins presented the following main claims:

1. In the contemporary world, there are three essential fields of economic competition among countries: acquisition of foreign investments; tourism; and export of goods and services.
2. A vast majority of countries and regions that have succeeded in attracting foreign investment were following carefully conceived promotion strategies and creating their image in a structured way (e.g., Wales or Ireland).
3. National stereotypes can significantly affect an individual countries' growth perspectives. Building a "positive stereotype" can make a product's origin an advantage in pursuing sales markets (Brazil).
4. In tourism, there is a huge pricing competition. An attractive geographic location or beautiful nature are no longer sufficient, and nowadays countries attempting to attract tourists have to distinguish themselves from others. Using the same techniques as those applied by suppliers of consumer goods, they have to show what makes them unique (Portugal).
5. States compete with each other using advanced marketing tools. Commercial success depends on whether the images concerning foreign investment, export, and tourism are coherent and mutually supportive – hence the importance of planning, coordination, and systematic management of the national brand (examples of comprehensive branding policies are Spain and the United Kingdom).[3]

Unfortunately, at the time of its accession to the EU, Poland did not enjoy a positive image of itself among its neighbors or more distant Western European states. This issue did not only affect Poland. Even though the countries of the

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[1] Kolarska-Bobińska 10.
[2] Olins 133–164.
[3] Ibidem.

former Eastern bloc began to support democratic ideas after the fall of communism, their status became different than that of Western European countries, due to the inferior condition of their economies. Even in the official EU nomenclature, the Central and Eastern European countries were labelled as "the other Europe". This, in turn, translated into attitudes, summing up the policy of Western Europe toward the candidate states. Andras Koves noted that

> a common issue that the Central and Eastern European countries share is the need to coexist and to function in an atmosphere which they perceive as relatively condescending. All the predictions and outlines made them feel that they were not as important for the rest of the world (which, in their view, meant the Western World) as they could wish."[4]

## THE IMAGE OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE OLD EUROPEAN UNION (EU-15) MEMBER STATES AT THE TIME OF THE EU ACCESSION

Central and Eastern Europe heritage was identified with a heritage of conflict and resentment (e.g., the German issue), a lack of political traditions (such as pluralism or debate), economic underdevelopment (a lack of entrepreneurship and imitative instead of endogenous growth). The differences in political culture (a lack of stability, frequent government changes, and conflicts between politicians and the population) had a strongly negative impact on the perceptions of the Eastern European countries. Because of these characteristics, the Western elites were skeptical about the political elites of Eastern Europe after 1989. The status quo would be compared to the first years after the war in Germany and Italy, facing a shortage of public order and harmony, when the people – tired after the war – tended to sympathize with anti-democratic forces.

The essential differences and deficiencies for which the Central and Eastern European countries were reproached can be divided into three categories: political/social; economic; and infrastructural. Among the political/social issues were recognized a different political culture; a lack of stability of the political map, wariness of the political elites as successors of post-communism making them unreliable partners for discussion; and unpredictability of public opinion. Another

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[4] Koves.

allegation was Poland's old-fashioned social and vocational structure, originating from the domination of an administrative command economy, which was incompatible with the requirements of a capitalist economy and the free market. It was claimed that too many people were working in the farming and industry sectors, with a weaker role of the services sector and modern professions (business, banking, insurance, real estate, etc.). Obsolete, relatively unproductive farming in Poland allegedly needed not only a lot of investment from the EU but also funding from Poland itself. There were also mentions of extensive bureaucratic state systems, low wages, low purchasing power in the population, and passive attitudes toward employment.[5] The requirements imposed by the European market were expected to modernize the types and proportions of jobs in the Polish society, leading to further social costs.

The following aspects were recognized as economic differences: an old-fashioned economic structure; industrial production estimated to be 30%–50% below the standards required by EU-15 Member States; excessive use of materials and energy; returns from production at significantly lower rates than those generated in the West; and unstable financial markets. There were mentions of shortages of modern infrastructure: an inadequate road network, underdevelopment of inland transportation and air transport, substandard condition of the telecommunication networks, and disregard for environmental protection rules.

Other barriers were the law not matching the principles of the market economy and the level of foreign debt, determined at USD 99.2 billion in 1989 for the Central and Eastern European countries (Poland's debt was estimated at USD 40.4 billion and USD 1,078 per capita; Hungary's was USD 19.7 billion and USD 1,873 per capita; and Czechoslovakia's was USD 6.9 billion and USD 431 per capita).[6] Moreover, there were concerns about the EU quality standards being an entrance barrier for Polish businesses, preventing them from entering the European markets, as they would not be able to meet those standards without prior modernization efforts and investment. Further important issues included the economy in the border regions, particularly in the eastern part of the country which, through the isolation and tightening of the border, was expected to be deprived of regular sources of income. Curbing the grey zone of border region trading turned out to

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[5] For a broader discussion on that topic, see Wnuk-Lipiński.

[6] Płonka 59.

be a blow to the economic interests of the eastern territory of Poland, causing resistance among the affected part of the population against further changes.

All these issues delayed the negotiation process and the admission of the Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union. It was alluded to them that the consent to their EU membership would depend on their preparedness and compliance with the EU's political and economic requirements.

So, which factors supported the admission of these countries as new EU members? There were mentions of a higher level of safety in Europe, as a result of discontinuation of the cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries. There were concerns about an outbreak of conflict and unrest in that part of Europe, along with the assumption that the Western governments would have to intervene. Closer relations were also supported by the prospects of gaining tens of millions of new consumers as a market for Western European products, as well as a cheaper workforce for Europe's industry. The advantages derived from the increased trading volume and the economic growth in the Eastern countries were expected to be conspicuous all across Europe, not just in the new Member States. There was also a certain relevance to the cultural and historical associations of the Central and Eastern European countries, which spoke in favor of them joining the EU. The prevailing opinion was that the Union composed of 25 members would increase its political potential in the international arena even more.

## "WELCOME TO THE EU IF YOU HAVE TO," OR THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE OLD MEMBER STATES TOWARD THE EXTENSION

Because the acceptance of the integration process in the Member States was one of the objectives set for the EU's communication policy, the people of the old and new EU Member States were regularly polled to determine their attitudes toward the integration process. As described by Prof. J. Holzer, "the starting point for any analysis of mutual perceptions should be an extensive asymmetry. Western Europe's culture, political, and civilization transformations have always been watched and studied here with a lot of interest. However, the Polish culture and the ongoing changes that are taking place in Poland and in the other Visegrád countries were marginalized within the area of the Western interests, more like an exotic item than equal neighborhood."[7]

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[7] Holzer.

The people of the old EU Member States perceived the Eastern European countries' accession in a completely different way than the people of the new aspiring members.

Table 1. The issues related to the enlargement of the European Union

| Claim | Agree | Disagree | Undecided |
|---|---|---|---|
| The more member states belong to the EU, the higher the Union's global importance will be | 67% | 17% | 16% |
| With more EU members, Europe will become culturally richer | 61% | 31% | 8% |
| More Member States mean a stronger guarantee of peace and safety in Europe | 59% | 25% | 16% |
| Before the admission of new Member States, the EU must reform its institutions | 59% | 16% | 25% |
| Extending the EU with new members means lower funding aid for my country | 47% | 26% | 27% |
| The more member states belong to the EU, the higher the unemployment rate in my country | 35% | 41% | 24% |
| EU enlargement with new Member States means less importance of my country in Europe | 34% | 47% | 19% |
| EU enlargement does not imply higher costs for the existing Member States | 28% | 49% | 23% |

Source: Eurostat Yearbook 2001: The Statistical Guide to Europe, Data 1989–1999[8].

The poll showed that 51% of people in Austria, 47% of Germans, and 46% of Greeks agreed with the claim that "the more member states belong to the EU, the higher the unemployment rate", while 62% of Dutch, 60% of German, and 58% of Austrian people answered "yes" to the question about the costs of the EU extension for their respective mother countries. The citizens of Ireland (68%), Denmark (62%), Greece, and Finland (61% each) were concerned about reduced financial aid as a consequence of the extension, yet the percentages of the population approving of the new member states' accession were highest in Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden. The levels of approval found for Belgium, France, and Luxembourg were much lower.

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[8] www.eurostat.com.

Moreover, definitive sympathy or antipathy toward individual candidates could be observed. The Greek people were strong supporters of the accession of Cyprus to the EU (88% support), whereas such nations as Austria and Germany were reluctant to welcome Romania to the Union (14% support in Austria and 17% in Germany). Equally pronounced was the decrease of support for the admission of such countries as Poland and Hungary.[9]

The old EU members' societies were happiest to see Norway and Switzerland in the Community, as they were rich countries at a high level of civilization advancement which would not need funding. Subsequent community polls proved that the trend of decreasing sympathy toward the eastern expansion was maintained. The levels of support for the enlargement among the societies of the old EU 15 Member States, according to the Eurobarometer study no. 59, from spring 2003 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. EU Member States vs. the Eastern enlargement

| Member State | For (%) | Against (%) | Undecided (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sweden | 56 | 34 | 10 |
| Finland | 50 | 40 | 10 |
| Netherlands | 48 | 38 | 14 |
| Italy | 60 | 19 | 21 |
| United Kingdom | 36 | 36 | 28 |
| Denmark | 63 | 25 | 12 |
| Belgium | 38 | 44 | 18 |
| Luxembourg | 53 | 40 | 7 |
| Germany | 42 | 39 | 19 |
| Austria | 43 | 44 | 13 |
| France | 31 | 54 | 15 |
| Spain | 60 | 17 | 23 |
| Portugal | 60 | 22 | 18 |
| Italy | 59 | 22 | 19 |
| Greece | 71 | 19 | 10 |

Source: Eurobarometer no. 59, spring 2003

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[9] Walkiewicz 57; for a broader discussion of that topic, see also European Commission.

There was a prominent decrease of the number of supporters of the EU expansion to the east. In Belgium, the number of people against uniting the continent exceeded the number of supporters. A similar situation occurred in France and Austria. There were also major decreases of endorsement in Finland, the Netherlands, and Germany. In France, with its traditionally strong anti-American sentiments, Jacques Chirac commented on Poland's involvement in a war that was highly unpopular in Europe by "accusing them (the Eastern European countries) of acting irresponsibly by expressing their opinions.[10] Time after time, comments would appear in the press to describe the Member States' increasing reluctance toward the admission of new members: "Welcome to the EU if you have to,"[11] "Rough accession,"[12] "Economic apartheid,"[13] or "No illusions."[14]

In 2001, there was a lot of publicity about a qualitative survey report drafted by OPTE, a French research agency hired by the European Commission, entitled "The image of the European Union, the social attitudes and expectations in the 15 member states and the 10 candidate countries." The study was organized in coordination with local research agencies, with the objective of determining the mutual perceptions of the citizens of the old EU member states and the candidate countries. The Polish part of the study was conducted by BSM Social and Marketing Study Agency, and the results were presented, on the Polish Press Agency site, among others.[15]

The report presents Poles in a way that can be considered insulting. Here is a set of quotations from this extensive 200-page compilation:

> The Poles are concerned about forever remaining poor, unfamiliar, and disrespected relatives (p. 12). The concerns surpass the hopes which, for reasons of extraordinary pessimism, they are unable to express (p. 17).
> Polish people consider themselves to be the poor, without proper access to the society of the wealthy. Their poor language competencies limit their communication ability. As a matter of fact, they are characterized by an inferiority complex, linked to the negative perception of the Poles abroad, where they are seen as fraudsters

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[10] Blankley.
[11] Bielecki and Stankiewicz.
[12] Bachman.
[13] Saryusz Wolski.
[14] Dawidowski.
[15] Dessler.

and thieves … Added to this is the vivid national sentiment, which can finally be fully expressed after years of foreign occupation and partitions. Their feeling of dignity is primarily defensive (p. 47).

The image of the Community which prevails among us is that of an economic union of rich countries. The goals at its foundation are neither very popular nor appreciated.  The Poles have a tendency to bring everything down to economic categories (p. 80).[16]

Further research of the images of countries and nations was carried out by *Instytut Spraw Publicznych* [the Public Affairs Institute] in 2003. It covered almost all the Western European states (Austria, Spain, Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany). The results of these studies also demonstrated that Poland or other Central and Eastern European countries were not treated as equal partners in the negotiation process. Most respondents did not have any opinion about Poland at the time; ignorance prevailed with regard to all the strategic growth areas of Poland. Only 15% of the people in Germany, Austria, and Spain and 18% of those in France were aware that there was a market economy functioning in Poland, whereas only 30% of Germans and Austrians and 25% of French people believed there was democracy in Poland. One third (32%) of the respondents in Germany and Austria declared that our parliamentary system was similar to the one prevailing in Western Europe.[17] The image of Poland as a candidate country was completely different than that of the EU member states:

The Central and Eastern European countries were perceived within the Union as distant in terms of geography and civilization, economically and politically different from the old member states. Poland was seen as dissimilar to the respondent's respective country: Catholic, traditional, backward, strongly corrupt, with a poor work organization and an economy not matching the economies of the European Union member states. … In the eyes of the West, Poland has liberated itself from communism, but has not yet managed to overcome the political and economic consequences of that political system.  However, the Western societies are unaware of the position Poland is in right now, how far it has gone away from communism, or when it will begin to resemble the European Union states.[18]

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[16] "*UE- Polak to pazerny fatalista*; for a broader discussion of the subject, see Skotnicka-Illasiewicz.

[17] Kolarska-Bobińska 9–16.

[18] Ibidem.

In terms of research, it appears to be equally interesting to investigate how the EU negotiators perceived their Polish counterparts in the accession process:

> It was obvious for the Commission officials that the candidate states were more interested in joining the Union and quickly negotiating the agreement. The eastern enlargement countries, even compared to the southern enlargement states, were perceived as countries with no other alternative. ... It was a source of controversy when confronted with the pressing attitudes of the candidate countries' representatives: 'They have very high aspirations, but very poor arguments on their side." ... In the case of Poland, there was the unique belief of the "non-compatibility of its interests with those of the EU." Spain used to be perceived in a similar way. ... For a comparison, Scandinavian countries were considered perfectly prepared, with a professional administration, "rich, well known, close friends." However, the eastern enlargement candidates were seen as poor, distant relatives, "second class passengers."[19]

Thus, at the time of the EU expansion, the elites and the peoples of Western Europe perceived us as a backward, economically underdeveloped country. For most of them, Poland was *terra incognita*, and no special chance was on the horizon for changing the situation. Paradoxically, even the famous Poles, attracting national pride in Poland, such as Chopin, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, or Copernicus, were not always identified with Poland. The former two are still perceived as French, and the latter as German.[20] A certain ambiguity was noticeable in Poland's status during the negotiation process: namely, Poland was considered one of the most important new member states, due to its size, population, geography, and economic growth rate. On the other hand, however, we were often reproached for "Poland being a candidate that balanced on the border of falling off the first wave of enlargement, being poorly prepared for integration (in comparison with Hungary and Slovenia, for example), with a lot of deficiency in the process of adopting *acquis communautaire*. ... There were some strongly emphasized suggestions to the effect that Poland's attitude was harmful not just for the country itself, but to other candidates as well."[21] When the Iraq war started, the list of national flaws was extended with the "double loyalty" we showed toward the Western European countries' governments. There were voices about Poland's "blind pro-American-

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[19] Commission officials interviewed for Victor Martinez Reyes (213–214).
[20] Grzeszak.
[21] Warchala.

ism" and the Polish "Trojan horse." Had the decision about EU accession been determined by referenda or the support of member states' societies, our accession to the Community would have been very improbable.

## THE IMAGE OF POLAND AND POLES IN THE OLD EU MEMBER STATES DURING THE POST-ACCESSION PERIOD: POLAND'S INITIAL SUCCESSES

Today, more than a decade after our country's accession to the European structures, the same question needs to be asked: How is Poland perceived today? Has its image changed significantly, has it improved and if so, to what extent?

Firstly, it should be noted that Poland's and the Visegrád countries' accession to the EU structures automatically translates to an improvement of their image, as it means a "formal recognition by other Member States that Poland has fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria, meaning that it is a state built on the basis of the rule of law, respect for the rights of minorities, and the market economy."[22]

Even though it is not common knowledge among the Polish or international public, Poland is climbing up the top economy lists and strongest country brand lists. According to the Country Brand Index report by the agency Futurebrand, Poland moved up the list by three positions in 2011, then ranking 79th out of 113 countries. Yet just a year later, in August 2012, according to Brand Finance agency, which estimates national brand values worldwide, **"Poland's national brand recorded the largest spectacular growth of value and, for the first time in the history of the classification, found itself among the top 20 most valuable brands worldwide."**[23] Poland moved up from 24th to 20th, and the value of the Poland brand was determined at USD 472 billion for the first time. Of all the surveyed nations and their brands, the value of Poland's brand experienced the highest rate of increase, at 75%. According to the authors of the survey, Poland achieved these rates due to its anticipated 3% growth in GDP, which is considered a particularly rapid growth rate.

Another success was recorded by Poland in the latest World Bank "Doing Business 2017" classification. Out of the 190 surveyed countries, our position was 24th, one number higher than in 2016. The main reasons behind this

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[22] Fomina and Frelak 11.
[23] Niklewicz 261–262.

advancement were the reforms of the tax law, restructuring, and bankruptcy law, which contributed to a significant improvement of the status of business owners in Poland. We are now ahead of most countries in our region: the Czech Republic ranked 27th, Slovakia 33rd, Romania 36th, Bulgaria 39th, and Hungary 41st. Only the Baltic states ranked higher than us: Estonia moved up from 12th to 10th, Latvia ranked 14th, and Lithuania ranked 21st.[24]

> The Polish society is considered one of the youngest on the continent, which – in view of the demographic crisis among the aging populations of Western Europe and the problems they are facing as a consequence of generational imbalance, low performance of the pension system, and the need to import a workforce in the future – presents Poland as a country of new opportunities.

Poland is more and more often perceived as a country of new opportunities, with economic growth rates reaching above 3% GDP per year. At the time of accession to the European Union, the nominal GDP value in Poland was at PLN 883.7 billion; 10 years later, this value was already at PLN 1,635.7 billion, which was almost twice as much. GDP per capita in 2004 was at 50.5% of the EU average; 10 years later, it exceeded 66.8% of the EU average. If a similar economic growth rate is maintained, GDP per capita in Poland is expected to reach 70% of the average in the old EU-15 member states by 2025.[25]

The value of foreign investment in Poland is steadily increasing, evidence of more confidence from Western business owners in our country. With the EU subsidies, Polish towns and cities are developing as well. The Polish society is

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[24] http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2017
[25] http://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/PKB-na-osobe-w-Polsce-goni-srednia-UE-Mocny-wzrost-do-2018-roku-7255686.html

considered one of the youngest on the continent, which – in view of the demographic crisis among the aging populations of Western Europe and the problems they are facing as a consequence of generational imbalance, low performance of the pension system, and the need to import a workforce in the future – presents Poland as a country of new opportunities.

Polish business operators are also gaining confidence in winning foreign markets. Here, KGHM Polska Miedź SA is the leader among Polish companies, and the "made in Poland" identification is receiving better and better associations in consecutive countries. Specifically, buses with the Polish brand Solaris travel the roads of Norway, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Pesa, in Bydgoszcz, manufactures trains that are operated not only in Poland but also in Russia, Czechia, Germany, and Italy. Polish windows from Fakro, Drutex, and Oknoplast find buyers in Ukraine, Hungary, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Austria, Switzerland, Australia, and the Middle East. Ursus exports its tractors to African markets, while Inglot has found customers for its cosmetics not only in Western Europe and the United States, but also in the Philippines, India, Arab countries, and South Africa. CD Project had its commercial displayed in Times Square, New York City, and it sold 16 million copies of its game "The Witcher" worldwide. Audioteka, with its proprietary audiobook selling scheme, is gaining popularity worldwide.[26]

The Polish premium brands are also becoming more and more popular. Ninety percent of the yachts from Sunreef, Galeon, and Delphia are exported all over the world. Polish vodkas such as Belvedere and Chopin are considered luxury products. Irena Eris is present in Germany and the United Kingdom (its products are available from Harrods, London); in France, it has made its presence in the prestigious Comite Colbert. Polish hotels and spa travel are starting to score high as well. Polish businesses are marking their presence in the segment of luxury brands.

Last year, Poland ranked among the 20 most frequently visited countries in the world. Since 2000, 220 million tourists have visited Poland, which made Poland the 18th most popular country worldwide and the 11th most popular country for tourists in Europe in 2015.[27] On November 1, 2015, Lonely Travel experts

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[26] http://www.polandgoglobal.pl
[27] http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,100896,19329021,polska-w-pierwszej-dwudziestcenajchetniej-odwiedzanych-krajow.html

recognized our country among the ten worldwide and one of only two in Europe which were awarded the title of "Best in Travel 2016."[28] The Lonely Travel experts paid special attention to the following towns in Poland: Wrocław, as the European Capital of Culture 2016; Krakow, as the location of World Youth Day 2016; Łódź; Szczecin; and Gdańsk; among other interesting regions, they included the Masuria lake district and Białowieża forest. As estimated by the Polish Tourist Organization, 16 million tourists came to Poland in 2014, or 1 million more than in 2012. Most of the tourists come to us from Germany, Czechia, Ukraine, and Slovakia, but also from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. At the moment, earnings from tourism in Poland amount to 5% of GDP each year.

The election of Donald Tusk as president of the Council of the European Union and Elżbieta Bieńkowska as the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, notwithstanding the comments in Polish, was initially perceived as a success for Poland. Among the international opinions, the prevailing approach was that it did not equate to Poland achieving equal status with that of the remaining EU-15 member states, but rather of an international position which had been completely unavailable for Poland before.

## POLAND MORE THAN 10 YEARS AFTER ITS EU ACCESSION: POLISH AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION POLLING

The opinion polls carried out in Western European countries, however, demonstrate that Poland is still perceived as one of the poorest countries in Europe. Greece is presented in a similar way today. "European perception of life in other countries,"[29] a survey conducted in March 2016 by Livewhat, an agency affiliated with the Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite) at Geneva University, indicated that only 25% of the respondents from the surveyed countries were of the opinion that the living conditions in Poland were good. Also, most of the respondents claimed that living in Poland (and in Greece) was "worse than the country thinks," while the Polish people had a more positive image of their neighbors.  For comparison, Switzerland and Sweden scored highest among all the subjects; Germany

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[28] http://www.pot.gov.pl/nowosci/l/wiadomosci/wiadomosci-z-pot/nagrody-best-in-travel-2016-rozdane- polska-w-czolowce-swiatowych-destynacji-turystycznych

[29] Livewhat, Geneva-based survey, quoted in "*Green-eyed continent*".

ranked high as well. The position of Greece was the lowest in the classification: in most of the surveyed countries, only 10% of respondents believed that the living conditions are adequate there. The Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy scored slightly better than Poland. Interestingly, most citizens of the surveyed countries (France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland) declared that living in their neighbor's country is better than in their home country (Table 3).

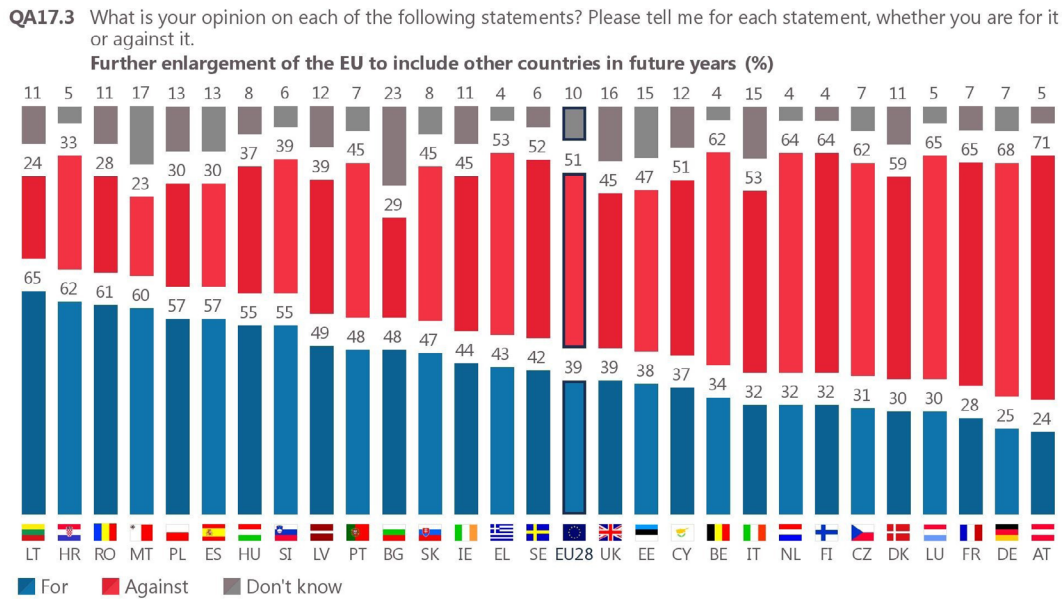Table 3. Europeans' perceptions of life in other countries
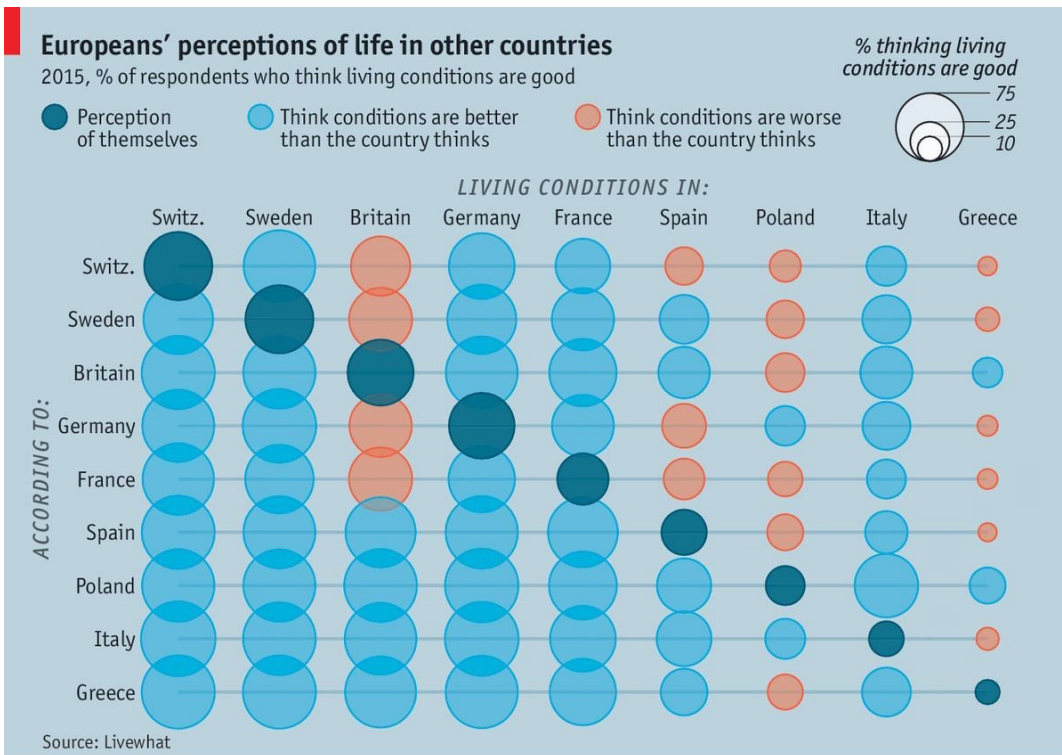


Source: Livewhat, Geneva-based survey, "The Economist", 29-03-2016

It is symptomatic that the support for further EU enlargement in the old EU-15 states is maintained at a low level. The latest Eurobarometer study of November 2016 showed that the support for further expansion of the Union in among founder members was still low: 71% of the people in Austria, 68% of those in Germany, and 65% in France or Luxembourg stood against the process. The EU

citizens demonstrating a high level of support of the EU enlargement usually were from the recently admitted countries, such as Lithuania (65% positive responses), Croatia (62%), or Romania (61%)[30] (Table 4).

Table 4. Support for further enlargement in the European Union member states



**QA17.3** What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.
**Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years (%)**

| | LT | HR | RO | MT | PL | ES | HU | SI | LV | PT | BG | SK | IE | EL | SE | EU28 | UK | EE | CY | BE | IT | NL | FI | CZ | DK | LU | FR | DE | AT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Don't know | 11 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 13 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 23 | 8 | 11 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 15 | 12 | 4 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Against | 24 | 33 | 28 | 23 | 30 | 30 | 37 | 39 | 39 | 45 | 29 | 45 | 45 | 53 | 52 | 51 | 45 | 47 | 51 | 62 | 53 | 64 | 64 | 62 | 59 | 65 | 65 | 68 | 71 |
| For | 65 | 62 | 61 | 60 | 57 | 57 | 55 | 55 | 49 | 48 | 48 | 47 | 44 | 43 | 42 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 37 | 34 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 31 | 30 | 30 | 28 | 25 | 24 |

■ For ■ Against ■ Don't know

Source: Standard Eurobarometer no. 86, November 2016

The image surveys carried out by Pew Research Center, on the other hand, focused on a more delicate subject, i.e., mutual national stereotypes.[31] In the 2013 Pew study, Germans were chosen as the "most trustworthy" nation, but the respondents also voted for them as the "most arrogant" and "least compassionate" (responses chosen by the majority of the subjects). In this classification, Poles were described as the "least arrogant" and the "most compassionate" by their compatriots only, whereas the other subjects did not mention Poles in these categories (Table 5).

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[30] Standard Eurobarometer 22.
[31] https://richardbrenneman.wordpress.com/2013/05/14/chart-of-the-day-how-europeans-see-each-other/

Table 5. Building stereotypes in Europe



## Stereotyping in Europe

### Who Is Trustworthy, Arrogant and Compassionate

*EU nation most likely to be named…*

| Views in: | Most Trustworthy | Least Trustworthy | Most Arrogant | Least Arrogant | Most Compassionate | Least Compassionate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Britain | Germany | France | France | Britain | Britain | Germany |
| France | Germany | Greece | France | France | France | Britain |
| Germany | Germany | Greece/Italy | France | Germany | Germany | Britain |
| Italy | Germany | Italy | Germany | Spain | Italy | Germany |
| Spain | Germany | Italy | Germany | Spain | Spain | Germany |
| Greece | Greece | Germany | Germany | Greece | Greece | Germany |
| Poland | Germany | Germany | Germany | Poland | Poland | Germany |
| Czech Rep. | Germany | Greece | Germany | Slovakia | Czech Rep. | Germany |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q44a-Q46b.

Source: Pew Research Center, May 2013

> The image of Poland that is presented by the Polish opinion polls and research papers published in Poland irrefutably seems to be more positive than that transpiring from Western reports or statistics. Here, the focus is on the growth rate of positive change, the decreasing distance toward the developed countries, and the progress we have managed to achieve recently; in the articles and papers published in Western countries, the main emphasis is on the reluctance toward further enlargement presented by the Western societies, as well as the threats occurring on the job market as a consequence of the migration waves or the negative perception of the eastern enlargement.

The Germans were presented as the "most hardworking" and the "least corrupt" in all the comparisons. The opinions on the Greeks were the worst. On top of the disgraceful list of the "least hardworking" and the "most corrupt" nations (Table 6), there are usually the nations of Southern Europe – Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks.[32] None of the surveyed nations mentioned Poles in their responses, which may be a source of optimism, as the high level of corruption was one of the negative features we were accused of at the time of EU accession.

Table 6. Building stereotypes in Europe

### Stereotyping in Europe

#### Who Works Hardest, Who's Corrupt

*EU nation most offered as top choice as...*

| Views in: | Most Hardworking | Least Hardworking | Most Corrupt | Least Corrupt |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Britain | Germany | Greece | Italy | Germany |
| France | Germany | Italy | Italy | Germany |
| Germany | Germany | Greece | Italy | Germany |
| Spain | Germany | Greece | Spain/Italy | Germany |
| Italy | Germany | Romania | Italy | Germany |
| Greece | Greece | Italy | Greece | Germany |
| Poland | Germany | Greece | Poland | Germany |
| Czech Rep. | Germany | Greece | Czech Rep. | Germany |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q50aCOMBO, Q50bCOMBO, Q51aCOMBO, Q51bCOMBO.

Source: Pew Research Center 2012, "The Economist" 4-06-2012

The reason that no specific mentions of Poland were made in the Pew survey could be that the image of Poland at the time, as the experts pointed out, was as a "country without a face,"[33] without a clear-cut image against the international background. The OBOP survey for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implied that the image of Poland and Poles in the West was incoherent; on the one hand, the image

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[32] Santoso.
[33] Smoczyński; Poland's Marketing Strategy in the tourism sector for 2008–2015; Analysis of Poland's image and Poland's brand worldwide perception survey results 2008.

of our country was considered **unremarkable**, while on the other hand it was noted that "the image of the Polish people is better, more prominent than the image of the entire country in a vast majority of cases."[34]

Unfortunately, this does not mean that the image of Poles is identical in all countries; specifically, the TNS OBOP 2013 survey demonstrated that Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Ukrainian people exhibited the most signs of sympathy toward our country. The fewest supporters were in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany, which is very characteristic because the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom were the most popular destinations for Polish migrants after 2004.[35] Another quite obvious conclusion might be that Western Europeans see us as the East of Europe, whereas for the people from the East of Europe, e.g. for the Ukrainian nation, "Poland is already the West."[36]

It would be reasonable to study the results of surveys regarding the image of Poland in selected EU member states. *Instytut Spraw Publicznych* [the Institute of Public Affairs] carries out regular research projects dedicated to the mutual perceptions of Poles and Germans, called the "Poland–Germany Barometer". ISP's research indicates a certain duality in Germany's perception of Poland.[37] On the one hand, Poland was even recently associated with a tough economic situation, pushing its people away in order to engage in low-skilled, seasonal jobs; the famous *Polnische Wirtschaft* was a synonym of extreme mismanagement and a total mess. In some social circles, particularly in the border areas, there was a vivid stereotype of a Pole as a car thief[38] and an image of Poland as a country with a high crime rate. On the other hand, Poland is more and more often perceived from the

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[34] Laboratorium Badań Społecznych for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18.

[35] According to the data of the Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland (GUS), 2,397,000 Polish citizens were staying outside of Poland as of the end of 2015, which is the sum of the estimated number of temporary migrants and those who have settled permanently outside of Poland. Specifically, 720,000 Poles were staying in the United Kingdom in 2015 (or more than 1,000,000 according to unofficial data); 655,000 were in Germany; 112,000 were in the Netherlands; and 111,000 had moved to Ireland. The total number of Polish emigrants increased by 82,000 compared to the preceding year.

[36] Laboratorium Badań Społecznych for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 20.

[37] Instytut Spraw Publicznych.

[38] During the communist times, some sayings were established in everyday speech, such as "*Fast gestohlen, schon in Polen*" or "*Fahren sie nach Polen, ihre Auto ist schon da*," meaning "Just stolen, already in Poland" and "Go to Poland, your car is already there", respectively.

perspective of its rapid economic transformation, numerous investments in infrastructure, and mutual business relations. In 2016, the value of Polish–German trade exceeded €100 billion (€22 billion more than in 2013),[39] making Poland an essential trading partner for Germany. This is also relevant to the nations' mutual perceptions. Specifically, even though Germans had declared they were not of the opinion that Poles as people were similar to them and that they believed we were much closer to Russians,[40] in later surveys they declared a willingness to accept a Pole as a colleague (79% positive responses), as a citizen of their country (62% "yes"), and as a son-in-law (49%).[41] This indicates that the level of social acceptance shown by Germans towards Poles exhibits an increasing tendency.

In Belgium, there is also a certain duality in the perception of our country and our people; on the one hand, there is a prevailing stereotypical image of a Pole: a poorly-educated illegal immigrant worker in a low-skilled job, often a heavy drinker. Poland is perceived as a country with a slow growth rate, a cold climate, and a rough history (World War II and the communist years). On the other hand, in the opinion of the international public official population, the image of Poland is completely different, and the qualities attributed to Poles are "ambition, courage, go-getter qualities, youthfulness, and speed",[42] and the real potential and growth rate of our country is emphasized.

The image of Polish people in the United Kingdom is interesting. During the last 10 years, the perception of Poland has undergone improvement. The British people are mostly aware that Poland is a democratic country, where parliamentary democracy and a market economy prevails. Sixty percent of respondents claimed that they had had some contact with Poland or Poles and consider them trustworthy – they would accept Poles as tourists, neighbors, or family members. Even though only 6% of Brits had visited Poland, almost half of them believed that Poles are similar to them. However, the perception of Poles in the United Kingdom is not free of all burden; the Brits still consider Poland to be a poor and backward country, affected by corruption and bureaucracy; interestingly, they think

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[39] https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/tematyka/makroekonomia/wymiana-handlowa-miedzy-polska-a-niemcami-na-rekordowym-poziomie
[40] For a broader discussion on that topic, see Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
[41] For a broader discussion on that topic, see Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
[42] Laboratorium Badań Społecznych for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18.

it is a smaller, less-populated country than it actually is.[43] In their opinion, Polish immigration has caused an excessive burden to the British social security system and has contributed to higher unemployment rates in certain vocational groups, which may cause certain social clashes. Even though the negotiation process is still pending on the terms of the United Kingdom leaving the EU (the Brexit tensions) and on the limitations on immigrants from the EU using the British welfare system, we may say that there is a certain sympathy toward Poles in the UK. Their jobs are more and more frequently consistent with their profession, meaning that they work as physicians, nurses, engineers, or office assistants – not just as manual laborers. Whatever the level of qualification, their work is appreciated by British employers. "You are Britan's favorite migrants," the British conservative MP Greg Hands allegedly said to Poles.[44] Similar opinions can be encountered among the Poles residing in the United Kingdom. Dominika Swieżewska wrote that

> our hard work, education, and willingness to integrate makes the image of a Pole more and more positive. This is evidenced, for example, by the demand for Polish professionals in the Polish economy. Moreover, there are documents and institutions intended to make it easier for Polish people to integrate and live on the British Isles. Banks offer them loans, Polish women have children, Polish people invest in property and vocational courses. Research shows that Poles still feel more like guests than legitimate inhabitants of the United Kingdom. Yet everything seems to favor the claim that if we continue to work on our positive image, we are going to feel more at home in our migration destinations.[45]

It would be difficult to disregard the fact that migrants are becoming the showpiece of our country abroad and that the changes in the perception of Poland will depend on them. It should be emphasized again that the citizens of our country enjoy more sympathy and a more positive image than the Polish state, which presents itself better and more realistically among the European elites than among the ordinary people.

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[43] Ibidem.

[44] M.P. Garapich "*Migracje, społeczeństwo obywatelskie i władza. Uwarunkowania stowarzyszeniowości etnicznej i rozwoju społeczeństwa obywatelskiego wśród polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii* [*Migrations, civil society, and power: The criteria of ethnic association and development of civil society among Polish migrants in the United Kingdom*], in: Fomina, Frelak, quoted article. p. 14.

[45] Swieżewska.

The image of Poland that is presented by the Polish opinion polls and research papers published in Poland irrefutably seems to be more positive than that transpiring from Western reports or statistics. Here, the focus is on the growth rate of positive change, the decreasing distance toward the developed countries, and the progress we have managed to achieve recently;[46] in the articles and papers published in Western countries, the main emphasis is on the reluctance toward further enlargement presented by the Western societies,[47] as well as the threats occurring on the job market as a consequence of the migration waves or the negative perception of the eastern enlargement.[48] They also note the deficits and weak points of the new Member States.[49] Adam Balzer of demosEuropa defined the Poland–EU relationship as "platonic love."[50]

## "POLAND AS EUROPE'S NEW HEADACHE": POLAND AND POLES IN SELECTED MATERIALS FROM THE WESTERN PRESS

Special attention should be paid to the time period following the October 25, 2015 parliamentary election, when a large volume of articles were published in the Western media that presented Poland in a negative light. Correspondents the foreign press commented on the success of the Law and Justice (PiS) party as an election of "ignorant, xenophobic, even radical Poland." Here are some excerpts from their articles: "Poland has taken a dangerous course towards authoritarianism" [Translator's note: no such quote exists in the reference, so the sentence is my translation of the Polish original and not the English source, see https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/polands-disturbing-tilt-to-the-right/2015/11/29/480341e0-952a-11e5-8aa0-5d0946560a97_story.html][51]; "Poland has taken a turn toward Orbán-style authoritarianism" [Translator's note: no such quote exists in Zakaria's *GPS* transcript at the date given in the reference, so the sentence

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[46] Instytut Spraw Publicznych; Laboratorium Badań Społecznych for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[47] E.g., Standard Eurobarometer.

[48] Sedelmeier.

[49] Advisory Council on International Affairs; http://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2014/bal_comp_ib_eu_enlargement_july2014-9463.pdf.

[50] Balzer.

[51] Diehl.

is my translation of the Polish original and not the English source][52]; and Poland is bringing back "Soviet-style censorship which … should be a serious concern for the world" [Translator's note: only a part of this quote exists in the reference; the rest is my translation of the Polish original].[53] The following articles should be noted as well: "Barbed rhetoric"[54]; "Europe's new headache"[55]; and "Two weeks in, Poland's new government is making Europe nervous".[56] Because of the significant emotional component of these texts, they deserve a separate analysis.

Specifically, we can read in the piece entitled "Europe's new headache" that

> when PiS was last in power, its tenure was marked by erratic policies and nationalist paranoia; it appears not to have mellowed with time. The last time PiS was in power, in 2005–07, it picked fights with Germany and created an atmosphere of hysterical unpredictability. … [Poland] has been the flagship of the EU's eastward expansion, proof that democracy and the rule of law can spread. If PiS wants that era to end, it is going about it the right way. … This lurch towards populism will hurt Poland. But the broader worry is that it will cripple the EU on critical issues, particularly the refugee crisis.[57]

The narrative prevailing in the German media is surprisingly consistent, too. *Suddeutsche Zeitung* wrote,

> the new Polish government under its *Spiritus Rector*, Jarosław Kaczyński, immediately started to rebuild Poland into a state in which power is no longer divided and controlled, but rather concentrated entirely with Kaczyński and his nationalist PIS party.[58]

*Die Welt* published the following warning:

> The threat that has developed in Poland is no less than a dictatorship, not a communist one this time, but a nationalistic conservative one. This is not only very bad for Poland, but it also mocks the courage and sacrifice of the people who fought and died for democracy in Poland.[59]

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[52] Zakaria, CNN on Poland.
[53] Zakaria, op. cit.
[54] Foy.
[55] "*Europe's new headache.*"
[56] "*The return of the awkward squad.*"
[57] "*Europe's new headache.*"
[58] Ulrich.
[59] Dietrich.

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* gives the following summary: "The PIS government are doing everything they can to be perceived not as a policy determining force but rather as a problem."[60]

The content from Fareed Zakaria of CNN deserves special attention:

Events in Poland have taken a very ugly turn. [Since] the country's right-wing Law and Justice party won the majority in parliament, it has embarked on a dizzyingly rapid power grab that has drawn comparisons with a coup d'etat. In a legally questionable move, the new parliament voided the appointments of five judges to the constitutional court – so they could be replaced with ones to the party's liking… All of this is very troubling and surprising, because in recent years, Poland has been a rare pillow of stability in Europe. Over the last decade its economy grew 50 percent, *The New York Times* points out, and big companies like Ikea, Volkswagen, and Amazon all have made big investments there. Despite this rosy outlook, the previous ruling party, which had been in power for eight years, had worn out its welcome thanks to scandals and bad politics, so the electorate chose a new course. … Poland is under threat of "Soviet-style censorship" because freedom of the media is blocked all the time. [Translator's note: this sentence is absent in the original footage of Zakaria and its transcript available on CNN.][61]

Here is a summary from *The New York Times*:

Poland is on its way to a political avalanche, which will take it straight into the arms of brownshirt dictatorship. [Translator's note: this is the translator's version of the sentence written by the author of this paper, yet there is nothing of the kind in the original referenced article from *The New York Times*. This content simply does not exist in the original text. See https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/21/opinion/polands-tragic-turn.html.][62]

Fareed Zakaria on CNN again:

If the Republican candidate Donald Trump wins, America could follow in the footsteps of Poland and Russia, where democracy was broken. Democracy is fragile – look at Poland, Russia, and Turkey. [Translator's note: Zakaria never said those exact words, it is rather a compilation of several different pieces from different dates and times].[63]

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[60] Veser.
[61] Zakaria, CNN on Poland.
[62] "*Poland's Tragic Turn.*"
[63] Zakaria "*Global Public Square*", CNN on Poland, CNN.

The level of detail in these pieces is interesting, too. Many of them present the political debates in our country on an ongoing basis, as if the authors were perfectly in the current about the sequence of the political events in Poland.

*The Economist* usually publishes pieces that are not signed with the author's name. In terms of knowledgeability about Poland's internal affairs, this weekly is not in any way behind the largest Polish media outlets. Specifically, in "The return of the awkward squad", we can read the following:

> How the new social policies will be funded is unclear. The changes, especially on pensions, are very costly. The proposed taxes on banks and supermarkets cover only a fraction of their cost. The budget deficit could hit 4% of GDP next year. With an aging population and many young people leaving for elsewhere in the EU, lowering the retirement age seems disastrous. … European diplomats … Privately, many are worried.[64]

Here is a quote from "Courting disaster":

> Father Rydzyk, too, is disappointed in the new government. After a spat over access to the president, he threatened to break off co-operation, saying he expected his media outlets to be "treated differently". It remains to be seen whom Mr. Kaczynski and his party fear more: the EU or Radio Maryja.[65]

The piece entitled "Illiberalism lives" stated the following:

> During Ms. Szydlo's attempt to unseat Mr. Tusk, François Hollande, France's outgoing president, snapped that Poland might have the principles, but the EU held the structural funds. You often hear such threats in Brussels and Berlin these days, notably over the refusal of Hungary and Poland to accept refugees. Talks on the EU's next budget begin next year.[66]

Journalists and experts from Poland echo the content published by foreign correspondents. Piotr Buras said the following in his article, "Driving Poland apart", published in *The New York Times*: "The real crisis in Poland is not that the country is uniting behind the nationalist right. It is that Polish society is cleaving

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[64] "*The return of the awkward squad.*"
[65] "*Courting disaster.*"
[66] "*Illiberalism lives.*"

between traditionalism and liberalism."[67] Professor Jadwiga Staniszkis said in *Die Welt* that Jarosław Kaczyński "has no empathy towards his own nation."[68]

For a vigilant observer of the daily political scene, the above claims will not be new. A majority of the articles discussed above had their reverberations in the Polish press; they were widely commented upon here. The only surprising aspect can be the early suggestion that the "issues with democracy" are not just the Polish domain under PiS rule, but that Poland "has never been truly democratic before", as a matter of fact. Democratic legitimization was denied for the whole nation. In the January 2017 piece published in *Foreign Policy*, entitled "Poland was never as democratic as it looked", Sean Hanley and James Dawson suggested that

> the political transformation in Poland and in the other countries of the region was not particularly successful, whereas the process of building democracy was stopped halfway. ... The European Union tossed up on the wrong model of democratization for post-communist states. The policies of Brussels have failed because of the assumption that democratization of state institutions will lead to the implementation of democratic values in the society. (...) The superficial democracy is the fault of all the consecutive governments after 1989, and one year is too short to change the entire system of state institutions or the values represented by the society. [Translator's note: this quote, again, never appears in the original article. No idea how the author of this paper obtained the Polish version, or what the real source was. See the original at https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/03/poland-was-never-as-democratic-as-it-looked-law-and-justice-hungary-orban.][69]

Another surprising aspect for a representative of the Polish intelligentsia will be the dichotomy between the allegedly "altruistic west" and the "xenophobic east". In "Barbed rhetoric", Henry Foy and Neil Buckley wrote that

> the new members have largely bought into the EU's liberalization agenda ... But today, the rise of nationalism and euroscepticism across central Europe, fueled by the migrant crisis ... is challenging the unity of the European project. ... Now it is the altruistic west against the xenophobic east. Our biggest danger is to fall into this trap.[70]

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[67] Buras.

[68] Staniszkis.

[69] Hanley and Dawson.

[70] Foy.

The entire Visegrad group is presented in negative terms and character-ized by a "lack of European solidarity". PIS's opposition to the election of Don-ald Tusk for the next term of office as president of the Council of the European Union (it was the first time in history that a member state did not back its own candidate) was commented upon ironically. Here are Henry Foy's comments on Twitter:

> Tusk re-elected @eucopresident, Polish Govt fuming (…) It is only just dawning on many EU diplomats just how deep the hatred of Mr Tusk runs within @pisorgpl & Kaczynski (…) Polish Prime Minister Szydło says Poland will block the conclusions of EU summit on this matter, but she adds that Poland is happy to take the EU money [Translator's note: the last piece is nowhere to be found on Henry Foy's Twitter pro-file for 2017, so it is my translation and not the English-language original].[71]

Here it would be reasonable to ask whether any comments could be found during the last eighteen months about Poland and Poles that were positive. Were there any articles (e.g. on any media with a conservative slant) that praised the accomplishments of the new government? There were not many of them, yet it did happen. The World Bank published a report in which it appreciated Poland for implementing the "500+" scheme, through which poverty in Poland was suc-cessfully reduced by 3 p.p., from 8.9% to 5.9%.[72]

Ruchir Sharma, Global Strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, predicted Poland's economic advancement in 2017 in *The New York Times* in the United States. In "The Next Economic Powerhouse? Poland", he suggested that

> of the more than 190 countries tracked by the International Monetary Fund, fewer than 40 count as wealthy or advanced economies. The rest are known as emerging nations, and many of them have been emerging forever. The last large country to make it into the advanced class was South Korea, 20 years ago. The next major na-tion likely to join that club could be Poland… a common thread is that all the nations have a per-capita income of at least around $15,000. … Poland's average income has risen to near $13,000, from $2,300, and it is now on pace to pass the $15,000 mark by the turn of this decade.[73]

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[71] Foy.

[72] Goraus and Inchauste.

[73] http://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/38233-new-york-times-polska-nowa-ekonomiczna-potega;    see    also    https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/05/opinion/

He did not forget about the concerns among the governments of Western states and commentators of the Western press, who were afraid of the growth of populism after the success of PiS in the parliamentary election: "The concern was that it would derail growth by meddling in the private sector and trying to fulfill costly populist promises. ... So far these policies have not caused much harm."[74]

Today, we already know that his predictions were correct. By the end of September 2017, for the first time in its history, Poland was not recognized among the emerging markets, but among the developed markets. The FTSE Russell index agency has considered us the first Central European state to join the 25 best developed countries, and as of September 2018 we will be recognized together with such countries as Germany, Japan, or the United States.[75]

Andrew Marr, BBC's political commentator, in his famous *Sunday Times* piece "Thank you, Poland, for lending us your young", praised the Polish immigrants:

> If we sit down with a piece of paper and a pencil and try to work out the ideal source of migrants to Britain, I suspect that after analyzing all the percentages, historical dates, and economic equations, we would end up with the word Poland circled, underlined, and followed by three exclamation marks.
> ... Polish pilots fought in the Battle of England, and the Brits expressed their deepest respect for the Polish dissidents during the communist times and the Solidarity era. My generation knows many Polish writers and composers, including Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, Zbigniew Herbert, and Witold Lutosławski, and Pope John Paul II was always treated as a world leader in the format of Nelson Mandela. ... 99 percent of immigrants from Poland have a permanent job or are studying. Poles have opened more than 22,000 businesses in the British Isles. (...) We helped the Poles, offering them higher wages, and they helped us. While Vladimir Putin is flexing his muscles and we are trying to define our priorities in the process of leaving the European Union, we should ask ourselves who our good friend is.[76]

And here is a funny comment by Giles Coren in his "How to be a lazy Brit" piece, pre-announced a day earlier, in *The Times* centerfold: "The Poles coming to

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poland-economy-trump-russia.html
[74] Op. cit.
[75] https://www.money.pl/gielda/wiadomosci/artykul/ftse-russell-polska-rynek-ro-zwiniety,122,0,2371450.html, https://www.gpw.pl/aktualnosc?cmn_id=10603, https://www.gpw.pl/pub/GPW/files/PDF/2017_09_FTSE_Russell.pdf
[76] Marr.

Britain work very hard. After a few years here, they start to mimic the Brits and become equally lazy."[77]

But there is only a minority of such comments. For the last eighteen months, the prevailing body of articles were one-sided pieces, with a black-and-white hypothesis, typically suggesting that Poland has problems respecting the rule of law or democratic values, and that it is "rolling down towards a Nazi-like dictatorship." They emphasized that Poland's present government had "symbolically half-masted the EU flag,"[78] nevertheless declaring that they did "not intend to get Poland out of the European Union"[79] and that they were "happy to take the EU money".[80] There were suggestions that "other EU member states would be happy to see Poland outside the EU."[81]

## SUMMARY[82]

Today, more than eighteen months after the October 2015 election in which PiS was the winner, we seem to have already passed the peak of this unhealthy interest in Poland. The activity of foreign correspondents seems to be declining in strength, so it is now possible to calm the emotions and slowly begin to summarize things. However, it is still not possible to authoritatively determine the causes of the negative press campaign about Poland, nor is it easy to estimate all its consequences.

Among the results, there is the change of Poland's image in the international scene, the incoherent and ambiguous perceptions of Poland among the European political elites, the new ratings of Poland by the international financial institutions (first a negative perspective was assigned, then there was another switch from negative to stable), and the continuously valid threat of sanctions for non-compliance with the rule of law (the threat of withdrawal or reduction of structural funds and the denial of Poland's voting rights in the European Council).

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[77] Coren.

[78] Foy.

[79] *Illiberalism lives.*

[80] Foy.

[81] *Illiberalism lives.*

[82] This paper does not cover the topic exhaustively; rather, it should serve as a starting point for further discussion. Careful observation and analysis is still needed for the issues under consideration.

It is certainly safe to conclude that, contrary to the ominous forecasts, 2016 was a good year for foreign investment in Poland: the value of investment grew by 74% over the preceding year.[83] According to the fDi Intelligence report developed at the Financial Times analytical division, last year foreign businesses announced new investment in Poland worth USD 9.9 billion (equivalent to PLN 38 billion).[84] Based on estimations, Poland is therefore ranked fifth in Europe, achieving a better bidding and investing position than many richer countries in Europe, such as Spain or Ireland.[85] The positive opinion investors have about our economy is further supported by the publication of our credit rating by Moody, of 12 May 2017. Moody maintained Poland's credit rating at A2 and, importantly, changed its perspective again, this time from negative to stable. In this way, the negative forecasts from autumn have gotten better. The implication is that the agency does not see any threat of decreasing Poland's credit capacity.

The prospects for foreign trade are optimistic as well: the data of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) for 2016 demonstrate a 2.3% growth in Polish exports (up to €183.6 bn), a 0.9% rise in imports (up to €178.9 bn), and an almost doubled turnover surplus (up to nearly €4.8 bn).[86] During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Poland in June 2016, more than ten bilateral agreements were signed in areas such as banking and air traffic; Poland's role in the new Silk Road reconstruction project was strongly emphasized – it is intended as a road project linking China with Europe. Moreover, in September 2017, for the first time in its history, Poland was not recognized among the emerging markets, but among the developed markets. Next year, we are expected to join the group of the 25 most developed countries worldwide.

The number of tourists coming to Poland is increasing regularly, too. The Ministry of Sports and Tourism declared that the number of foreign tourists had broken the previous record in 2016. It increased by 4.5% over 2015, up to approx. 17.5 million (12.5 million in Krakow alone).[87]

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[83] For a broader discussion of the topic, see Siemiończyk; http://www.tvp.info/30762 014/inwestorzy-cenia-polske-gospodarka-sie-rozpedza

[84] Op. cit.

[85] For a broader discussion of the topic, see "Zagraniczne firmy nie boją się rządu PIS."

[86] https://www.mr.gov.pl/strony/aktualnosci/handel-zagraniczny-polski-w-2016-r.

[87] http://tvn24bis.pl/z-kraju,74/turystyka-w-2016-r-wiecej-turystow-z-zagranicy,71 6615.htm

Furthermore, it appears from the quoted opinion polls and journalistic articles that the image of Poles as a nation is becoming more and more positive in the West. This image is built by hardworking, well-educated migrants who often study at universities in Western European countries and start working in highly specialized jobs afterwards. The 'unremarkable' image of the Polish state ("Polska bez twarzy"), so prominent in the opinion polls around 2010, has been replaced by an image of a state in good economic condition, but breaking the rules of democracy. Poland is a country with good economic and investment prospects (no longer an emerging market, but already a developed market), which is nonetheless experiencing certain political problems, is torn by internal conflicts, and governed by a Nazi-like dictatorship that has immobilized the Constitutional Tribunal and the free media, and which did not support its candidate for president of the European Union Council (the first member state to do so in the history of the EU). Even for an inattentive observer of international affairs, this conclusion is quite predictable, yet this is exactly the shape of Poland's contemporary perception on the European political scene.

Despite the numerous positive comments in the press or on TV about the two significant visits for the Poles (Donald Trump on July 6 and Kate and William Windsor on July 17, 2017, an event that uniquely promoted Poland's history, culture, and aspirations all over the world), there was definitely no breakthrough in the way Poland has been described since. After some brief delight with Poland as the "geographic heart of Europe,"[88] "the spirit of Europe,"[89] and "a model and symbol of hope for the survival and triumph of the Western civilization,"[90] and with the Polish people "fighting for independence in a valiant, courageous, and determined way,"[91] or those who "throughout their history did not want any privilege or money, they just wanted God,"[92] the public opinion in Europe became interested in the matter of the reform of the Polish justice system. There began to ap-

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[88] Donald Trump's speech at Plac Krasińskich in Warsaw, July 6, 2017, as quoted in https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10063965/1/Komentarze-w-swiatowych-mediach-po-wizycie-Trumpa-w- Warszawie-Polska-jako-przyklad.html

[89] Ibidem.

[90] Ibidem.

[91] Speech by Prince William Windsor at Łazienki Palace, Warsaw, 17 July 2017

[92] https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10063965/1/Komentarze-w-swiatowych-mediach-po-wizycie-Trumpa-w- Warszawie-Polska-jako-przyklad.html

pear mentions of a "dependent judiciary,"[93] the "effort to subjugate the legal system to a politician's control,"[94] and how "from the mountain resort of Zakopane in the south to the Hel peninsula in the north, tens of thousands of Poles took to the streets … in protest against *the ruling party's policy*" [Translator's note: the italicized passage is completely different from the original quote from the source given in the reference; see https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/07/29/a-veto-gives-the-rule-of-law-in-poland-a-reprieve].[95] After Andrzej Duda's veto on July 24, the following comment was published: "*taking control over the judiciary in Poland was stopped for a moment,* but the threat to the rule of law in Poland is far from over." [Translator's note: the initial passage in italics is completely different from the original quote from the source given in the reference; see: https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/07/29/a-veto-gives-the-rule-of-law-in-poland-a-reprieve].[96] Not all the comments were so elegant. A Norwegian journalist's comment about president Duda's tweet reverberated strongly among Polish Internet users: "Kaczynski's dog became a man."[97]

There is no way we can speak of any breakthrough in the negative narrative or of any change of style in what is written about Poland. Thus, the media reports should still be observed with proper attention. After all, "the image of a country is a certain kind of currency, which can be exchanged for other goods: political cooperation for the accomplishment of goals… incoming investors, export opportunities, interest among tourists, culture consumers…"[98] It should be reiterated continuously that the consideration of Poland's image on the international scene is still an important task, not only for the political elites or decision-makers, but also for all informed citizens of our country.

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[93] "*Dependent judiciary.*"

[94] "*Dependent judiciary.*"

[95] "*Objection sustained.*"

[96] Ibidem.

[97] https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/skandaliczne-slowa-norweskiego-dziennika-o-dudzie-lawina-komentarzy-6148287146247809a

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## About the autor

Karolina Świrska-Czałbowska, Ph.D. is a lecturer at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University. She has published in such periodicals as "Polis - pismo o sztuce życia publicznego", by the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN); "Studia europejskie", a quarterly of the Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw; "Problemy zarządzania"; "Studia i materiały"; the Institute of Economic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences Report; Magazyn Niezależnych Publicystów "Unia i Polska"; "Tygodnik Powszechny"; and "Arcana". Her research interests cover the image of Poland and the Poles abroad, the issue of building a national brand, national branding and national market identity, and the promotion of Poland worldwide in the cultural, political, and economic aspects. Contact: kswirska@wp.pl

**Bartosz Wieczorek**

**Uniwersytet Kardynala Stefana Wyszyńskiego**

# Faces of Georgian Cinema

## Oblicza kina gruzinskiego

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to present, on the basis of foreign literature, the main characters and the main lines of development in Georgian cinema from its inception to the present. In Poland there have been no comprehensive studies of this issue. The presented text focuses mainly on the history of Georgian cinema, showing its uniqueness. Closer to the present is the profile of Tengiz Abuladze, one of the greatest Georgian directors. This text does not pretend to present a comprehensive panorama of Georgian cinema, but it outlines the most important components. A full presentation of the Georgian cinema still requires numerous studies.

**KEYWORDS:**
Georgian cinema, history of cinema, social realism, Tengiz Abuladze

**ABSTRAKT**

Celem niniejszego tekstu jest prezentacja, na podstawie zagranicznej literatury przedmiotu, głównych postaci i najważniejszych linii rozwojowych w kinie gruzińskim od czasu jego powstania do czasów najnowszych. Jak dotąd w Polsce nie pojawiło się żadne całościowe opracowanie tego zagadnienia. Prezentowany artykuł skupia się głównie na historii kina gruzińskiego, pokazując jego specyfikę i wyjątkowość. Bliżej zaprezentowana zostanie sylwetka Tengiza Abuładzego, jednego z najwybitniejszych gruzińskich reżyserów. Niniejszy tekst nie pretenduje do całościowego zaprezentowania panoramy kina gruzińskiego, ale do nakreślenia najważniejszych jego elementów. Pełna prezentacja dorobku kina gruzińskiego wymaga jeszcze licznych studiów.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**
kino gruzińskie, historia kina, socrealizm, Tengiz Abuładze

> *Art is about creating harmony out of chaos,*
> *establishing order, extracting form from the formless.*[1]
> Tengiz Abuladze

Georgia, situated between the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea, dependent throughout its history on influences from great empires – the Roman, Persian, Ottoman, and Russian empires – is a small country with an unusually

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[1] N. Nikulenkova, *Грузинский Кинемотограф Абуладзе*, http://nnikulen.livejournal.com/ (accessed 8.10.2015).

colorful history that is very proud of its past. Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy and monophysitism), Islam, and the remnants of Zoroastrianism and pagan cults that continue to linger in the margins, form the complex spiritual background of Georgia as one of the oldest Christian countries.[2] The deep Georgian spirituality, the attachment to the faith of ancestors, the patriotism, and the love of freedom and beauty rooted in the Hellenic and Byzantine cultures find reflection in the magnificent Georgian cinema.[3] The creators of Georgian cinema are aware of this heritage: "I represent the last Mediterranean culture alive, the roots of which date back to Antiquity," says Otar Ioseliani, the famous Georgian film director.[4] The uniqueness of this land and this cinema was also noted by the Italian cinema master, Federico Fellini, who wrote that "Georgian cinema is a strange phenomenon; philosophically light, sublime, and at the same time childlike, pure, and innocent. There is everything in it that can make me cry and, I must admit, it is not an easy thing to do."[5]

The Georgian cinema continues to be terra incognita, somewhat exotic, like the country's highlands. One of the reasons for this is the fact that Georgian films were incorporated in the shared main body of Soviet cinema and shown as creations of the homeland of communism. The majority of Georgian productions are still held in the archives of the Russian Gosfilmfond. The people of Georgia have made attempts to recover them, but the armed conflict with Russia in 2008 put an end to those hopes.

The beginnings of Georgian cinema coincide with the birth of cinema as such. The first public showing of a film took place in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, in 1896; by the beginning of the 20th century the country already had several screening rooms. The first permanent movie theater, "Iluzjon," was opened in Tbilisi, on Golovin Avenue (now Rustavele Ave.) in 1904. Among Soviet cities after the First World War, only Petrograd (St. Petersburg) had more screening rooms than Tbilisi.[6]

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[2] E. Dulgheru, "Serge Parajanov and Tengiz Abuladze: Two Models of Anticommunist Testimony through Cinema in Soviet Georgia", in *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 2014, http://orthodox-theology.com/media/PDF/IJOT3.2014/Dulgheru.pdf (accessed 8.10.2015).

[3] E. Dulgheru, op. cit.

[4] http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/films/1510 (accessed 8.10.2015).

[5] http://www.tofifest.pl/pl/program-2010/s/8 (accessed 8.10.2015).

[6] A. Mikaberidze, *History of the Georgian Cinema,* http://rustaveli.tripod.com/cinema.html (accessed 8.10.2015).

At first, Georgian cinematic productions consisted of images of daily life recorded during producers' trips to the Caucasus Mountains. Alexander Digmelashvili, Simon Esadze, and Vasil Amashukeli were its precursors. Unfortunately, their works have been lost and we know about them only from mentions in the contemporary literature.[7] In 1908, Vasil Amashukeli and Alexander Digmelashvili filmed some experimental footage and four years later directed their first full-length documentary film, entitled *Akaki's Travel*. It was a narrative on the trip taken by the poet Akaki Cereteli to the Racha-Lechkumico region between July 2 and August 2, 1912. This event can be recognized as the birth of the Georgian film industry.[8] Next, in 1916, Alexander Cucunava shot a short movie called *Christine*, which was based on a short story by the renowned Georgian writer, Egnate Ninoshvili, which began the idea of adapting popular works of Georgian literature.

Georgia gained its independence in 1917 as an result of the October Revolution, after ages of being a Russian colony. Unfortunately, it was annexed again in 1921 by Bolshevik Russia and subjected to dictatorship, repressions, and powerful propaganda. These dramatic historical events isolated Georgia from the world for 70 years.[9]

## CINEMA IN THE SHADOW OF IDEOLOGY

In the period 1923–1926, a new generation of Georgian film directors brought a new perspective and sensitivity to the cinema. Important productions from that time include "My Grandma" (1929) by Kote Mikaberidze (whose works were confiscated by Soviet censors); *Caucasian Love* (1928) by Nikolai Shengelai; *Sol Swanetii* (1930) by Mikheil Kalatozishvili; *Amok* (1927) by Kote Marianishvili; and *Saba* (1929), *Chabarda* (1931), and *Great Luna* (1938) by Mikheil Chiaureli. In those years, Alexander Cucunava and Kote Marianishvili, both with a theatrical background, introduced the best dramatic traditions of Georgian theater to the art of film and the Georgian Film Studio (Goskinprom) was established in Tbilisi in 1923.[10]

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[7] L. Ochiauri, *Georgian Cinema before and after Independence*, http://www.kinokultura. com/specials/12/ochiauri-independence.shtml (accessed 8.10.2015).

[8] http://www.tofifest.pl/pl/program-2010/s/8 (accessed 8.10.2015).

[9] Ibidem.

[10] P. Rollberg, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Cinema*, Lanham 2009, p. 274.

The original evolution of Georgian cinema was suppressed by the socialist realism that became the leading trend in Soviet art. Georgian cinema lived through this painful experience from 1930 to 1950, being turned into a part of the Stalinist propaganda machine. The new regime demanded that the cinema obey communist ideology. At that time, Georgian films were shot by non-Georgian directors, including Ivan Perestiani, Vladimir Barskij, and Amo Bek-Nazarov, who were attracted to the exoticism of the mysterious Caucasus and its "savage" inhabitants. They shot films based on Russian and Georgian literature, intending to develop a new "Revolutionary" cinema. The films were set in the Georgian reality but foreign to the traditional Georgian culture.

The forced socialist realism inhibited the artistic growth of Georgian artists and turned the cinema into a pseudo-art representative of Soviet culture.[11] A statement by one scholar of Georgian cinema illustrates the issue well: "A true work of art can come into existence only when it serves the truth. (...) In the years 1930–1940, it served a deception, and false ideas gave rise to false messages. A single lie spawned a whole string of subsequent lies. The cinema walked a path of half-truths and fake reality."[12] Thus, Georgian cinema languished in this very unfavorable environment for decades. The socialist Georgian republic needed new heroes to create new values and lifestyles. It required new myths to explain the new reality to people. The cinema, as a modern mass medium, was ideally suited for spreading propaganda. The works of Mikheil Chiaureli, the author of the first Georgian sound film, *The Last Masquerade* (1934), a satire on the bourgeoisie, is a good example of such use of the power of cinema.[13] Chiaureli entered the history of cinema as one of the most faithful apologists and one of the makers of the cult of Stalin. This is what he wrote in one of his articles on this Soviet leader: "Many artists met Comrade Stalin often. They heard his voice, saw his warm smile, shook hands cordially with him. There was the wisdom of our times in his simple words and a flare of genius in his eyes."[14]

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[11] L. Ochiauri, op. cit.

[12] Ibidem.

[13] P. Rollberg, op. cit., p. 275.

[14] P. Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*, London, 2001, p. 208.

The Second World War set the whole public life on military tracks, so there were no new films apart from productions by Chiaureli, including the historical film entitled *Giorgi Saakadze* (1942–43).

## THE CINEMA OPEN TO INDIVIDUALITY

In time, the iron curtain that isolated Georgia from the rest of the world started to weaken. The first crack showed during Khrushchev's thaw in the 1950s. That did not mean that the Soviet propaganda was lessened or that one could speak freely, but there was a change of climate in Russian politics that extended the scope of societal and cultural liberties.

> This new trend became noticeable in the Georgian cinema of the 1960s in terms of not only subjects open to discussion, but also to new styles and ways of thinking, which started to break free from the context of real socialism. Most importantly, the cinema moved on from the collective "us" to the individual "me," exploring human inner life and looking for the unique, which used to be suppressed by political and social pressures.

A path slowly opened towards the creation of a new human being and new guiding values. Step by step, the cinema relieved itself of servicing social myths and focused more on human individuality.

The first film that held promise for a revival of Georgian cinema was *Magdana's Donkey* (1956), by Tengiz Abuladze and Rezo Czcheidze. Later, in 1962, Giorgi Shengelaia filmed *Two Stories*, which became a kind of creative manifesto of the generation of the 1960s. These authors, like their counterparts in the following decade (Eldar Shengelaia, Otar Iosseliani, Alexander Rekchashvili, Lana

Gogoberidze, Mikheil Kobakhidze, Merab Kokochashvili, Rezo Esadze, Nodar Managadze, and Irakli Kwirikadze), started to speak frankly about their personal problems. Anxious about censorship, they selected such genres as legend, myth, fairy tale, comedy, or tragicomedy, which gave them creative freedom and relieved them from political responsibility: The truth was passed in their movies in an allegorical fashion.

The main source of power of these films was their individualism and the unusual poetic form that has become a distinguishing mark of Georgian cinema. Apart from the above-mentioned films, this artistic current included *Other People's Children* (1959) and *The Begging*[15] (1968) by Tengiz Abuladze[16]; *Pirosmani* (1969) by Giorgi Shengelai'; *Georgian Chronicles of the 19th Century* (1979) by Alexander Rekchashvili; *The Big Green Valley* (1967) by Merab Kokochashvili; *An Unusual Exhibition* (1968) and *Eccentrics* (1973) by Eldar Shengelai; *There Was a Thrush* (1970) by Otar Ioseliani; *A Soldier's Father* (1964) by Rezo Czcheidze; *Under One Sky* (1961) by Lana Gogoberidze; *A Nylon Christmas Tree* (1985) by Rezo Esadze; and *The Wedding* (1964) and *An Umbrella* (1967) by Mikheil Kobakhidze. In these films, remote from ideological, political, and social contexts, an individual awareness was liberated from the collective mind. Their narratives were poetic and the plots headed in various directions.[17] The story told by each of the films was set in a mythical, timeless, or ahistorical world. Pieces of reality did not disturb the integrity or inner dynamics of the work. The arbitrariness of the fictitious world, the multitude of literary references, and the poetic narration turned into the distinguishing features of Georgian film art. The world of these films – metaphoric, symbolic, and unreal – was a specifically modeled microcosm.[18] They beamed with a spirit of the stoic philosophy and lyrical intonation.[19] National and universal

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[15] Many Georgian films had troubles with the censors and had a limited reach. This is what happened to Tengiz Abuladze, whose film *The Penance* was held up by the censors for a few years. The film turned into a legend – one of the most prominent long-term shapers of public opinion that, by unveiling the brutality of Stalinist rule contributed to a gradual change of public awareness in the Soviet Union. See Mikaberidze.

[16] Tengiz Abuladze makes an original transformation of the Italian neo-realism in his films. See Oleksiewicz, p. 4.

[17] L. Ochiauri, op. cit.

[18] Ibid.

[19] J. Bogomowlow, "Kino gruzinskie - stosunek do rzeczywistosci", in: *Film na swiecie* no. 10, 1979 p. 7.

matters, the moral challenges faced by human beings, respect for tradition, and the imperative of following one's own moral code were the main themes raised by these new productions. Another explanation for the uniqueness of Georgian cinema comes from the different style of acting: the "code" of Stanislawski, popular in Russia, was unsuitable for expressing the Georgian emotional temper.[20]

Tengiz Abuladze: The Cinema's Poet

Tengiz Abuladze (1924–1994) first gained artistic experience at the Theatrical Institute of Tbilisi, from Giorgi Towstonogow and Dimitri Aleksidze. Abuladze did not become a *regisseur*, but he benefited greatly from his exposure to the tradition of Georgian theater.[21]

Abuladze enrolled in WGIK, the Moscow film academy – one of the best in the world in 1946 – together with his friend Rezo Czcheidze. That was possibly owing to the support of Sergei Eisenstein, to whom the two friends wrote a letter.[22] They both were admitted to the class of Sergei Utkevitch, where they could learn from outstanding film producers, including Lev Kuleshow, Alexander Dowzenko, Wsiewolod Pudowkin, and Mikhail Romm. Working together, they shot *Magdana's Donkey*, which was awarded at Cannes in 1956. Even this first movie, recognized as a cornerstone of the Georgian film school, reveals the fusion of realism and poetry so characteristic of the works of Abuladze. The lyricism, the reconstruction of Georgian society, and the humor and love showing through in the depiction of the characters became the distinguishing marks of his style.

> Tengiz Abuladze (1924–1994) first gained artistic experience at the Theatrical Institute of Tbilisi, from Giorgi Towstonogow and Dimitri Aleksidze. Abuladze did not become a *regisseur*, but he benefited greatly from his exposure to the tradition of Georgian theater.

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[20] L. Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears: Russians and Their Movies*, Washington 2010, p. 325

[21] N. Nikulenkowa, op. cit.

[22] I. Alajew, *Мольба и покаяние Тенгиза Абуладзе*, http://m.ritmeurasia.org/news-2014-02-28-molba-i- pokajanie-tengiza-abuladze-11574 (accessed 8.10.2015).

The second film by Tengiz Abuladze, *Other People's Children* (1958), under the convention of Italian neo-realism, is the story of a female student at the University of Tbilisi who decided to adopt two orphans.[23] The next film by the Georgian director, *The Grandma, Grandpas and Me* (1962), based on the novel by Nodar Dumbadza, is a lyric and gently humorous story about the Georgian countryside. Another excellent work is *The Begging* (1967), the first part of a famous (though unplanned for) trilogy. It was the gold winner at the festival in San Remo in 1973. The film tells the story of the poet Waza Pshaveli's inner world, the struggle against evil, and love and fidelity in the context of the great hostility of two neighboring nations. *The Necklace of My Loved One* (1973) is a charming fairy tale about discovering the world and a contemplative comedy where the contemporary is interwoven with the past, realism with fantasy, and eccentric humor with poetic metaphor.[24] *The Tree of Wishes* (1977), the second part of the trilogy, full of metaphors and understatements, consists of a dozen or so short stories portraying the life of the Georgian countryside just before the revolution. The film is about dreams and about people willing to sacrifice everything for their ideas.

In 1978, while returning from a screening of *The Dream of Wishes*, Abuladze had a car accident, which gave him an idea for his next film, *The Penance* (1987), which closed the trilogy. The film excited a strong public resonance and attracted crowds of film fans to box offices. This universal story of a dictator and the struggle for freedom was meaningful, particularly because the dictator could be identified with Stalin.[25] "The film shook us. (...) It was a manifest taller than the art itself. This philosophical story changed the minds of a massive audience," said Rezo Czcheidze.[26]

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[23] Abuladze shot his next film by himself. "Here, the neo-realistic inspirations were manifest enough to inspire very adverse responses. This came as a surprise because neo-realistic films were screened and received quite warmly in the Soviet Union: first, for their subject matter, and second, because of their correct ideological background. The Communist sympathies of some neo-realists were not a secret. However, there was a difference between the remote Italians and the native authors. Abuladze was accused of an inclination for 'abstract humanism,' a departure from the rules of socialist realism" (J. Wojnicka, *Przypowiesci Tengiza Abuladze*, http://ekrany.hekko24.pl/images/18_abuladze.pdf).

[24] A. Horoszczak, "Mądrosc wspolczesnej bajki", in: *Kultura Filmowa* no. 6, 1973, p. 96.

[25] M. Markow, *Мольба Тенгиза Абуладзе*, http://www.filmz.ru/pub/2/20250_1.htm (accessed 8.10.2015).

[26] I. Alajew, op. cit.

Since then, the works of Abuladze have been perceived as a kind of anti-totalitarian therapy for Georgians and an inspiration for resistance against sovietization. His *The Penance* can be defined as one of the most powerful anti-communist and anti-totalitarian cinematic testimonies in history. The pivotal work of this director, the trilogy composed of *The Begging* (1967), *The Tree of Wishes* (1976), and *The Penance* (1987), invokes the archetypal world of values: a source of the Georgian identity and an antidote against Russian cultural imperialism.[27]

However, Abuladze was not a typical dissident. Until 1974 he was an academic teacher at the Theatrical Institute of Tbilisi; he remained a member of the communist party until 1978; he was nominated a member of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union; and in 1980 he was awarded the prestigious title of a "National Artist." This inconspicuous participation in the official life enabled the director to speak quite freely through his films. This is why the artist could refer to tradition (biblical, evangelical, Caucasian, European, and Medieval) to present a model of an "old-time person." This person was a figure rooted in the world of ancient invariable values, such as liberty or beauty, which were rejected by the socialist society with its ideological vision of a "new man." This artistic strategy turned out to be effective, though it was inherently dangerous to the state ideology: "What could be more dangerous to the Marxist–Leninist ideology-driven art than the depiction of the wealth of the Medieval world presented in *The Begging* by Abuladze?"[28] According to Elena Dulgheru, this work by Tengiz Abuladze is "full of love for people, homeland, God and tradition (…) highlighting the faith in beauty (…) the strongest testimony to the strength of Christian values and their ability to survive under the communist regime."[29]

## THE NEW GEORGIAN CINEMA

The year that the Film Faculty at the Theatrical Institute of Tbilisi was established, 1972, was a very important event for Georgian cinema. It laid the foundation for the development of the Georgian film school that has given Georgia and the world a number of outstanding film producers. Giorgi Danielij, Eldar and Giorgi

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[27] E. Dulgheru, op. cit. (accessed 8.10.2015).
[28] Ibidem.
[29] E. Dulgheru, op. cit.

Shengelai, Otar Iosseliani, Lana Gogoberidze, and Mikheil Kobakhidze all graduated from this department.[30] A whole generation of new producers who came to the industry in the 1980s – including Temur Babluani, Goderdzi Czokcheli, Dito Cincadze, Dato Janelidze, Otar Litanishvili, Nana Jorjadze, Nana Janelidze, Tato Kotetishvili, Gogita Czkonia, Aleko Cabadze, Levan Glonti, Levan Tutberidze, Levan Zakareishvili, Zaza Kchwalwaszi, and Marina Kchonelidze – sought their own film narration styles, characters, and topics.

The producers of that time converted from the hitherto prevailing poetic style to a more careful observation of the world, which was a consequence of new challenges faced by the new generation. The reality presented in their films is dark; there is an atmosphere of hopelessness, lost opportunities, and disappointment; life is gray, monotonous, and lonely; the lack of spiritual roots aggravates the state of isolation of the individual; only the strongest and the most ruthless can survive. This kind of attitude is represented in *The Sun of the Sleeping* (1992) and *Brother* by Temur Babluani, *Mother Earth* (1982) by Goderdzi Czokcheli, *A Trip to Sopot* (1980), and *The Family* (1985) by Nana Jorjadze; *Quasimodo* (1981) by Levan Eristavi, or *Anemia* (1987) by Tato Kotetishvili.

The year 1991 brought a huge political and social change to Georgia. The old regime fell and the country regained its independence. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought liberty, but on very complex terms. Most importantly, this liberty was not guaranteed to last forever.

The initial years of Georgia's independence were marked by chaos, the emergence of a new order, economic change, and most of all, the Abkhazian war that deprived Georgia of a significant part of its territory. These events were followed by a long crisis that inhibited the development of the country's economy and culture, including cinema.

[30] A. Mikaberidze, op. cit. (accessed 8.10.2015).

The social havoc and economic uncertainty that was typical of former Soviet republics, including Russia, urged filmmakers to deal with new topics. The erosion of the rules of social life, the conflict of old and new values, and the blunting of the meaning of life placed Georgian film producers in a new position.

Many emigrated to Russia and other European countries. Today, Otar Iosseliani and Mikheil Kobakhidze work in France and Nana Jorjadze and Dito Cincadze work in Germany. Jorjadze's career is developing superbly: She was awarded for *The Robinsonade* (1987) in Cannes and her *1001 Recipes by Love-struck Chef* (1996) was nominated for the American Film Academy Award.[31] Gela Babluani has won the Silver Bear at the Berlinale for *The Sun of the Sleeping* (1992).

## THE GEORGIAN CINEMA OF THE 21ST CENTURY

After the 2002 Revolution of Roses that made president Eduard Shevardnadze step down, the course of Georgian history turned again: the country started to develop, heading in quite a new direction. Cinema continued to witness this process and gained new film-making infrastructure, new studios (Aisi, Remka, Sanguco, Independent Film Project, Cinetech), and new group of producers (Levan Korinteli, Archil Gelowani, Zurab Magalashvili, and Guka Rcheulishvili), which created opportunities for shooting independent films with more or less cooperation from the Georgian National Film Center. The Georgian–Russian conflict in South Ossetia, initiated in 2008, disturbed this growth. No wonder that the contemporary Georgian cinema focuses on painful historical events that menaced the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union: the civil war and conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the conflict in Chechnya, and the unremitting tension in Upper Karabakh. These events echo in a number of contemporary Georgian films: *A Trip to Karabakh* (2005) by Levan Tutberidze, *The Russian Triangle* by Aleko Cabadze (2007), *The Conflict Zone* by Wano Burduli (2009), and *The Other Bank* (2009) by Giorgi Owashvili. This cinema is not poetic any more.

*A Trip to Karabakh* tells the story of young people experiencing the civil war in Georgia and the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Upper Karabakh – the lost generation who cannot come to terms with the atrocities and

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[31] The film is a successful reference to the Georgian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. See Chyb, p. 96.

whose values have been disturbed by the war. *The Russian Triangle* is set in Russia, after the Chechen wars. The characters have lived through the hell of the war and cannot find themselves in their daily lives. Torn apart by their painful memories, they are desperate to straighten out their lives. *The Other Bank*, the debut of Giorgi Owashvili, is about a 12-year-old refugee who lives with his mother, in separation from the father who stayed in his native Abkhazia. The titular "other bank" is Abkhazia, to which the boy sets out to find his father. The film depicts the disastrous consequences of war.[32]

Contemporary Georgian cinema touches upon problems of daily life, the quest for one's own way of living, and the building of new values and rules of social life. This is the subject area of *Tbilisi, Tbilisi* (2005) by Levan Zakareishvili, *Three Homes* (2008) by Zaza Urushadze, *An Embassy Man* (2006) by Dita Cincadze, *I Would Die Without You* (2010) by Levan Tutberidze, or *Dependency* by Archil Kawtaradze.

Other, more recent, successful films include *The Corn Island* by Giorgi Owashvili (a slow-cinema picture of the daily life of the provinces with ethnic conflicts in the background), *Tangerines* by Zaza Urushadze (a cameral look at the Abkhazia war), and *The Brides* by Tinatin Kadzrishvili (a highly acclaimed debut at Berlinale 2014).

Georgian cinema has a long and sophisticated history. At its very onset, it was contaminated with the Bolshevik ideology and exposed to Soviet propaganda. However, the great strength and the Christian–Mediterranean rooting of the Georgian culture allowed it to develop the phenomenon of Georgian cinema – full of poetry, fabulous realism, and lyric tonality. Against all the immense obstacles, Georgian cinema has posed a veiled resistance to the pressing socialist values, protecting the ideal of a person faithful to themselves, free and aware of their merit. Today, Georgian cinema faces new challenges: the conflict with Russia, the economic crisis, or the rise in new values and lifestyles. However, judging by some extremely successful films, such as *The Corn Island* by Giorgi Owashvili or *Tangerines* by Zaza Urushadze, the essence of Georgian cinema has stayed intact: it continues to present pure, poetic, distanced, and wise attitudes to current events, drawing from its own roots and history.

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[32] L. Ochiauri, op. cit.

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## About the autor

Bartosz Wieczorek is a doctor of philosophy. He has published articles in *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, *Znak*, *Zeszyty Karmelitańskie*, *W drodze*, *Jednota*, *Fronda*, *Przegląd Powszechny*, and *Studia Bobolanum* and is the author of radio plays. From 2000 to 2002 he was secretary of the editorial office of the sociocultural monthly *Emaus*. Contact: bartosz.wieczorek@poczta.fm

**Edyta Żyrek-Horodyska**

**Jagiellonian University**

# The Reportage Discourse on Post-memory: *Casus* of *Un Papa de sang* by Jean Hatzfeld

## Reportażowy dyskurs o postpamięci. *Casus Un Papa de sang* Jeana Hatzfelda

### ABSTRACT

This article refers to post-memory, which is treated today as very important problem appearing in contemporary literary reportage. The reflection on the memory of the second generation gains a special dimension in journalistic texts: on the one hand, it stands in opposition to the mass media's postulate of covering the current news; on the other hand, it allows us to pay attention to the situation of communities that are still struggling with the consequences of trauma several years after a war. The purpose of the research outlined in this sketch is to analyse the reportage *Un Papa de sang* by the French reporter Jean Hatzfeld, which deals with the trauma of the genocide in Rwanda, recorded in the memory of the second generation.

### KEYWORDS:
reportage, Jean Hatzfeld, genocide, Rwanda, post-memory

### ABSTRAKT

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest namysł nad problematyką postpamięci, stanowiącą dzisiaj niezwykle istotny temat pojawiający się we współczesnym reportażu literackim. Refleksja nad pamięcią drugiego pokolenia zyskuje w tekstach dziennikarskich szczególny wymiar: z jednej strony stoi bowiem w opozycji do właściwego mediom masowym postulatu aktualności, z drugiej zaś pozwala zwrócić uwagę na sytuację społeczności, które wciąż jeszcze, kilkanaście lat po wojnie, zmagają się z jej konsekwencjami. Przedmiotem analiz nakreślonych w niniejszym szkicu jest reportaż *Więzy krwi* francuskiego reportera Jeana Hatzfelda, traktujący o traumie ludobójstwa w Rwandzie, utrwalonego w pamięci drugiego pokolenia.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:
reportaż, Jean Hatzfeld, ludobójstwo, Rwanda, postpamięć

Groups of texts marked by clear memorative intentions[1] may be nowadays extended – alongside artistic works – with numerous journalistic publications, the authors of which present a particularly attentive attitude towards the

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[1] This term is used by Magdalena Horodecka in relation to *Papusza* by Angelika Kuźniak (179).

problem of memory. This theme returns especially in works concentrating on war-related topics, which is one of the most important human experiences of the 20th century.[2]

> The aim of reporters is both to save the memory of direct witnesses of breakthrough events and, more and more often, to preserve the memories of their children and grandchildren growing up among the stories about war of the older generation.

Even a superficial reading of contemporary literary reportage[3] shows how often their authors today deal with topics related to recent history and its social perception: both direct witnesses and their descendants can share with the writer a subjective reflection on their own (real or mediated) experience of war.

According to Pierre Nora, 'there was one history and there were many memories'.[4] This experience, which has been transferred to the journalistic field, is becoming one of the most important challenges for contemporary reporters wishing to describe an event in which they did not participate directly. In this situation, when deciding to adopt the method of 'collecting voices' in their work, the reporter is faced with the necessity of playing the role of a listener who sees the value not so much in an objective discourse about the event as in the possibility of recording many (often highly varied) narratives about it. This kind of creative method was used by French journalist Jean Hatzfeld, who returned many times in recent years to the subject of the genocide committed in Rwanda.

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[2] Due to the number and brutality of wars, Bogusław Wołoszański called the 20th century the age of blood ("Wiek krwi").

[3] I define literary reportage as a genre that combines factography with the literary essence of its representation.

[4] As quoted in Żakowski (64).

This paper is dedicated to the discussion about his book, released in 2015[5] and entitled *Un Papa de sang*, which was significantly different from the previous publications by the French author. This report is an attempt to reach not so much the direct witnesses of the 1994 genocide, but their descendants, who keep in their memories the trauma of their parents and grandparents. Hatzfeld's book is a record of the memory inherited by young people born in the 1990s in a country where the repercussions of the dramatic events of about twenty years ago are still clearly audible. When analysing Hatzfeld's work, it is worth considering first and foremost the function and ways in which the writer presents the individual and community memory of the second generation. It also seems important to place the statements of the individual protagonists against the background of Hatzfeld's earlier works, documenting the experiences of the direct participants of the Rwandan genocide – both victims and executioners.

Among the postulates concerning the shape of literary reportage, Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński and Andrzej Kaliszewski point out the topicality of the subject matter undertaken by the writer.[6] In contrast to writers, limited only by their own imagination, journalists should concentrate on socially relevant and significant topics. It is therefore worth considering whether, and possibly to what extent, the issue of post-memory, and therefore memory inherited from direct witnesses of the Holocaust, is an important and interesting subject from a media point of view. Undoubtedly, the interest of reporters in this issue brings their work closer to that of a historian, but – and this should be stressed – it does not identify with it. Journalistic research on memory and post-memory above all activates a discourse marked by a subjective perspective, which usually does not fit into the traditional historical narrative. In this perspective, therefore, it comes much closer to literature, which repeatedly took up the subject of secondary witnesses in the 20th century.

## POST-MEMORY, WAR, AND MEDIA

Research on post-memorial issues has been so far focussed mostly on the Holocaust and the history of World War II. However, Romana Kolarzowa suggests that

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[5] The publication was released in Polish bookstores in 2017.
[6] Wolny-Zmorzyński, Kaliszewski, and Furman.

this issue should be looked at from a much broader perspective, also referring to other events related to the transmission of emotions evoked by 'eradication, disinheritance, dehumanisation, exploitation, and (sometimes) extermination'.[7] Such an approach makes it possible to explore much more widely a subject which, for many reasons, attracts media attention today, with particular emphasis on the activities of reporters and war correspondents. According to Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, we are currently observing the phenomenon of the massification of post-memory,[8] which is influenced by numerous exhibitions, literary or theatrical works, and films dedicated to this issue. Above all, the myth-creating and community-forming role of secondary memory is being activated, which seems to be particularly highlighted by the mass media in their narratives.

The issue of post-memory was introduced to the scientific discourse by American researcher Marianne Hirsch, who used it for the first time in an analysis of the comic book entitled *Maus* by Art Spiegelman.[9] This term is defined by the literary scholar as

> the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. I have developed this notion in relation to children of Holocaust survivors, but I believe it may usefully describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events or experiences.[10]

In case of post-memory, we have to deal not so much with a record of the experience of witnesses as with their memories, filtered through the sensitivity of subsequent generations. The prefix 'post-' evokes the perspective of memories postponing; it connotes the fact of returning to past experiences that have not always been able to be fully resounded by the direct witnesses of events. In reportage, this issue seems to be of fundamental importance, since this genre – unlike literature – is not considered to have a primary artistic or therapeutic function, but serves primarily to document events. Dominic LaCapra has drawn attention

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[7] Kolarzowa 123.
[8] Tokarska-Bakir.
[9] These analyses were outlined in 1992.
[10] Hirsch 22.

to this disruption in communication between successive generations, claiming that post-memorial narratives are often characterised by the elevation or suppression of certain issues, leading in fact to a distortion of the story.[11] As a result, the second-generation narratives are subject to strong aesthetic treatments, which pose a huge challenge for journalists.

These temptations – and it is worth stressing this – are visible not only in the case of stories kept by descendants of direct witnesses of events, but often also by an author (a researcher, historian, or reporter) trying to describe them.[12] Hirsch points out that memory is not based on facts, but on the creative work of imagination.[13] It seeks to perpetuate the issues that have been silenced by the first generation, which does not find enough strength or motivation to share its history. The source of remembrance for the second generation is often therefore films and photographs or journalistic material and literature, which often seek to put the chaotic narrative of witnesses in order whilst simultaneously becoming its creative continuation. In the case of mass media, especially electronic media, it is not particularly common to reach for the reservoir of memories. The experiences of the second generation, although they are undoubtedly a valuable source of journalistic information, are concentrated around interpretation rather than facts. In a media dictionary, they are therefore defined as a kind of 'anecdotal information' that requires additional verification. A journalist's analysis of a memory tells much more about those who maintain it than about real events.

In media discourse, the memory of the second generation undoubtedly requires a special way of articulating. Literary reportage, situated between journalism and literature, seems to be the most appropriate form for this. As a result of its evolution, various narrative strategies have been developed within its framework to convey as faithfully as possible the experience of the trauma of war or genocide. One of them is the method of 'collecting voices', which is used by such reporters as Hatzfeld or Svetlana Aleksiyevich and consists in quoting the protagonists' extensive statements in independent speech. The practice of polyphonic reportage seems particularly justified in the case of topics related to the work of

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[11] LaCapra 185–246.

[12] Hatzfeld has repeatedly signalled that his father had to flee the Holocaust all the way to Madagascar. He pointed out that many of his relatives died in concentration camps during World War II.

[13] Hirsch 22.

memory. This form makes it possible to limit the subjectivity of authorial assessments in favour of presenting the extended memories of protagonists, quoted in the reporter's book without additional comments from the author. In such a case, the writer's aim is not so much to reach the truth of the story as to recreate and present to the reader the work of human memory, often mediated by various cultural texts.

In addition to reportage polyphony, contemporary reportage also finds other narrative strategies to record and save the voice of the second generation. It is therefore worth quoting some their representative examples, such as the one proposed by Magdalena Grzebałkowska in her book entitled *1945: War and peace*,[14] in which she returns to the history of World War II. The journalist, revealing to the reader in one of her interviews the backstage of her work on the text, said, 'this is a book written from the perspective of a child. My heroes are people who were children or teenagers during the war.'[15] The wartime memories of many of the characters mentioned in the volume, who were already elderly during the conversations with the journalist, were shaped by the experiences of their parents and grandparents. The post-memorial discourse is also activated by Filip Springer in his book *Miedzianka*,[16] where he writes about the collapse of a small town entangled in the history of the Polish–German borderland. Reconstructing its history, the journalist often uses seemingly dependent speech. He is primarily interested in the memories of the descendants of the former inhabitants, who passed on from generation to generation the war experiences and legends about the magical reasons for the disappearance of Miedzianka. Wojciech Tochman's book *Today we will draw death*, which like Hatzfeld's publications, is dedicated to the Rwandan genocide,[17] also draws on inherited memory. Going to Rwanda a dozen or so years after the dramatic events of 1994, the Polish journalist listened not only to the voice of the survivors, but also to the statements of the young generation coming after them.

At present, a literary reportage, taking the issues related to war or genocide into consideration, explores new areas of interest. The perspective of a participant

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[14] Grzebałkowska.
[15] Sowińska.
[16] Springer.
[17] Tochman.

or witness to events – so clearly valued by the classics of the genre: Melchior Wańkowicz, Ksawery Pruszyński, or Ernest Hemingway – contemporary reporters often replace the perspective of the listener and the restorer of events with that of the listener.[18] A decade or even several decades after the end of fighting, they come to the areas where war was waged, recalling the testimony of the memory of the direct participants and their descendants. Literary reportage becomes a medium that seeks to extract from the area of oblivion experiences about which one should not remain silent. Journalists therefore do not focus solely on describing *hic et nunc*, but successfully combine past, present, and future into a collage of an often mythologised common history.

## THE MEDIA TOWARDS THE GENOCIDE IN RWANDA

Critics reviewing *Un Papa de sang* seem to suggest that Haztfeld is actually writing one book in his life,[19] gradually enriching it with further chapters.[20] It is difficult for a researcher to disagree with this statement. The volume analysed in this article is already the fifth report on the Rwandan genocide by the French author. For fifteen years, Hatzfeld has been exploring the subject from a variety of angles. What is undoubtedly missing from the journalist's work is the perspective of a direct witness to the events of 1994. His earlier books – *La stratégie des antilopes*, *Dans le nu de la vie*, *Une saison de machettes*, and *Englebert des collines* were written by an author who went to Rwanda after the genocide and focussed primarily on the memory of the survivors. In these books, Hatzfeld confronted the memories of the executioners with those of the victims, consistently avoiding the explicit expression of his own opinions. *Un Papa de sang* therefore has the character of a kind of appendage to earlier publications, which focussed on the re-relationship of those who managed to survive one hundred days of the Rwandan genocide.

According to Grzegorz Siwor, the key category in Hatzfeld's thinking on genocide is the motive for silence[21] – which does not necessarily attract the attention

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[18] Wolny-Zmorzyński indicates four types of disclosure of a journalist in a reportage text: as a participant, a witness, a listener, or event restorer (50–62).

[19] Unfortunately, the journalist's work on the war in the former Yugoslavia is unfairly overlooked here; Cf. Hatzfeld "L'air de la guerre."

[20] Hetman.

[21] Siwor 267–276.

of the commercial media, but is extremely important for the creator of literary reportage. Hatzfeld's texts make it possible to highlight a special kind of silence, in which for several years now there have been both those unwilling to settle accounts with the Hutus' past and those unwilling to return to the brutal events, the Tutsi. The reportage *Un Papa de sang* is an attempt to allow those who are twenty years away from the bloody attacks to speak out. In an interview for the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, Hatzfeld points out that the new generation of Rwandans does not always want to return to the events of 1994, and even seems surprised by the attention paid to them by the Western media:

> Les enfants sont obliges de nier pour survivre. Ils ont ete surpris que je prete attention a leur histoire, a leur vecu. Ils ne pensaient pas que leur avis puisse avoir un quelconque interet, encore moins la parole d'enfants de tueurs. On ne les interroge pas la-dessus.[22]

Many young people, like their parents, also choose to remain silent. It is becoming a strategy for them to live in a society that treats the memory of the genocide as a kind of taboo that is not reverted to in public space. As Katarzyna Głowacka writes, there is an unwritten obligation in the state to forget, but complying with it may have long-term consequences: 'the policy of ethnic amnesia, which is being pushed through by the authorities, is increasingly objectionable [...] – the fact that the existing social antagonisms are not spoken of publicly does not mean that the problem disappears.'[23]

The genocide in Rwanda was a dramatic event of all kinds. In a hundred days, approximately one million people lost their lives in fratricidal attacks by the Hutus against the Tutsis. Less than forty years after the end of the Second World War, the scenario of a large-scale murder was re-activated in a small, African country which, as Ryszard Kapuściński stressed on the pages of *Ebony*,[24] was not particularly interesting for the European media and their audience: even when it faced the consequences of the genocide. The topic resounded with great force in

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[22] "Dzieci są zmuszone zaprzeczać, aby przeżyć. Były zaskoczone, że zwracam uwagę na ich historię, na ich doświadczenie. Nie sądziły, że ich opinia może mieć jakiekolwiek znaczenie, tym bardziej zaś słowo dzieci zabójców. Nie pytamy ich o to" [translated by the author] J. Hatzfeld "Au Rwanda".

[23] Głowacka 46.

[24] Kapuściński 192.

a variety of artistic messages, ranging from films such as *Hotel Rwanda* in 2004 and *The Birds Are Singing in Kigali* in 2017 to music, e.g. the song *Cut the Tall Trees* [*Ściąć wysokie drzewa*] by the band Myslovitz.

Today, researchers dealing with the Rwandan genocide place a strong emphasis on the involvement of local media, not so much in reporting the crimes as in calling for them to be committed. As Kofi Annan said, 'the media were used in Rwanda to spread hatred, to dehumanise people, and even to guide the *genocidaires* toward their victims.'[25] The Rwandan media, with particular reference to an extremely popular radio station, broadcast propaganda messages and openly exhorted the extermination of the Tutsi, with the metaphorical phrase 'tall trees should be felled'. The radio station RTLM and the newspaper *Kangua* played a significant role in this process, and in their messages they unambiguously indicated the enemy to be annihilated. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has precisely documented their actions to spread hatred:

> The newspaper and the radio explicitly and repeatedly [...] targeted the Tutsi population for destruction. Demonising the Tutsi as having inherent evil qualities, equating the ethnic group with the 'enemy' and portraying its women as seductive enemy agents, the media called for the extermination of the Tutsi ethnic group.[26]

Researchers and media professionals stress that in the 1990s European public opinion was much more interested in events in the Balkans than in the situation in Rwanda. The Americans, in turn, at that time, were following O. J. Simpson's trial with curiosity,[27] which then dominated the narrative conducted by the media. The media silence about Rwanda is also due to the absence of reporters from many leading Western media outlets in the country, motivated by the fear of losing their lives. The events of 1994 therefore lacked outside witnesses and observers. Paradoxically, the subject of this genocide only returned with increased force in media discourse a dozen or so years after the end of the war. The memories of direct witnesses are compared with the memory of the second generation, which, by actively following the materials published on the Internet, believes that the media are jointly responsible for shaping the memory of events.

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[25] Annan IX.

[26] Thompson 2.

[27] Dallaire 14.

## *UN PAPA DE SANG* **TOWARDS EXPERIENCING POST-MEMORY**

The motif of a saved and lost memory is undoubtedly the main compositional axis of Hatzfeld's book, which already reveals its motivation on the front pages: the desire to look at the Rwandan genocide from the perspective of young people. The journalist is aware of the strong entanglement in the history of the second generation; although he does not remember the events of 1994, for several years he still treats them as the main point of reference for constructing his own biography.

> Nineteen years have passed: the time when man grows up. I have met many young people who have been accompanied by these returning phantoms since childhood. Everyone has dealt, as they could, with the story that has become part of their lives.[28]

*Un Papa de sang* is a record of the independent statements made by young people – both Tutsi and Hutu – to whom the journalist gives the floor, preceded by information about their age, their parents' names, and their membership in either of the above-mentioned groups. Using the method of 'voice collection', the reporter – and this is worth emphasising – does not leave the quoted statements without his own commentary, although he prefers to replace evaluations and opinions with quoting important facts from the life of the hero. Each time, Hatzfeld presents the reader with a historical background that allows for a better understanding of the fate of individual characters and their relations. These statements are often a kind of intertextual reference to the journalist's earlier publications, trying to situate the history of young Rwandans in the context of their relations' experiences. Memory and post-memory, although often forming completely separate narratives, are complementary for the journalist.

*Un Papa de sang* was conceived as a volume of tripartite construction. The first part, entitled 'Memory', is a collection of statements made by young Rwandans who return in their memories to events before their birth or early childhood. The second part, 'Parents', presents a series of short stories about the same historical moment in history, recorded in the memory of the mothers and fathers of the main characters. In the third part, entitled 'The Future', the reporter once

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[28] Hatzfeld, "Un Papa" 19.

again gives a voice to the young interviewees, but this time he directs his gaze to what is yet to happen. Hatzfeld, starting with wartime memories, asks the young people about their plans for the years to come. The use of the clamp construction allows the journalist to create a bridge between the Rwandan past and the future and to show how strongly the two spheres intertwine. The memory of the genocide is undoubtedly one of the main topics to which Rwandans return in talks with their families. By comparing the functioning of the post-memorial memory of young people with the memories of their parents, the reporter gains the opportunity to look at the issue from two perspectives. It turns out, however, that the two have more in common than in opposition. Both the first and second generation, despite the lapse of time, still struggle with the inexpressibility of human language. The genocide for parents and their children is becoming the most important element of intergenerational identification. The stories about it as well as the silence that surrounds it have a boundary-forming function.

The protagonists of *Un Papa de sang* present the journalist with a scheme of constructing memories of the event: they inform how in recent years, out of half-truths, guesswork, and secretly heard utterances, they have recreated in their imagination an image of the year 1994. In the statements of young people, a clear pattern of memory work can be seen. The accumulation of extremely similar stories introduces a kind of thematic redundancy into the pages of this volume; in this case, however, it seems to be intentional and fully justified. This repetitiveness, so clearly highlighted by the reporter, makes it possible to put forward a thesis about the existence of a kind of social grammar of constructing the framework of memory: from total ignorance and unconsciousness, it gradually evolves (with human participation in the life of the community) towards ever clearer images, additionally marked by a strong emotional burden. The following statement by one of the heroines of the book could undoubtedly have been signed by her peers:

> I think that when I was nine years old, the genocide really shook me up. What happened? I can't remember anymore. I think that one day I set my ears on what people say. My mother mentioned some details and explained something to the people who visited us. I could not understand it. I was confused. Can a child imagine the neighbours chasing Tutsi with machetes in their hands?[29]

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[29] Ibidem 113.

For the young Tutsis in particular, 1994 still remains an important reference year, although, as they themselves point out, many of them do not have any personal memories of that period. Despite this, they reconstruct the fate of their parents and loved ones with great precision, and with a cult of reportage and detail they look for information about the genocide on the Internet and watch films about it. Their memory is supposed to be a tool for preserving the testimonies of the survivors. The reactions of young Hutus seem to be much more varied. A frequent response to the deeds committed by their parents is still silence or embarrassment.

The memory of the second generation is often constructed on the basis of preserved photographs, which are a tool for recording and visualising social experiences. The role of photography in the process of commemorating breakthrough events was clearly stressed by Susan Sontag, who wrote that

> photographs can be more memorable than films because they record separate units of time, not its flow. Television is a stream of carelessly selected images, each of which erases its predecessor from consciousness of the viewer. A motionless photograph is a moment endowed with the privilege of permanence.[30]

For young Rwandans, photographs not only become important evidence in the case, but also serve as a memory guard. The protagonists of Hatzfeld's book emphasise that they play the role of a tool for restoring lost memory, reconstructing a coherent narrative about the event from individual memories. These two aspects are emphasised by Ange Uwase – a nineteen-year-old Tutsi:

> I am interested in the photographs from the time of the genocide. I can see them forever, because I was a child then and I don't remember anything. It's a pity that people don't want to see them in order to explore the subject of massacres in this way. [...] The photographs save from oblivion more effectively than mourning ceremonies; they contradict the words of denialists or those who do not have a taste for the massacres.[31]

He treats the photographs from the period of genocide as a transparent, almost unquestionable document that mimics the reality of several years ago. They

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[30] Sontag 23.
[31] Hatzfeld, "Un Papa" 82–83.

function as a kind of substitute for individual memory, filling the gap generated by the silence of direct witnesses of events. They are also a tool for the temporary circulation of memories, because they transfer images that are important for a given community, offering access to them to future generations.[32]

Young Tutsi and Hutu have a similar experience of rooting out. It is connected not only with the impossibility of faithfully recollecting the events of 1994, but also with the impossibility of connecting with the history of one's own family, which was taken away from the youngest generation with the death or imprisonment of the family. This feeling is expressed both by the descendants of the victims who died during the genocide and by the young generation of the Hutus whose fathers spent their last years in prison. The protagonists of *Un Papa de sang* repeatedly draw attention to the fact that they have been cut off from their roots and that the generational bond has been broken, denying the individual a sense of belonging to a particular community. In the statement of a Tutsi girl we read that

> the ravages have harmed family relationships. Wisdom has suffered from the lack of older generations; we neglect daily celebrations. No-one is telling us how to behave towards other people, towards the elderly, and there is no-one to chastise us for our careless dress.[33]

A similar experience was shared by many young Rwandans, many times in conversations with Hatzfeld, emphasising the shame, fear, or guilt inherited from their ancestors. Most of those questioned admit that 1994 is still a kind of taboo in school or private contacts, which neither the young Tutsis nor their Hutu peers want to break through. Hatzfeld's interlocutors agree that the relationship between the two groups is nowadays a sphere of understatement; many topics in public discourse are not addressed, even though they are one of the focal points of reflection not only of the older generation, but also of the younger generation.

As Maurice Halbwachs pointed out, the image of the past, as constituted by individual groups, is often distorted by various factors.

Facts – in general – are selected by individuals and communities according to their destiny of being forgotten or remembered. This process is initiated both by

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[32] Łaguna-Raszkiewicz 155–163.
[33] Hatzfeld, op. cit. 28.

the sender and the recipient of the message.[34] This filter seems to function more strongly even in the case of post-memory, shaped not only by the stories heard from loved ones, but also by various media narratives taken from the press, radio, television, or the Internet. This last one is often referred to by the young protagonists of *Un Papa de sang*, stressing its role in informing about the genocide, but also helping to work out fears built mainly on the foundations of ignorance and silence. In his earlier books, Hatzfeld presented the Rwandan genocide against the background of events connected with the extermination of Jews during the World War II; this time he shows how much the development of the media, especially electronic media, has changed the way trauma is experienced. Thanks to them, information has become available at one's fingertips, which is what the individuals in *Un Papa de sang* say:

> I started to watch television programmes and listen carefully in my social lessons. It was only later that I started to browse the Internet, looking for information. When I was feeling up to it. I got used to the genocide.[35]

On the basis of the statements made by the witnesses and their descendants that Hatzfeld collected, a kind of topography of the post-mortem can be formed. In the statements of the Rwandans, certain places, which are extremely clearly marked by the memory of the genocide, play an equally important role as people do. This spatial dimension of memory returns in the statements of many representatives of the younger generation, for whom certain landscapes in a way automatically evoke a sense of pain and suffering, referring the viewer to events that took place in such scenery for several years. We are therefore talking about a space in which negative emotions are evoked not through a simple reminder, but through a kind of work of imagination. For the second generation, some places lose their ordinariness and neutrality; they are permanently marked by the stigma of history. In case of the Rwandan genocide, the role of *lieux de memoire* – to use the term of Pierre Nora[36] – They are filled, above all, with swamps and hills, generating sad memories of both young Tutsi and Hutsi. Importantly, as we read in the Hatzfeld report, this space has an extremely strong community-forming

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[34] Halbwachs.
[35] Hatzfeld, op. cit. 29.
[36] Nora 7–24.

potential. It evokes a sense of trauma, not only among the direct witnesses, but also among their descendants, who in their statements repeatedly declare fear and aversion to the places mentioned. In an excerpt from a representative of the Hutu, we read:

> I never went to the swamp, I did not dare to offer it to any colleague. I did not have the opportunity to go there with someone who would tell me everything. I do not know enough about this to talk about it honestly with my friends.[37]

An analogous attitude to the place of memory is presented by the Tutsi:

> Did I go into the forest on Kayumba Hill, where my dad had to run away from the killers? No, I was not at our Arab neighbours' house in Kigali either. I do not visit these places, as I prefer not to go to the mausoleums.[38]

The people in Hatzfeld's book treat the traumatised *lieux de memoire* as a kind of archive of memories, mediated mainly by photographs, historical documents, or media stories. They agree that confronting these emotions would only be possible with the help of a guide, the role of which could be played by someone close to them; in the face of silence, returning to the swamps or hills becomes emotionally too difficult or even impossible for young people.

It is estimated that in Rwanda between 2,000 and even 5,000 children were born as a consequence of the rape of Tutsi women; today they are described in publicistic discourse as '*les enfants mauvais souvenir*'[39] ['children of bad memories']. Their birth is burdened with a bad memory, which is kept not only by the women harmed by the Hutus, but also by their sons and daughters. Although these children do not remember 1994, it has fundamentally affected the way their identity is formed. Born of a Tutsi mother and a Hutu father, young people often experience rejection, even from their loved ones. They become a kind of hostage to memory; on the one hand, they enjoy not having memories of the genocide, but on the other hand they are stigmatised by those close to them. The subject of *les enfants mauvais souvenir* is often raised in contemporary media discourse, just to

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[37] Hatzfeld, op. cit. 47.
[38] Ibidem 85.
[39] Mukangendo 50.

mention the famous photojournalism of Jonathan Torgovnik, who as a Newsweek employee came to Rwanda to photograph AIDS victims. However, he returned from his visit there with a series of photographs depicting mothers with children conceived in an act of war violence.

Hatzfeld also writes extensively about the 'children of bad memories', quoting the statements of seventeen-year-old Nadine Umutesi. The heroine of his text, although she lives with the burden of war experiences, is lucky to grow up in a family that loves her. She is only told about her biological father by outsiders: neighbours, friends, and classmates. In the reporter's memoirs, interestingly enough, there are no negative comments about her biological father. As a particularly difficult task, Nadine instead mentions the social stigma which she is unable to resist effectively:

> In fact, I feel trapped, I have already told you. Sometimes, I would like to get sick of the words in which my story is contained in order to put away my sadness. I do not want to remain in melancholy, I do not want to hear about it.[40]

She based her memories of genocide on the basis of stories she heard (often even against her will). As a consequence, she experiences the burden of memory in an extremely painful way, which becomes not only a burden but also a stigma for her. In public opinion, the father's transgression is transferred to the child. The girl declares that she is understandingly looking at the suffering of the Tutsis, who want to talk about the enormity of their tragedy. For her, however, the only desired state seems to be silence, which can suppress painful memories.

**SUMMARY**

The issue of memory has been returning with particular force in contemporary literary reportage in recent years. An explanation for this should be sought in the conviction of journalists that it is necessary to document the testimonies of slowly departing generations, whose generational experience was that of war in the last century.

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[40] Hatzfeld, op. cit. 61.

> The turn of reportage work towards the problem of post-memory is an attempt to expand the view of wartime events to include the view of those who have been instilled with a sense of trauma in various stories passed on from generation to generation.

For journalistic texts that (unlike literature) value facts over interpretations, opening up to the voice of the second generation may seem as difficult as it seems surprising. It is a great challenge for a reporter to separate pure description from commentary.

Basing the journalistic narrative on inherited memory entails various consequences that Hatzfeld tried to overcome in *Un Papa de sang* by confronting the post-memorial narratives of the young protagonists with the stories of their relatives – direct witnesses of the events. This book, in a layer of meta-textual comments, is above all a reflection on the limitations of human language, the problem of its inexpressibility, which both the people Hatzfeld interviewed and he himself face. In the narrative of the French reporter, the memory is presented as a kind of stigma that young Rwandans want to get rid of at all costs. Against the backdrop of his dramatic stories, Hatzfeld draws a picture of their 'normal', as it might seem, life: young people enjoy watching European music videos on the Internet, going to the cinema, cheering on their favourite sports teams, and gaining an education. *Un Papa de sang* should therefore be read not so much as a journalistic story about an event, but rather as a reportage text on its social perception.

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## About the autor

Edyta Żyrek-Horodyska – Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Institute of Journalism, Media, and Social Communication of the Jagiellonian University. Her scientific interests focus on contemporary literary reportage, media history, and the links between the press and literature in the 19th century. She is the author of a book entitled *Wieszczowie i gazeciarze. Europejska publicystyka epoki romantyzmu*.