Jaroslaw Kinal
Rzeszów University, College of Humanities
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2810-7307

Ways and types of media participation in Polish, Slovak and Hungarian villages
Comparative analysis

Sposoby i rodzaje uczestnictwa w mediach na wsi polskiej, słowackiej i węgierskiej
Analiza porównawcza

Abstract

Modern technological development of media, together with the possibilities of access to content, has practically bridged the information gap between the inhabitants of village and city. The aim of the article is to present the results of media participation studies conducted in three countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The study was conducted on a random group using the Collected Research Aggregate data, indicating the difference in transmedia participation and identifying patterns of media consumption behaviour in rural areas. To this point, a comparative analysis between respondents representing different media systems with different media practices has allowed to distinguish common features and differences that may be of interest not only to media experts, but also to those managing advertising campaigns in the media in the countries studied.

Keywords: media participation, village, media, COVID-19, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania.

Abstrakt

Współczesny rozwój technologiczny mediów, wraz z możliwościami dostępu do treści praktycznie zniwelował lukę informacyjną pomiędzy mieszkańcami wsi oraz miasta.

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja wyników badań dotyczących partycypacji medialnych przeprowadzonych w trzech krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Badania przeprowadzono na grupie losowej metodą webankiety. Zgromadzony agregat badawczy pozwolił na wskazanie różnic w partycypacji transmedialnej oraz pozwolił nakreślić wzorce zachowań konsumpcji mediów na terenach wiejskich. Dokonana w tym celu analiza komparatystyczna pomiędzy respondentami reprezentującymi różne systemy medialne, posiadające różne praktyki medialne pozwoliła na wyłuskanie cech wspólnych i różnic, które mogą być interesujące nie tylko dla medioznawców, ale także dla osób zarządzających kampaniami reklamowymi w mediach w badanych krajach.

Słowa kluczowe: partycypacja medialna, wieś, media, COVID-19, Polska, Słowacja, Węgry, Rumunia

Introduction

A feature of the modern media system is its multimodality, understood as the use of different types of media in the process of obtaining information. This is linked, on the one hand, to the multiplication of accessibility to communication channels and, on the other hand, to the multiplicity of forms and species available to the ordinary public, which is forced to create an internal selection mechanism on its own.

In the opinion of the author of this text, an interesting case is systems which have undergone a relatively short transition from closed systems licensed to free market systems. Such are the following systems included in the Polish, Slovak and Hungarian.

When considering in detail the auditorium of these systems, attention should be paid to the specific duality of the recipient. On the one hand, they are young people with much more developed IT and media competences created in a situation of a surge in content and media proposals in the ecosystem available to them. This type of user in the literature of the subject is increasingly referred to as "digital natives". The creator of this term, M. Prensky, described digital natives as people born in the digital age after the 1980s, for whom new media are the natural environment of existence. People who were born after the 1980s remember the *pre-digital* era. They use digital means of communication in a clear and natural way. Their mother tongue is the language of the Internet, computerisation and digitisation (Prensky 2001). Digital language is considered a supranational language used by digital natives from all over the world, using a unified nomenclature. Mr Prensky believes that digital *natives use multiple multimedia*

devices or a single Multifunction Device at the same time. With a single device at the same time they can use the Internet, send messages, listen to music and watch movies (Mysiar 2014). Their peculiarity of learning is that if they can't find or understand something, they don't look for it in printed books, but search for the information they need online. Such actions state that digital natives are called "always on" (Mysiar 2014). "Digital natives" are creating a new community of people developing in the multimedia world. Their communication process is linked to access to new media so that they can connect with many people at once. According to H. Rheingold, the communication of digital natives is directed so as to "share common emotions, make plans, spread gossip, have disputes, fall in love, find and lose friends, [...] to flirt, to have insignificant conversations" (Krauza-Sikorska *et al.* 2013).

In literature, the generation of "digital natives" is justified by two assumptions: (1) digital-era young people have advanced knowledge of new digital technologies; (2) young people have scientific tendencies, different from those born in the pre-digital era (Prensky 2001).

The second category of audience in the auditorium is "digital immigrants", sometimes defined in literature as a *generation of pre-digital* people, i.e. those born before 1983, for whom new media are not an environment of being. They use the Internet, but not in an advanced way like digital natives. Digital immigrants speak an outdated language that is not adapted to the principles of the modern educational system. The phone is mostly used to make and receive calls. They work on printed text because they can freely edit it with a pen. In the digital world, they often lack courage, they are not able to get used to new technology achievements. New technologies arouse distrust in them (Hojnacki 2016).

When considering the transformation of receiving styles, it is important to note a significant change in the understanding of communication rituals and the level of media absorption. The term "ritual" is one of the most popular terms in literature in the field of humanities and social sciences. Ritual in literature is referred to as "manifestations of what is supernatural" (Godde 1983), "the execution of more or less immutable sequences of formal acts and statements, coded by no means by the performers" (Rappaport 2007). When considering this issue in the media sense, the concept of media ritual can be defined as the cyclical, repetitive use of media forms by audiences who are convinced of the personalization and uniqueness of the receiving process of a given medium.

The concept of media absorption should also be defined from a media point of view and mean 'full or partial assimilation of media content by the recipient, together with a level of understanding of the message received and processed'.

In this case, it should be noted that a serious problem for the age group stud-ied in this study is to maintain concentration on a single medium, which may pose a risk to the degree of understanding of the message received. The purpose of the study described in this article was to diagnose the types and reception and preferences of media reception, i.e. media participation of users living in towns with less than 5000 inhabitants, in three selected media systems. This is an issue that can also be used in a market-based way. The study presented was part of a larger project carried out by the author on the diagnosis of forms of communication in contact regions, i.e. places where national and ethnic di-versity occurs, media interconnection and diversity in terms of cultural factors affecting communication practices.

1. Methodology

The process of conceptualizing research was conducted in cooperation with media experts from Slovakia and Hungary. During the process, it was agreed that the studies would be pilot, trending. The selection will be random from the data. For the purposes of this work, it was decided to use surveys conducted by the method of a bank. The choice of this research technique was determined by two factors. The first factor was the methodological factor resulting from the para-digm of presence. As part of this paradigm, media experts are calling for non-re-search into social communication in the environment of the phenomenon. The second determining factor was the environmental factor. Due to the epidemic situation associated with COVID-19, it was not possible to carry out studies in ac-cordance with traditional test methods such as audit survey, in-depth interview or PAPI method. An additional factor was the ease of reaching the target group through modern communication channels, including social media. The research was conducted in late September and early October using a dedicated tool in the Google Forms app. Two groups were identified (227 persons) of rural resi-dents with different professional and material status and control (101 persons), i.e. urban residents. Due to the method of research adopted and the epidemic situation, it was decided that the control group should be selected among the Polish residents living in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. A detailed list of respondents' origin is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' country of origin

Country of origin	Number of respondents	Study group	Control group
Poland	203	102	101
Slovakia	78	78	0
Hungary	47	47	0
sum	328	227	101

Source: own study

Due to the distribution of residence, respondents were divided into compartments which relate to the number of places of residence. A detailed distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Breakdown of respondents by declared place of residence

Residence of respondents	Study group	Control group
Village 1–250 inhabitants	43	0
Village 251–500 inhabitants	62	0
Village 501–2000 inhabitants	55	0
Village over 2001 inhabitants	67	0
City of more than 50,000 inhabitants	0	101

Source: own study

The survey also asked respondents about their level of education. In the study group, *high school education* prevailed – 103 indications over higher education (*University Education*) 89 indications, primary education declared 35 respondents. In the control group, the vast majority of study participants (74 people) declared higher education, 21 people had secondary education and 6 people had primary and vocational education.

As indicated in the table above, the groups are not in uniform numbers. However, due to the nature of the research – trend study, such a division does not constitute a methodological error.

In the course of conceptual work, research hypotheses have been established by adopting the following definition of the hypothesis: the prominence or proposition of a scientific theorem that arose from a research problem is the essence

of the conceptualisation process *of the research process. Hypotheses are an important part of methodological work, because research is, after all, a command of truth or misrepresentation of the precence.* (Sztumski 1995)

In conjunction with the accepted methodological paradigm for exploring the subject, the following research hypotheses have been established in the empirical research process, the same for all national auditors surveyed:

H1. Respondents most often use media at home

H2. Respondents do not notice difference in media access due to their place of residence H3. Rural respondents use media to meet consumer needs (teleshopping, e-commerce) H4. Rural respondents are more likely than respondents in the control group to watch and listen to public media

H5. Respondents are most likely to receive information from their preferred media

H6. Respondents highly rate the quality of the programme offer proposed by the national media

H7. Rural respondents do not use foreign-language media

H8. Rural respondents point to a transformation of behaviour in the choice of visual medium from traditional media to streaming media

The objective of the study was to verify (as shown or reject) hypotheses. The study was conducted in accordance with the canons and paradigm of social research. In most cases, a mechanism was used to compare the study and control groups.

2. Analyses

The process of analysing the aggregated test material consisted of refering the responses to the hypotheses, which led to the submission or rejection of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Respondents most often consume the media at home

This hypothesis has been partially verified positively. In response to respondents from the study group, the preferred place of reception of traditional audiovisual media is the place of residence (house or apartment), in the case of audial media (radio); the preferred place of reception is a car or means of public trans-

port (train, bus) while in the case of the Internet, the reception location does not matter or it is difficult to clearly determine preferences. Similar results were recorded in all media systems studied. A summary of responses is presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Preferred media reception location for respondents in the study group by country of origin and results in the control group. Question about general preferences

Respondents' country of origin	Home	Work	Car, public transport	Public space	institu- tion	sum
Poland	65	21	11	1	3	101
Slovakia	56	13	5	0	4	78
Hungary	30	7	7	3	1	48
Control group	38	34	21	7	1	101

The results of this question can be correlated with the lifestyle preferred by respondents. Studies in previous years have shown that some of the public treat media consumption as a waste of private time, focusing in their free time on building family or camaraderie ties, and that the process of media consumption takes place outside the place of residence. In rural areas, this can also be linked to a profession (farmer, agritourism owner) in which the time for media perception is significantly reduced. The control group reported different results, which can be explained by the higher time of being in the car or public transport and the higher number of cultural offers offered by living in heavily urbanised areas.

The media type-by-media breakdown as indicated above diverses reception locations according to the type of media. Questionnaire questions divided the audience by media type and asked respondents to express their views. The internet, which was the subject of a separate question, was excluded from the list. The cumulative results for the whole test group are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Receiving preferences for media type. N=227

Media type	Place of reception – house	Pick-up point – car, public transport	Place of reception – work	Pick-up point – public space	Pick-up location – other
Audiovisual medium (traditional television)	224	0	3	0	0
Audio medium (radio)	105	72	43	7	0
press	130	0	53	39	5

With regard to the internet, it is assumed that due to the variety of access methods it is not possible to determine a single preferred access location. Therefore, the question is whether there is a place where users do not use this medium. The vast majority of respondents in both the study group (97%) and the control group (99%) indicated that there was no such place.

Hypothesis 2. Respondents do not notice a difference in media access due to their place of residence

In relation to the collected research material, this hypothesis has been subdued. In both the study group and the control group, respondents did not indicate significant differences in media reception. The only anomaly identified by the respondents was the difficulty in using the internet in open spaces related to the movement between BTS of mobile telephony. This problem was not observed in the control group. In view of the above, it can be concluded that the comparative analysis did not show differences in access to the media by place of residence.

3.3. Hypothesis 3. Rural respondents use media to meet consumer needs (teleshopping, e-commerce)

For the studies collected, the vast majority of respondents living in rural areas (respondents from Poland – 78%, from Slovakia – 69%, from Hungary – 82%) they indicated that they saw benefits of online trading, particularly because of the speed of delivery and the wide range of products presented. The residents of Poland particularly surveyed indicate the ease with which online purchases and forms of delivery are made. This is most likely related to the wide-ranging offer of pick-up points (Paczkomaty and Slot Machines). A small, only 7% of respondents make purchases in the form of teleshopping.

3.4. Hypothesis 4. Rural respondents are more likely than respondents in the control group to watch and listen to public media

The hypothesis has not been confirmed. In both the study group and the control group, just over 50% (study group 56%, control group 52%) respondents indicate public media as preferred. For individual media systems, this has to do with the participation of private media in the system and their attractiveness related to the programme offer. There has been some increase in interest in public media in the case of the Polish media system, but due to its dual nature and attractive offer of entertainment programmes correlated with the broadcast time acceptable to respondents, it is a question to be re-examined in a larger study.

3.5 Respondents are most likely to receive information from their preferred media

The gathered research operat made this hypothesis possible. According to the data received, the vast majority of respondents have a preferred receiving list, in any type of media. In particular, so-called readership is evident in the printed press (93% of respondents living in rural areas) and television (75% of respondents). In the case of the Internet, the choices related to the public are based on the so-called information needs and, in the case of young people, trends related to the popularity of selected online platforms. For a detailed list of answers to the question "Do you use most of the media you know?" see Table 5.

Table 5. Answers to a question about preferred broadcasters in each media type

Type medium	Positive responses	Negative responses
television	75%	25%
Radio	41%	59%
press	93%	7%
Internet	33%	67%

Source: own study

3.6. Hypothesis 6. Respondents highly rate the quality of the programme offer proposed by the national media

This hypothesis has been positively verified. Respondents to all media systems were satisfied with both the programme offer and the methods of functioning of the national media (82% of the overall sample the answer "hard to say/I don't have an opinion"). In a detailed question, respondents indicated satisfaction with the offer of entertainment forms and the selection of film collections in the case of television, news in the case of radio stations and specialization of printed periodicals.

3.7. Hypothesis 7. Rural respondents do not use foreign-speaking media

The hypothesis has been partially verified positively. In the process of analysis, due to the ambiguity of the data for the general sample, it was necessary to apply a correlation of the results with the breakdown into two receiving groups (described in the introductory part, that is, digital immigrants and digital tribians). For the older age group, you may see a preference in all media systems to use national media broadcast in the language of your country. In the case of studies of the younger group, there is a trend of using both foreign media as sources of information. In the case of Poland and Slovakia, English is an additional language outside the national preferred language for media reception, and in the case of the Hungarian media system there has also been an occurrence of German and Romanian, which can probably be correlated with the place of residence in the contact regions or the personal tradition of the respondents.

3.8. Hypothesis 8. Rural respondents point to a transformation of behaviour in the choice of visual medium from traditional media to streaming media

The hypothesis has been negatively verified. At the general level, no age grouping preference was observed for online television reception over standard television. The vast majority of respondents (94%) demonstrated that both forms of reception are equivalent. For younger respondents (under 40 years of age), they demonstrate the advantage of on-line television in terms of receiving independently of a traditional TELEVISION set, while noting that this type of reception allows reception on different types of devices (tablet, smartphone, personal computer, notebook).

3. Summary and discussion

Similar studies related to the study are not known to the author of this study. National agencies responsible for monitoring media in the countries in question prepare reports, but the data presented by them do not contain the information presented in the above article.

The presented study brought interesting conclusions, pointing out that the development of media technologies not only shortened the distance between heavily and poorly urbanized areas, but also enables the sustainable development of the infosphere of these areas. It should be noted that, as in the case of large-scale studies, in this study there was a observed tendency to dissection of the audience into a group of persons under 40 years of age and those above that age, in particular as regards reception. Interestingly, attention (loyalty) to reading has also been indicated, which is a feature that stabilizes media systems.

For reasons of research, it should be noted that the subject presented is intended to start a discussion and to contribute to further, larger ones, both thematically and in terms of sample size. It also seems valuable to change the research method to CATI telephone testing, due to some methodological controversies related to the online survey. Another proposal is the possibility of using a designed research tool in panel studies carried out at specific intervals. The author of the study assures about the provision of a research tool.

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