

THE RELATIONSHIP OF YOUNG SLOVAK CATHOLICS TO THE MEDIA

Terézia RONČÁKOVÁ

ABSTRACT:

The article discusses the relationship of young engaged Catholics in Slovakia to the various media outlets which they follow. It attempts to reveal which media outlets are considered to be inspiring and thought-provoking and how are they perceived and evaluated by their followers. The author draws from extensive research into the interpretation of Church news and current affairs within the community of young engaged Catholics; therefore, the findings related to media reception presented herein also include demographical and personal characteristics for individual audiences. The findings are also presented within the context of three specific Church-related news stories: the contentious removal of Róbert Bezák from his position as Archbishop of Trnava, the financial separation of the Church and state, and clerical celibacy. The underlying research was conducted using combined questionnaires, both quantitative and qualitative, on a sample of 339 suitable respondents. The research reveals that the most inspiring Slovak media outlet according to the young engaged Catholics is the secular weekly *.týždeň*, followed by the Catholic television channel Lux. The research has revealed a significant discrepancy between the opinions of the audiences of secular media and the audiences of official Church media: while the former are very critical of Church media, the latter seem to be more reluctant to turn to secular media.

KEY WORDS:

media, Catholics, Slovakia, Róbert Bezák, separation of Church and state, celibacy



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Terézia Rončáková graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the Comenius University in Bratislava, specialising in journalism (2002). Having previously worked as a journalist for the SITA press agency, *Katolícke noviny* and later also at Vatican Radio in Rome, she defended her thesis at the Catholic University in Ružomberok (2006) and appointed to the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (2012). In her scholarly research she focuses on news and religious style and journalistic genres. Lecturing at the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts and Letters at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, T. Rončáková is the author of a series of monographs *When the Church Speaks Media Language*, *How the Church Speaks Media Language* and *Can the Church Speak Media Language?*, as well as the textbook *Journalistic Genres*. She is also a member of the Ladislav Hanus Fellowship, the Association of Young Catholic Journalists Network Slovakia and Public Affairs Forum.

1 Introduction

According to classical theories of communication, the formation of public discourse and public opinion is shaped primarily by the media, opinion leaders and interpretive micro-communities. These three factors have formed the basis of our extensive research into public discourse on Church news and current affairs in Slovakia.

Our research has focused on the perceptions of young engaged Catholics from Slovakia, a group which we believe is worthy of study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the young age of this group is of interest, as both the process of opinion formation and the real life consequences of this formation can be studied in detail. Secondly, this group has a marked tendency to engage in various activities with a real impact on the public

sphere, and therefore they have the potential to assume responsibility for future opinion leadership. Thirdly, their Catholic faith and specific lifestyle is reflected in the development of specific competence, a concept which is relevant for the subject matter of our research, the Church and current affairs discourse.

This article thus presents our findings and conclusions related to the perception of mass media, proposing answers to the following questions:

1. Which media outlets inspire or form the opinions of young engaged Catholics in Slovakia with respect to Church news and current affairs?
2. How do young Catholics perceive individual Slovak media outlets in a more general sense?

2 Theoretical Outlines of the Topic

The foundations of research into the process of shaping public opinion in democratic societies were laid in 1922 by Lippmann.¹ The theory of opinion leaders dates back to 1944, when Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet published their concept of a two-step flow of communication;² these findings were later elaborated and further developed in the works of Lazarsfeld and Katz.³ Their study describes how the information obtained through mass media is selected and processed by people with better access to and more interest in this information, or by those with more sophisticated critical thought process who in turn forward their own interpretation to others.

The concept of community is currently a major focus of research in social sciences. In general, community allows scholars to decipher and explain social processes; within the field of communication, which also includes media communication, the primary focus of scholars is the study of so-called interpretive communities. This term is derived from the work of the literary theorist Stanley Fish⁴ who argued that the involvement of the receiver in the construction of meaning does not occur solely on an individualistic basis, but also within certain natural communication communities. These communication communities were initially categorised as interpretive communities and speech communities, although Borg⁵ later added the mixed category of discourse communities to the list. The interpretive and meaning-giving dimension of community represents one of the three basic characteristics and typological starting points of the concept, along with the dimensions of space and social structure. These three dimensions were supplemented by Crow and Allan⁶ – through the so-called ‘fourth dimension’ of community time.

Within the field of journalism, the theory of interpretive communities provides an interesting and useful tool for examining a broad spectrum of topics; for example, Berkowitz and TerKeurst⁷ have used the approach to examine the relationship between journalists and their information sources, while Wenner⁸ adopted the theory to examine specific groups of audiences such as sports fans in his research into the attempts of media to create fan groups. Rauchová⁹ has studied the means by which the rejection of the mainstream forms the basis of group identity among activists within the alternative media, but the work by Mitra¹⁰ has also drawn

attention to the often superficial and illusory nature of this conflict with the mainstream in the example of homosexual bloggers in India. Brewin¹¹ has explored interpretive communities from the perspective of reformist and citizenship-related journalism, and Lindlof¹² has applied the concept of interpretive communities to investigate the religious practices of contemporary American society and the influence of public preferences on religious institutions.

The aim of this study is to discuss the relationship of a specific audience to particular media forms and outlets. In Slovakia, the study of audiences remains a marginal topic despite the fact that the effect of the almost permanent interaction of individuals with media is one of the key issues posed by modern media-driven society. Abercrombie and Longhurst¹³ suggest that the current paradigm of media impact can be described as a ‘spectacle/performance paradigm’; mass media have become such a natural and prevalent part of our lives and our environment that they have also come to constitute our identity. Some insights into the topic within Slovak environment can be found in a number of partially overlapping works. Rankov¹⁴ has examined the behaviour of media audiences within the context of the overabundance of information offered by contemporary society. Studies by Hacek¹⁵ address the relationship of readers to their favourite news websites, while Višňovský and Baláž¹⁶ have explored the impact of local media on agenda setting and public opinion. Slovak researchers have also focused on specific types of audiences. Teenagers were the primary focus of research conducted by Vrabc¹⁷ who explored their communication and identity in the online environment, and Gillárová¹⁸ has focused on their socialisation in the digital age. Similarly, the impact of television on teenagers’ attitudes towards marriage, pre-marital sex and homosexual relationships has been explored by Izrael.¹⁹ The preferences of other audience groups have also been addressed by a series of studies; university students by Holdoš and Považan²⁰, the elderly by Petranová²¹ and the viewing patterns of mothers on maternity leave by Domeniková.²²

Within the specific context of religion, the perception of specific media forms by specific audiences has been subject to several works such as that of Hužovičová and Rončáková²³ which explored the perceptions of the *Katolícke noviny* (Catholic weekly newspaper) within families or Lysý’s²⁴ study of older listeners of *Rádio Lumen* and their attitudes to the broadcasts. The previous works of the author have analysed the coverage of presidential elections by Slovak Church media²⁵ and the attitudes of readers of *Katolícke noviny* towards the publication’s editorial approach to general social and political affairs.²⁶ The relationship of viewers to the Catholic television channel EWTN in the American cultural environment has also been examined by Dluhý.²⁷

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3 Methodology

The data used in this study was collected using the quantitative and quantitative method of questionnaire survey. The questionnaires consisted of 27 questions, 9 of which were focused on collecting socio-demographic data on the respondents (such as gender, age, education, residence, place of birth) and information providing a broader picture of the respondents (such as their relationship with God and the Church, their engagement in the Church and society). The research questions which concentrated more specifically on the theme of the study covered three areas: the respondents' relationships with media outlets, opinion authorities (specifically with local Church authorities such as bishops) and opinion-shaping environments.

For the purposes of the study, the group of respondents was restricted to young (aged from 18 to 40) engaged Catholics who identified themselves as such; indeed, this was the key condition for participating in the research. The chosen participants had also declared various specific forms of social or religious engagement which were addressed by targeted research questions. The research was focused on young engaged Catholics and their relation to the media, and therefore less emphasis was placed on the other types of information obtained during the study.

Two questions covered the respondents' relation to the media: one half-open question asked respondents which media outlets they are regarding as being influential or inspiring, and a closed question asked respondents to evaluate their awareness of various media outlets on a scale from 1 to 10.

In order to allow a deeper statistical analysis of the attitudes of young Catholics towards mass media, three specific Church-related news stories were addressed: the contentious removal of Róbert Bezák from his position as Archbishop of Trnava, the financial separation of Church and state, and the issue of clerical celibacy.

The questionnaire was published online²⁸ on 18th February 2014 and responses were collected until 25th March 2014. The questionnaire was disseminated in cooperation with institutions, whose memberships were likely to contain suitable participants for the study; these groups included the Association of Christian Youth Fellowship (ZKSM), the study and formation-orientated Ladislav Hanus Fellowship (SLH) including its branch, Forum for Culture (F4C) based in East Slovakia, the Public Affairs Forum (FVO), the Catholic News Journalists' Association Network Slovakia, the Forum of Christian Institutions (FKI), the pastoral centre Quo Vadis in Bratislava, Christian-Democratic Youth of Slovakia (KDMS), 11 animator schools in Slovakia and Slovak scout groups.

We obtained 367 responses of which 339 met the criteria related to age and religious affiliation with the Catholic Church. 51 % of the respondents were male and 49 % female, while respondents aged 30 or less formed the majority of the study group (61 %). As can be seen in Chart 1, 18-year olds and individuals in their late thirties were the least numerous groups.

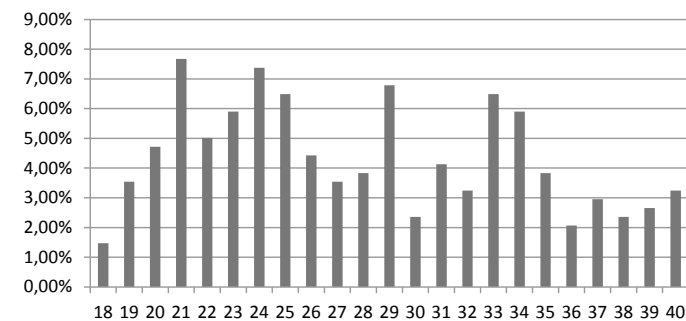


Chart 1: Respondents by age
Source: own processing

28 Dotazník. [online]. [2015-10-20]. Available at: <bit.do/dotaznik>.

In terms of levels of education, the least numerous group was comprised of individuals who had left secondary school without a school leaving certificate (2 %), while the most numerous group (31 %) were university graduates in social sciences (Master's degree). However, for the sake of clarity, we have combined the two categories of Master's and Engineer's degree holders (both of which are regarded as Master's degrees); a similar approach was taken in case of the individuals who left secondary school either with or without obtaining school leaving certificate (Chart 2).

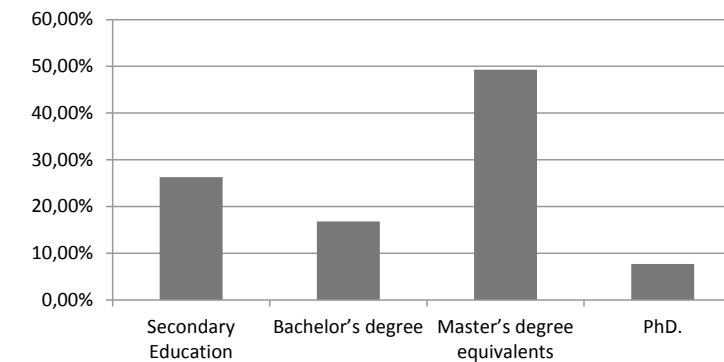


Chart 2: Respondents by education
Source: own processing

Regarding the issue of personal involvement in Church communities, respondents were allowed to select more than one option; thus, those who volunteered as animators, lecturers, singers, etc. often selected the option that they actively followed Church affairs. However, since volunteering is a higher level of engagement than that of actively following news, and such higher level of engagement automatically presupposes the presence of the lower level, the highest level of engagement for each respondent was taken into consideration.

Almost half of the respondents stated that they volunteer for the benefit of the Church community; if categories such as catechists, priests and members of parish boards are included, the final result would be that 55 % of participants identified themselves as volunteers.

Table 1: Respondents by engagement in the Church

| Engagement | Share |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Actively following | 36.87 % |
| Volunteering | 49.26 % |
| Members of parish council | 4.42 % |
| Catechists | 0.88 % |
| Priests | 0.88 % |
| No engagement | 7.67 % |
| Total | 100 % |

Source: own processing

In determining social engagement, respondents were allowed to select more than one category of involvement or even to add new definitions to the list. Individuals who identified themselves as actively following events with occasional engagement formed the largest group of respondents (65 %), followed by members of citizens' associations or other socially beneficial organisations (42 %). Individuals organising petitions, open letters, discussions, seminars, etc., accounted for 11 % of the study group. The term 'municipal politicians' includes those who engaged in political activity at the community level (i.e. municipalities, regions) and 'national politicians' those who engaged in political activity at a national level (i.e. active participation in political parties).

Table 2: Respondents by social engagement

| Engagement | Share |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Actively following | 64.90 % |
| NGO member | 42.18 % |
| Organizer | 11.21 % |
| Municipal politician | 5.31 % |
| Nation-wide politician | 2.06 % |
| Amateur commentator | 15.34 % |
| Professional commentator | 5.90 % |
| No engagement | 8.55 % |

Source: own processing

When identifying the interrelation between general social and Church involvement, we found that many of those who engaged in voluntary work within the Church were also members of various civic associations and other non-governmental organisations, or amateur journalists. Church developments are mostly followed by those who also follow general current affairs closely without any significant direct public engagement; 27 % of the respondents stated that they limited themselves to following both areas without engaging in any regular activities.

People engaged in nation-wide political life or professional commentators may be thought to lack the additional time and energy to engage in other activities (such as direct involvement in the Church); nation-wide politicians recorded an above-average membership in parish councils, which also enjoy significantly higher levels of engagement by municipal politicians, social life organizers, and members of civic associations (albeit at a lower level in the latter case).

This implies that local Church and general civic institutions are managed by people with the same backgrounds. Catechists and priests formed an almost exclusive group of respondents who identified themselves as followers of the current affairs but who had no ambition to participate in the civic life.

Respondents who had no engagement in civic society formed a below-average percentage of each Church engagement group, and an above-average percentage of those not involved in Church activities. Respondents who reported no involvement in either Church or general civic society causes accounted for 3 % of the research sample.

4 Findings

4.1 Evaluation of Media

The perceived inspirational and thought-forming value of individual Slovak media outlets with respect to Church news and current affairs was evaluated by asking respondents to select from or add to a selected list of Slovak national print and electronic media. The weekly *.týždeň* was the most popular (39 %) and from among unlisted media added by the respondents, the highest score was achieved by the news website *Postoy.sk* (14 %).

.týždeň weekly was followed by *Katolícke noviny*, the television channel *Lux* (38 %) and daily newspaper *SME* (36 %). The threshold of 30 % was also exceeded by *Rádio Lumen*, and the television news channel *TA3*. The public broadcaster *Slovenská televízia* (now part of RTVS, i.e. Radio and Television of Slovakia) was selected by just over 20 % of the respondents. Popular tabloid daily newspapers such as *Nový Čas* and *Plus 1 deň* or the tabloid weekly *Plus 7 dní* were chosen by fewer than five respondents (1.47 %).

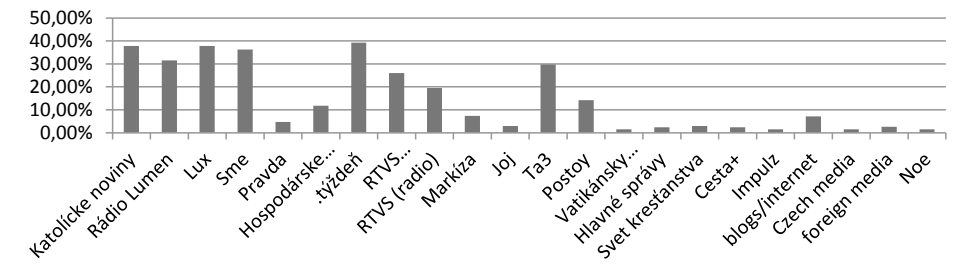


Chart 3: Media by perceived inspirational value

Source: own processing

In addition to evaluating the inspirational value of media outlets in terms of Church news and general current affairs, respondents also evaluated individual media outlets using a scale of 1 – 10. An above-average score of more than 5 was achieved by *.týždeň* (5.5) and the *Lux* television channel (5.2), while *Slovenský rozhlas* (public radio network, now part of RTVS), *Rádio Lumen*, *Slovenská televízia* (now part of RTVS), the daily *SME*, the *TA3* news channel and *Katolícke noviny* all received average scores of 4.5-5.

Table 3: Media by evaluation score

| Medium | Average | Median |
|---------------------------|---------|--------|
| <i>.týždeň</i> | 5.50 | 6 |
| <i>Lux</i> television | 5.24 | 5 |
| RTVS (radio) | 4.85 | 5 |
| <i>Rádio Lumen</i> | 4.82 | 4 |
| RTVS (television) | 4.70 | 5 |
| <i>SME</i> | 4.67 | 5 |
| <i>TA3</i> | 4.65 | 4 |
| <i>Katolícke noviny</i> | 4.51 | 4 |
| <i>Hospodárske noviny</i> | 3.87 | 4 |
| <i>Pravda</i> | 2.66 | 2 |
| <i>Markíza</i> | 2.56 | 2 |
| <i>Joj</i> | 2.03 | 1 |
| <i>Plus 7 dní</i> | 1.63 | 1 |
| <i>Nový Čas</i> | 1.56 | 1 |
| <i>Plus 1 deň</i> | 1.32 | 1 |

Source: own processing

Only the weekly *.týždeň* achieved a median value of higher than 5 (lying at the midpoint of a frequency distribution of observed values). The most significant difference between the average and median values can be found in the case of *Rádio Lumen* and *Joj* television – both media outlets have a below-average median, which means that more respondents scored them poorly on the scale; however their higher scores were more extreme. This is also true for the *Lux* television channel, *TA3* news television channel, *Katolícke noviny*, the daily *Pravda*, the popular commercial television channel *Markíza* and tabloid publications such as *Plus 7 dní*, *Nový Čas* or *Plus 1 deň*. On the contrary, a high frequency of high scores combined with a smaller number of more extreme low ratings were seen in the cases of *.týždeň*, *Slovenský rozhlas* (RTVS), *Slovenská televízia* (RTVS), *SME* daily and *Hospodárske noviny*.

Therefore it is possible to conclude that a minority of young engaged Catholics is radically positive about Catholic media and radically negative about the mainstream media. However, the majority are generally negative about the former and moderately positive about the latter.

Chart 4 compares the score curves in the ratings of .týždeň and Plus 7 dní, and suggests that respondents posted moderate evaluations for .týždeň (i.e. the weekly has a stable share of individual scores across the scale). The score curve for all tabloid media outlets resembles an exponential curve (represented by Plus 7 dní on the below chart). Almost all respondents assigned very negative scores to this type of media.

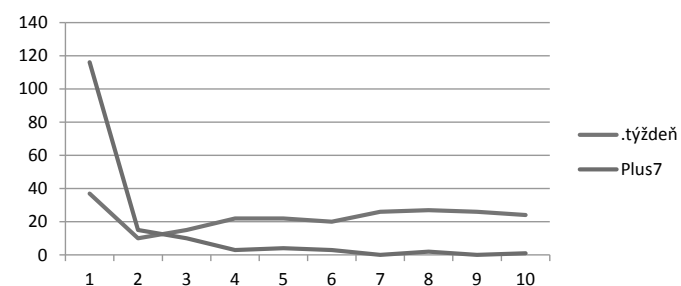


Chart 4: Evaluation of .týždeň and Plus 7 dní
Source: own processing

Chart 5 depicts the same contrast in ratings between the daily SME and the TA3 television news channel, and shows that SME has a moderately slanted score curve; in fact if the most extremely negative and positive evaluations are ignored the curve has a relatively flat pattern. A similar pattern can be identified in the case of the daily Hospodárske noviny. The score curve of the TA3 television news channel was very similar to that of the public radio and television network RTVS.

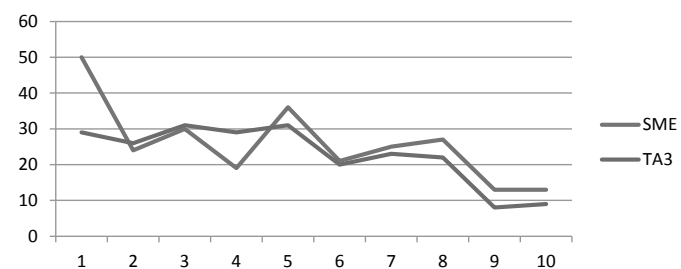


Chart 5: Evaluation of SME and TA3
Source: own processing

From the various religious media outlets, a balanced curve was recorded by the Lux television channel, and a curve skewed towards radically positive or negative scores with the fewest neutral scores was recorded by Rádio Lumen; the score curve of Katolícke noviny shows a descending pattern with a significant share of very negative scores.

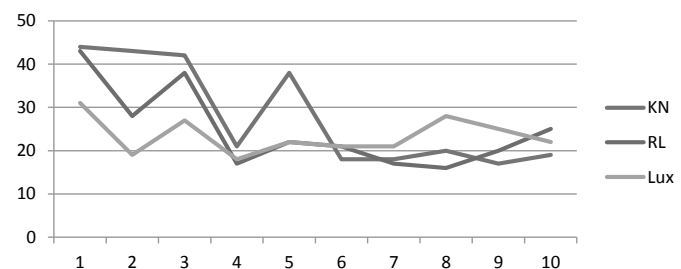


Chart 6: Evaluation of Katolícke noviny (KN), Rádio Lumen (RL) and Lux television channel
Source: own processing

Individual media outlets were categorised using factor analysis and the ANOVA test and individual categories included respondents with similar or related views. These methods allowed the following four relevant audience categories to be identified:

1. religious;
2. decent;
3. television;
4. tabloid.

The first group clearly includes the audiences of Katolícke noviny, Rádio Lumen and Lux television, a list which can also be supplemented by the websites Svet kresťanstva and Cesta plus. Based on the analysis of the correlation coefficient, the second group is constituted of the audiences of SME, .týždeň and Postoy, and probably also Cesta plus; all of these respondents tended to have very critical and negative views about Church media (Katolícke noviny, Rádio Lumen and Lux television). The television group includes all of the television channels (Markíza, Slovenská televízia, Joj, and TA3) but also includes the publications SME, Pravda and Plus 7 dní, as their results showed a coefficient level which was acceptable for inclusion within this category group. The tabloid group is represented by Nový Čas, Plus 1 deň, Plus 7 dní in addition to the television channels Markíza and Joj. The difference between the tabloid and television groups is relatively small, and these two categories could be even merged into one if the influence of the SME and Pravda dailies was to be ignored.

More women than men found the religious media (Katolícke noviny, Rádio Lumen, Lux television, Vatican Radio, Noe television) and RTVS (both radio and television) to be inspiring. Among men, a greater preference for .týždeň, SME and foreign media was noted.

There did not appear to be any connection between age and popularity of individual media outlets. The highest correlation coefficient (0.27) was achieved by .týždeň which suggests that its score is directly proportional to age, although this cannot be regarded as statistically significant.

Similar results were found in the case of correlation between education and individual media preference. No statistically significant relationship was established for any of the media outlets, although .týždeň achieved the highest correlation coefficient (0.31), which implies that its audience grows at a rate proportionate to increasing educational levels of respondents. A similar pattern was also observed in the case of Slovenský rozhlas which recorded a correlation coefficient at multiples of the levels recorded for other media outlets (0.21).

With regard to the civic engagement of respondents, no differences could be identified between those who actively follow general current affairs and those who are directly engaged through their membership in civic associations. A consensus of commentators, especially professional ones, on the low credibility of Church media can be confirmed, as well as higher ratings for SME and .týždeň. Likewise, municipal politicians reported very high scores for SME and .týždeň, and also for Hospodárske noviny, TA3 and Postoy. Respondents who identified themselves as organizers of civic activities reported moderately higher scores for Church media, SME and TA3.

No statistically significant relationship could be established between the engagement of respondents in the Church environment and the evaluation of individual media outlets. The lowest correlation coefficients (i.e. those with the least significant interdependence) were reported for Joj television (0.03), .týždeň (0.05), TA3 (0.08) and Katolícke noviny (0.09). This indicates that respondents assigned scores to those media outlets in a very similar way regardless of whether or not they are actively involved in the Church either voluntarily or professionally or even just as active followers of Church affairs.

4.2 Correlation with Opinions

Finally, our research also examined the correlation between the opinions of respondents on specific news stories and their evaluation of the influence of individual media outlets in the given contexts. For the sake of comprehensiveness, the average stratification of opinions on the removal of Archbishop Róbert Bezák, financial separation of Church and state, and celibacy is summarised in the table below. It should be noted that a more detailed analysis of individual attitudes is beyond the scope of this research.

Table 4: Opinions on the removal of Archbishop Róbert Bezák

| Category | Number | Share |
|---|--------|----------|
| Injustice to Róbert Bezák | 148 | 43.66 % |
| Roma locuta... | 48 | 14.16 % |
| Chaos | 48 | 14.16 % |
| Mistakes on both sides | 28 | 8.26 % |
| Disobedience and pride of R. Bezák | 26 | 7.67 % |
| Mismanagement by the Church authorities | 19 | 5.60 % |
| Removal was right | 9 | 2.65 % |
| Spiritual view of this matter | 4 | 1.18 % |
| No opinion | 9 | 2.65 % |
| Total | 339 | 100.00 % |

Source: own processing

Table 5: Opinions on financial separation of the Church and state

| Category | Number | Share |
|----------------|--------|----------|
| Definitely yes | 80 | 23.60 % |
| Rather yes | 11 | 32.74 % |
| Don't know | 61 | 17.99 % |
| Rather not | 28 | 8.26 % |
| Definitely no | 59 | 17.40 % |
| Total | 339 | 100.00 % |

Source: own processing

Table 6: Opinions on clerical celibacy

| Category | Number | Share |
|----------------------|--------|----------|
| Positive | 206 | 60.77 % |
| Should be voluntary | 111 | 32.74 % |
| Negative and harmful | 6 | 1.77 % |
| Don't know | 16 | 4.72 % |
| Total | 339 | 100.00 % |

Source: own processing

On the topic of the removal of Róbert Bezák from the position of Archbishop of Trnava, the largest number of respondents saw the injustice of his removal as the main issue of the situation. This group of respondents is divided into two subgroups; the first with below-average support of this opinion who feel inspired by official Catholic media such as *Katolícke noviny*, *Rádio Lumen* and *Lux* television, and the second subgroup with above-average support of this view comprised of audiences of all other outlets with the exception of the *Postoy* website, which concurred exactly with the average share of 44 %. Among those respondents who cited injustice as the main perception of the Bezák affair, the sense of injustice was felt least strongly by the audience of *Lux* television (37 %), and most strongly by the viewers of *Markíza* (60 %). Audience groups whose strength of opinion on the issue of injustice was higher than 50 % include those of *.týždeň* (55 %), *RTVS* television and radio broadcast (53 % and 52 % respectively) and *TA3* news channel (51%).

A similar structure based on individual media outlets was established within the category of respondents confident of the unquestionable authority of Rome: above-average shares were recorded for audiences of the three Catholic media outlets, and below-average by all of the remaining audiences. The strongest support of this view was found among the viewers of *Lux* television (20 % compared to the average of 14 %), and the least strong support in readers of *.týždeň* (3 %) and *Postoy* (4 %). Other groups whose strength

of opinion on the infallibility of the Church was less than 10 % included viewers of *Markíza* and readers of blogs and internet sources (8 % of each). For other categories, the opinions on the removal of Archbishop R. Bezák were slightly different. Among the supporters of Catholic media, the viewers of the *Lux* television stood out, and to a lesser extent reproached Bezák's pride and disobedience (5 % compared to the average of 8 %) and were prepared to admit mistakes on both sides (12 % compared to 8 %). Similarly, the largest audience – that of the weekly *.týždeň* – also saw mistakes on both sides of the conflict (11 %). Among the readers of print media, *Hospodárske noviny* can be regarded as exceptional, since its readers were the only group to place an above-average emphasis on Bezák's pride and disobedience (13 % compared to 8 %), and to admit to mistakes on both sides to a lesser extent (3 % compared to 8 %). This audience also showed a higher tendency to believe that the Church had mismanaged this case (13 % compared to 6 %). The viewers of *Markíza* stood out in contrast to the audience of other electronic media outlets, and did not believe that mistakes had been made on both sides (0 % compared to 8 %). Readers of *Postoy* placed an above-average emphasis on the mismanagement of the case on the part of the Church (15 % compared to 6 %) and also saw mistakes on both sides (10 % compared to 8 %). Respondents who felt inspired by blogs and websites tended to emphasize confusion more than others (21 % compared to 14 %).

A similar picture can be drawn by categorising audiences based on opinions on the separation of the Church from the state. Supporters of the three official Catholic media outlets have a high and above-average lack of knowledge of the question (an average of 23 % compared to the general average of 18 %), whereas all other audiences had a below-average lack of knowledge, except for viewers of *TA3*, who were found to be at the average level. Among those groups who proffered an opinion, the supporters of the three official Catholic media developed stronger and more clearly articulated attitudes against the separation (24 % strongly opposed compared to the average of 17 %). The groups of those opposed to the separation also included the audience of *Markíza* but this group demonstrated less strong attitudes (they showed a marked tendency to select the option 'rather not': 20 % compared to the average of 8 %). From among other audiences, the least undecided group was that of *.týždeň* and *Hospodárske noviny* readers (each with 5 % compared to 18 %); *Postoy* and *SME* readers also did not exceed the 10 % threshold (6 % and 9 %, respectively). The separation of Church and state was supported more actively by the readers of *.týždeň* (78 % compared to 56 %) and *Postoy* (75 %); the readers of *SME* and *Hospodárske noviny* also achieved levels in excess of 60 % (68 % each).

The answers obtained for celibacy confirmed the division lines presented above, although the audiences of Catholic media outlets and *Markíza* were also joined by *Postoy* in praising celibacy and its benefits, with these groups showing only below-average levels of advocacy for the liberalisation of celibacy. Levels of support for celibacy were 70 % for audiences of Catholic media and *Postoy* on the question of celibacy (compared to 61 %), while among viewers of *Markíza*, the support reached 64 %. A reverse tendency could be identified among the audiences of all other media outlets: less praise of celibacy and more calls for its liberalisation. The most radical views in that respect were voiced by the audience of *RTVS* (with 52 % of the listeners of *Slovenský rozhlas* and 47 % of the viewers of *Slovenská televízia* supporting voluntary celibacy compared to the average of 33 %). Supporters of all other media with the exception of *TA3* (35 %), blog and internet followers (38 %) also exceeded the 40 % threshold in this respect.

5 Interpretation

The data, information and results of the statistical testing presented above have also been examined in more depth to arrive at a more profound interpretation.

Young engaged Catholics in Slovakia consider the weekly *.týždeň* the single most trustworthy medium of all Slovak media (39 %). This was the only medium with a median of 6 on the evaluation scale from 1 to 10, and a moderately ascending evaluation curve. This weekly also gained the highest average score (5.5). The second most inspiring medium was found to be the Catholic television channel *Lux* (38 %) albeit with a much more unstable evaluation curve. All other media outlets followed a descending evaluation curve pattern, with the most significant discord between the number of radically negative evaluations and moderate

evaluations (with the exception of tabloid media outlets) being seen in the reactions to Katolícke noviny and Rádio Lumen. The respondents quoting the mainstream secular media were less polarised. A significant tension was also observed between clearly positioned audiences of individual media outlets. Religious media formed a separate group, the audiences of which tend not to trust secular media, while the reverse is also the case, with readers of secular media such as .týždeň and SME espousing a negative view of the religious media. Svet kresťanstva was seen as part of the religious media and Postoy was categorised as a secular media outlet, while the website Cesta plus was regarded as lying between the two categories. A further connection could be seen in the fact that there was considerable overlap between the consumers of tabloid print media and tabloid television.

In terms of media affiliation, the opinions of Catholic media audiences were generally stronger, with perhaps the exception of the viewers of Lux television, who showed some reluctance to criticise Róbert Bezák for his disobedience and were more willing to see mistakes on both sides. Otherwise, the consumers of religious media had a much clearer tendency to use the authority of the Rome as the keystone of their opinions and were more reluctant to admit injustice in the case of R. Bezák. They also tended to support the separation of Church and state – or were often not familiar with the topic – and they tended to be positive about celibacy. The audience of Markíza shared many of these attitudes on separation and celibacy, and there was also some common ground with the readers of Postoy.sk over the issue of celibacy. Readers of Postoy also took a moderate approach to the removal of R. Bezák, and often looked for mistakes on both sides or blamed the Church for mismanagement or poor communication in this case. On the other hand, they radically supported the separation of Church and state. The readers of .týždeň, the publication which was clearly seen as the most inspiring medium for young Catholics and which achieved the highest evaluation scores, tended to place much less trust in the authority of Rome in the case of removal of Bezák, and they were more likely to argue that mistakes had been made on both sides. They were also well acquainted with the topic of Church-state separation and strongly supported it, and they would make celibacy voluntary.

Thus an interesting parallel can be confirmed between the Markíza television channel and the Catholic media. The opinions of Markíza viewers differed from those of the Catholic media only in their approach to the removal of Róbert Bezák, who enjoyed sympathy and support from the viewers of the television channel. Some affinity can be found in the audiences of the Catholic media and Postoy.sk, although the readers of Postoy are more sensitive to issues of the sacred (celibacy), despite their willingness to criticise the Church (on Bezák) and to questioning tradition (on separation of the Church and state). The young engaged Catholic readers of .týždeň were even more critical and more open to innovation.

Conclusion

From all of the various media outlets examined in this study, the source which was felt to be most inspiring and thought-provoking was the weekly .týždeň, with 40 % of the young engaged Slovak Catholics questioned in this survey selecting this option. This was followed by the various outlets of the official Catholic media. The conservative news website Postoy, which had not been listed in the questionnaire, posted a better-than-expected score, 14 % of respondents referred to the website as their primary source; this is an almost fivefold difference from the score of the second most quoted unlisted source (Svet kresťanstva). Significant affinities were also identified among the audiences of .týždeň and Postoy (similar to the affinities identified among the audiences of the daily SME and other respected secular media outlets). On the other hand, the research has revealed a significant rupture between the audiences of the official Catholic media and the above mentioned audience groups. Similarities between the audiences of Katolícke noviny, Rádio Lumen, Lux television and the audience of Markíza television have been identified, with the only significant divergence in the opinions of these two groups being found over the case of the removal of Archbishop Bezák, which Markíza viewers felt to be unjust. Among the official Church media, the Lux television channel stood out and does not seem to have the same polarising effect with young Catholics which its official counterparts evoke; the television channel does not have many radical proponents or opponents, and enjoys the same level of popularity across the board. Moreover,

the television channel obtained the highest approval scores of all Catholic media outlets; its viewers expressed only moderate criticism of R. Bezák and saw mistakes on both sides in this issue. In general, it can be concluded that young engaged Slovak Catholics generally reject tabloid media and find them uninspiring in terms both of Church news and current affairs – a fact reflected by the extremely low scores for this type of media.

In the light of the findings stated above, it is possible to conclude that two quite different patterns can be observed in terms of media preference among young engaged Slovak Catholics: firstly, there is a group of more critical consumers who tend to follow secular media to a greater extent, and secondly, a group which is more content with the status quo and tends to follow the official Church media to a greater extent. The opinions of individual members of these two ‘factions’ tend to be in relatively strong discord, or may even be antagonistic. Although the more critical group slightly outnumbers the other, it is not possible to derive a clear-cut pattern or draw a strong conclusion of a prevailing audience pattern in favour of either of the two groups.

The conducted research does not include the most recent development in the field of Slovak religious media, the foundation of a new medium named Konzervatívny denník (Conservative Daily), which began to take shape under the auspices of the conservative website Postoy.sk in the aftermath of the Slovak referendum on the family (7th February 2015). However, this study has already indicated signs that Postoy appears to be an unexpectedly strong force among young engaged Catholics, and here one can already see new opportunities for further examination of the structure of Catholic or conservative audiences, especially in terms of internal polarisation and the space for critical thought and innovation.

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