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# MARGINAL GROUPS AND THEIR ROLE WITHIN MEDIA AND SOCIETY SPECTACULARIZATION – THE CASE OF THE INTERNATIONAL “BIG BROTHER” TELEVISION REALITY SHOW

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## ABSTRACT:

Ever since it was first aired in September 1999 in the Netherlands, the *Big Brother* television show became the world's most famous and most widely-held reality show franchise with up to 400 broadcast seasons in more than 70 countries. Since strong competition emerged in the meantime in the form of many other reality shows, owners of the *Big Brother* franchise are constantly trying to 'refresh' the concept in various ways to maintain its popularity and ratings. Thus, several production companies and commercial televisions from the former Yugoslavia region, all of them license owners authorised to produce the show, decided to organise an international or, more accurately, regional *Big Brother* show from September to December 2015. The producers gathered a total of 19 contestants from five countries with similar spoken languages – Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia – almost half of whom were somewhat bizarre members of socially sensitive, so-called marginal groups of citizens (a homeless person, a prostitute, a transgender person, a Roma family and others), which caused strong and divisive public reactions in the mentioned countries. The authors conducted an analysis of the content of the show broadcast over a period of one month in order to find out whether and to what extent these members of marginal societal groups were used to promote and increase viewer ratings of the show. At the same time, they followed the viewer ratings and, to a lesser extent, the public opinion on the show in Croatia. In the theoretical part, briefly, terms such as “marginal groups of citizens”, “celebrity culture”, “spectacularization of society and media” and “reality show” and the concept of television and its convergence with new, digital media formats have been elaborated. The objectives of the research were to determine whether the show's license owners succeeded in their somewhat controversial approach to halt the trend of decreasing viewer ratings, and whether the concept of *Big Brother* and reality shows in general have been somewhat 'worn out', at least in South East Europe.

## KEY WORDS:

*Big Brother*, celebrity culture, society, marginal groups, media, reality show, RTL, spectacularization of society, television

# 1 Introduction

In 1967, G. Debord introduced and elaborated in detail the concept of creating a “spectacle society”, in which “the spectacle is no longer just a set of images, but the social relationship between people mediated by images”.<sup>1</sup> However, the further development of the trends of favouring spectacularization in many domains of society and producing increasingly sensationalist media content, as H. Hromadžić writes, were also noted later in the new millennium.<sup>2</sup>

H. Hromadžić primarily finds the causes of this development in the classical dichotomy between the media audience as the public vs. the media audience as a market category, which he associates with the two primary institutional models bound to the dual media system, the public service and the commercial model. The first model has an informational and educational role, approaching media audiences as citizens who want to be informed, educated and entertained. On the other hand, according to H. Hromadžić, “the current, dominant model of commercial media sees the sphere of the mediated and constructed reality as a commercial space primarily directed by the media owners’ financial and profit interests, and sees media audiences as potential consumers whose attention needs to be attracted by marketing-advertising mechanisms”.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the latter model neglects the first two of the three basic functions of the media (information, education and entertainment),<sup>4</sup> aware that the “media are a large and lucrative business”<sup>5</sup> and that users of most media usually seek only some form of entertainment.<sup>6</sup> The media, and even television, are increasingly turning towards spectacle, because easy and attractive entertainment brings much higher ratings and profit than informational and educational content, which will be illustrated by the authors in the analysis in the empirical part of the study.

In doing so, the commercial media system, according to I. Ang, uses a dual approach to the media audience as a consumer group: the type of commercial media programmes and the products advertised through these programmes.<sup>7</sup> Within this, the media audience is treated as a version of the “consumer society”, as a product and a market segment that is interest-wise and profit-wise positioned between media producers and marketing (or advertising) agencies and advertisers.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as Z. Miliša and B. Ćurko warn, the consumer is becoming the “king among people today”,<sup>9</sup> noting that both traditional and new mass media are raising this approach to a higher level. According to Z. Tomić, “as companies, the media sell information and entertainment in a way that stimulates the audience to allocate money or time to read, listen or watch. Perhaps even more importantly, the media sell their space to advertisers”.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, “while mass media present simplified and edited versions of events in our complex and dynamic world, they also give us a sense of participation and understanding”.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, in *Big Brother*, this is done by constantly inviting the audience to make phone calls every week; to decide who will be thrown out of the *Big Brother* house.

An increasingly dominant tendency in the media, according to H. Hromadžić, is subjugating content to form, and form to market-advertising models: “Hence, today’s media contribute to the general spectacle of society (...), feeling out tabloid trends and seeking their financial interest, and consequently, the media land-

scape, determined by programme characteristics of the so-called celebrity culture, i.e. staging and spectacularizing (...), is increasingly becoming just a framework for media commercials and advertising.”<sup>12</sup> Television has assimilated this current form of media functioning.

# 2 The Transformation of Television and Reality Show in the Age of Digital Formats

Studying the manipulative influence of mass media and propaganda, J. Habermas once concluded that the former public-media sphere was transformed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – into the uncritical mass of passive media consumers glued to their television screens.<sup>13</sup> The social and media situation has changed since then; the media audience has become active, even interactive. Television has been able to adapt to contemporary demands, retaining its status as the “universal eye”<sup>14</sup> and confirming, as was stressed by V. Car in 2006, “that it is still the most powerful medium”.<sup>15</sup> The same seems to be relevant a decade later; media theorists point out several reasons for television retaining its popularity in the digital age.

According to V. Car, “the power of television derives primarily from its great availability and from the multidimensional nature of television media, whose fundamental advantage is the persuasiveness of live imagery”.<sup>16</sup> J. Thurow (in Croatian Dž. Tjurou) agrees with the universality of television by pointing out that today’s television world should be divided into three areas: radio-diffused television or classical broadcasting of audio-visual signals via terrestrial transmitters; cable services and satellite services.<sup>17</sup> V. Car sees digitalisation as the key factor in television’s successful transformation – it has increased television’s ability to communicate more interactively, bringing it substantially closer to the Internet.<sup>18</sup> Other authors, such as A. Briggs and P. Burke, put emphasis on media convergence.<sup>19</sup> R. Campbell, C. R. Martin and B. Fabos reflect on the situation by saying: “Things are different today as television has entered the fourth stage in the life cycle of a mass medium-convergence. Today, audiences watch TV on everything from big flat-screen digital sets to tiny smartphones and tablet screens.”<sup>20</sup> In this way, television has approached the young audience and gained new, numerous viewers.

Many interested scholars believe two other crucial factors should be added to all that has been stated so far. The first factor was mentioned in the introduction – the rapid development of commercial and market-oriented television networks. It has been apparent from the beginning of the new millennium that the European concept of public television is obsolete both technologically and ideologically.<sup>21</sup> Another factor is the development of existing (and the creation of new) television formats. The ever-expanding and diverse television reality shows, which need to constantly offer new and different content to the ‘hungry’ media audience in order to retain ratings and which are already wiping out the thin line between the reality and the virtual world, are an increasingly important part of this process.

1 DEBORD, G.: *Društvo spektakla & komentari društvu spektakla*. Zagreb : Arkzin, 1999, p. 153.  
2 HROMADŽIĆ, H.: Mediji i spektakularizacija društvenoga svijeta – masmedijska produkcija „kulture slavnih”. In *Filozofska istraživanja*, 2010, Vol. 120, No. 4, p. 617.  
3 HROMADŽIĆ, H.: Mediji i spektakularizacija društvenoga svijeta – masmedijska produkcija „kulture slavnih”. In *Filozofska istraživanja*, 2010, Vol. 120, No. 4, p. 618.  
4 BRIGGS, A., BURKE, P.: *Socijalna povijest medija: od Gutenberga do interneta*. Zagreb : Naklada Pelago, 2011, p. 212.  
5 TOMIĆ, Z.: *Odnosi s javnošću – Teorija i praksa (II. dopunjeno i izmijenjeno izdanje)*. Zagreb : Synopsis, 2016, p. 695.  
6 BERTRAND, C. J.: *Deontologija medija*. Zagreb : ICEJ i Sveučilišna knjižara, 2007, p. 56.  
7 ANG, I.: *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London : Routledge, 1991, p. 21.  
8 HROMADŽIĆ, H.: Mediji i spektakularizacija društvenoga svijeta – masmedijska produkcija „kulture slavnih”. In *Filozofska istraživanja*, 2010, Vol. 120, No. 4, p. 619.  
9 MILIŠA, Z., ĆURKO, B.: Odgoj za kritičko mišljenje i medijska manipulacija. In *MediAnali*, 2010, Vol. 4, No. 7, p. 64. [online]. [2017-07-11]. Available at: <<http://hrcak.srce.hr/file/84138>>.  
10 TOMIĆ, Z.: *Odnosi s javnošću – Teorija i praksa. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Zagreb : Synopsis, 2016, p. 696.  
11 BASKIN, O. W., ARONOFF, C. E., LATTIMORE, D.: *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice*. Madison, Boston : Brown & Benchmark Publishers, McGraw Hill, 1997, p. 197.

12 HROMADŽIĆ, H.: Mediji i spektakularizacija društvenoga svijeta – masmedijska produkcija “kulture slavnih”. In *Filozofska istraživanja*, 2010, Vol. 120, No. 4, p. 619.  
13 HABERMAS, J.: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Berlin : Suhrkamp Verlag AG, 1990, p. 161.  
14 BRIGGS, A., BURKE, P.: *Socijalna povijest medija: od Gutenberga do interneta*. Zagreb : Naklada Pelago, 2011, p. 190.  
15 CAR, V.: Televizija i globalizacija: uloga javnog servisa. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Utjecaj globalizacije na novinarstvo*. Zagreb : ICEJ i Sveučilišna knjižara, 2006, p. 62.  
16 CAR, V.: Televizija i globalizacija: uloga javnog servisa. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Utjecaj globalizacije na novinarstvo*. Zagreb : ICEJ i Sveučilišna knjižara, 2006, p. 63.  
17 TJUROU, DŽ.: *Mediji danas: Uvod u masovne komunikacije II*. Beograd : Clio, 2013, p. 201.  
18 CAR, V.: Televizija i globalizacija: uloga javnog servisa. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Utjecaj globalizacije na novinarstvo*. Zagreb : ICEJ i Sveučilišna knjižara, 2006, p. 63.  
19 BRIGGS, A., BURKE, P.: *Socijalna povijest medija: od Gutenberga do interneta*. Zagreb : Naklada Pelago, 2011, p. 190.  
20 CAMPBELL, R., MARTIN, C. R., FABOS, B.: *Media & Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication: Subheading*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston, New York : Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013, p. 193.  
21 CAR, V.: Televizija i globalizacija: uloga javnog servisa. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Utjecaj globalizacije na novinarstvo*. Zagreb : ICEJ i Sveučilišna knjižara, 2006, p. 67.

As we have stated above, the discussed type of television show is called “reality television” or “reality show”, which are basically synonymous terms. According to the *Collins English Dictionary*, a “reality show is a type of television programme that aims to show how ordinary people behave in everyday life, or in situations, often created by the programme makers, which are intended to represent everyday life”.<sup>22</sup> This definition is added to by D. Demers in his dictionary: “Reality television – a form of entertainment television programming in which ordinary people or celebrities are placed into real situations, often competing for money or prizes”.<sup>23</sup> He notes that this concept is not revolutionary or particularly novel, citing the example of the famous *Candid Camera* show – a show in which real people were unknowingly placed in normal situations in an effort to obtain a humorous outcome<sup>24</sup> – that began broadcasting on television in the USA in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This popular show was one of the first to capitalise on the fact that, according to D. Giles, television is a better replicator than, for example, photography because “cine-camera was a huge step towards the perfect reproduction of human form”.<sup>25</sup>

Although *Candid Camera* is often referred to as the prototype of today’s reality show programmes, most media theorists, including R. Campbell, C. R. Martin and B. Fabos, recognise *The Real World* as the first actual reality show, which was broadcast from 1992 to 2013, and represented the longest-running programme on *Music Television (MTV)*: “Changing locations and casts from season to season, *The Real World* follows a group of strangers who live and work together for a few months and records their interpersonal entanglements and up-and-down relationships. *The Real World* has significantly influenced the structure of today’s reality TV programmes, including *Survivor*, *Project Runway*, *Jersey Shore* and *Dancing with the Stars*.”<sup>26</sup>

D. Demers points out that reality show programmes are often the object of criticism, but television networks and the majority of the audience ignore it: “They cost an average of 400.000 American dollars per episode compared with two million American dollars for a dramatic series. Audiences liked them partly because the outcomes were not predictable.”<sup>27</sup> These characteristics are also true in the case of the most famous reality show – *Big Brother*.

The original version of the *Big Brother* TV reality show was created in 1997 by Dutch producer John de Mol. The first episode was broadcast in September 1999, on Veronica, a Dutch TV station, and after the end of the first, highly successful season, the programme format was also taken over by the Dutch television network Endemol.<sup>28</sup> The name comes from George Orwell’s novel *1984* or rather from the character of a dictator (*Big Brother*) who oversees everything. The show follows a group of contestants, known as ‘housemates’, living together in the *Big Brother* house specially built for that purpose, under constant surveillance of television cameras. The housemates are, as a rule, completely isolated from the outside world and have no communication with anyone not living in the house. The housemates compete for a big cash prize – in Croatia, most often for one million Kuna – with weekly tasks and challenges and weekly evictions of one or more of the candidates, until the last one is declared the winner.<sup>29</sup>

Since it was first aired, *Big Brother* – widely regarded by the majority of the public as controversial, with part of the audience considering it to be “the most provocative reality show in the world”<sup>30</sup> – has

become the most famous and most widespread reality show franchise in the world. By November 2016, it has recorded as many as 387 broadcast seasons in more than 70 countries and regions of the world,<sup>31</sup> and it is estimated that at the time this study was written, the total number of seasons has already exceeded 400. *Big Brother* is a fairly expensive and production-demanding television format. Therefore, producers carefully consider the project’s profitability, specifically its potential viewer ratings that are commonly measured and calculated before the launch of the project. Measurements and research are carried out on so-called “buying target”, i.e. a target group of the audience that guarantees minimum ratings (RTG rating). However, after a certain time, such formats are usually unattractive, regardless of the plot and the participants. In the process of selecting a participant or a candidate to enter the *Big Brother* house (casting), psychologists, sociologists and psychoanalysts are involved because it is necessary to choose a variety of personalities, mostly to make it interesting for the viewers. Such formats are primarily based on audiences identifying with certain candidates, which then follow the entire show through their own prism.

Foreign and Croatian sociologists, psychologists and media theorists cite several other reasons why *Big Brother* has been so popular for almost two decades. S. Blagonić argues that *Big Brother* promises entertainment delivery based on what is ‘real’ – “real protagonists freed from scriptural constraints”. However, recognising that this ‘reality’ suffers from justified objections, primarily from the fact that the whole event takes place because of the presence of cameras, he also concludes: “Despite the fact that both the ambience and the synopsis impulses in the form of daily and weekly tasks are artificial, *Big Brother* successfully uses the ‘reality’ effect.”<sup>32</sup>

Another important factor of popularity, according to S. Blagonić, is that the audience is the “consuming producer”. The audience gains this status – which coincides with Z. Tomic’s earlier statement regarding a “feeling of participation and understanding” – not only by constant observation of the housemates’ daily lives, but also by using their phones to vote candidates out of the *Big Brother* house. Thus, the audience is practically becoming a co-creator of the output or outcome of the script,<sup>33</sup> and the producers also generate additional profit as each phone vote is billed. When analysing the attractiveness of the *Big Brother* concept in Croatia, P. Madžarević points out that *Big Brother* is “the beginning of the first true therapeutic culture among Croats.”<sup>34</sup> He mentions, among other things, the confession room for housemates as well as the couch in the sitting room, occupying the central place in the house, as proofs supporting his statement.

A commercial television network with a national concession, *RTL Croatia*, was the first in Southeast Europe to buy the franchise and start broadcasting its version of the *Big Brother* show. *RTL Croatia* is part of the *RTL Group*, the largest European media group based in Luxembourg. With three free national channels and three channels on IPTV platforms, *RTL Croatia* is one of the strongest media television companies in Croatia and the wider region.<sup>35</sup> The first episode of the licensed *Big Brother* programme was broadcast by *RTL Croatia* in September 2004,<sup>36</sup> and since then it has produced a total of eight seasons of the show. The sixth season back in 2011 and the seventh season in 2015 (the latter is reflected on by the research we present) were of an international nature, i.e. co-produced with several television networks and companies from the region, and included participants from the ex-Yugoslavia region. The public release of the series of the *Big Brother* shows contributed significantly to the introduction of the inhabitants of Southeast Europe to the concept and features of the so-called celebrity culture.

22 *Collins English Dictionary*. [online]. [2017-07-02]. Available at: <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/reality-show>>.

23 DEMERS, D.: *Dictionary of Mass Communication & Media Research: A Guide for Students, Scholars and Professionals*. Spokane : Marquette Books, 2005, p. 263.

24 DEMERS, D.: *Dictionary of Mass Communication & Media Research: A Guide for Students, Scholars and Professionals*. Spokane : Marquette Books, 2005, p. 263.

25 GILES, D.: The Quest for Fame. In MARSHALL, P. D. (ed.): *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. London, New York : Routledge, 2006, p. 483.

26 CAMPBELL, R., MARTIN, C. R., FABOS, B.: *Media & Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication: Subheading*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston, New York : Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013, p. 216.

27 DEMERS, D.: *Dictionary of Mass Communication & Media Research: A Guide for Students, Scholars and Professionals*. Spokane : Marquette Books, 2005, p. 264.

28 DROTNER, K.: New Media, New Options, New Communities? Towards a Convergent Media and ICT Research. In *Nordicom*, 2002, Vol. 24, No. 2-3, p. 11.

29 *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.

30 BA, G.: *Prije točno 19 godina nastao je najprovokativniji show na svijetu*. Released on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. [online]. [2017-07-05]. Available at: <<http://www.index.hr/black/clanak/prije-tocno-19-godina-nastao-je-najprovokativniji-reality-show-na-svijetu/880160.aspx>>.

31 CARMAN, J.: *Big Brother Watches Their Every Movement*. Released on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2000. [online]. [2017-07-03]. Available at: <<http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Big-Brother-Watches-Their-Every-Movement-2750300.php>>.

32 BLAGONIĆ, S., KOVAČ, M., MADŽAREVIĆ, P.: *Big Brother: 100 dana ispred ekrana*. Zagreb : AGM, 2004, p. 47.

33 BLAGONIĆ, S., KOVAČ, M., MADŽAREVIĆ, P.: *Big Brother: 100 dana ispred ekrana*. Zagreb : AGM, 2004, p. 69.

34 BLAGONIĆ, S., KOVAČ, M., MADŽAREVIĆ, P.: *Big Brother: 100 dana ispred ekrana*. Zagreb : AGM, 2004, p. 124.

35 *Zašto RTL?* [online]. [2017-07-08]. Available at: <<http://www.rtl.hr/rtl-hrvatska/posao-i-karijera/zasto-rtl/131978/zasto-rtl/>>.

36 BA, G.: *Prije točno 19 godina nastao je najprovokativniji show na svijetu*. Released on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. [online]. [2017-07-05]. Available at: <<http://www.index.hr/black/clanak/prije-tocno-19-godina-nastao-je-najprovokativniji-reality-show-na-svijetu/880160.aspx>>.

### 3 Celebrity Culture

Only the basic characteristics of the complex social phenomenon labelled “culture of fame” or “celebrity culture” shall be touched upon, as deeper dissemination of the terms goes beyond the scope and topic of this study. The emergence of celebrity culture, according to H. Hromadžić, has been recorded in various forms throughout human history and since then constitutes a historical constant, but the true growth and development in the contemporary sense was experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the support of mass media.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, both the meaning and the perception of the concept of “celebrity” have changed. It is common to refer to celebrities as “popular, successful and famous people in an area of activity” (actors, athletes, musicians and the like); however, as F. Furedi warns, the term “celebrity” is not just a noun, but also an adjective indicating that someone has the quality of attracting attention. Scholarly literature on this subject distinguishes between extremely talented, ‘self-made’ stars and ‘produced’ and relatively unexceptional celebrities. While the first group acquires their status through their superior talents and abilities, the other group, whose members lack any accomplishment, is produced and made known through media publicity, through becoming objects of mass consumption. Therefore, in the last decades, the meaning of the concept of “celebrity” has mutated, and is often used today for those who are famous for being famous.<sup>38</sup>

A number of experts have discussed this issue from several points of view. For example, in his scholarly article *The Quest for Fame*, D. Giles uses different angles, including the psychologic aspect, and wonders what ‘makes’ people become celebrities, assuming it might even be written in genes.<sup>39</sup> G. Turner, F. Bonner and P. D. Marshall base their concepts around the fact that this often natural impulse of man is ‘fed’ by television and increasingly widespread reality shows that make it much easier to end up in front of the camera and on the television screen than before.<sup>40</sup> F. Furedi looks at the phenomenon from the opposite point of view, noting that due to reality show programmes such as *Big Brother* and the *X-Factor*, the audience is expressly given the opportunity to select soon-to-be celebrities as well as reject the mass-produced “over-night celebrities” when they do not want to see them anymore. The consequences include the creation of two new types of celebrities: the easily-disposable ones and the celebrity-victims, wherein people gain recognition (fame) based on their failure (deficiency), illness or distress, used to fascinate (enchant) numerous viewers/audiences. The problem is that these people do not necessarily possess the qualities of heroes, but as highly-visible role models they become objects of imitation nonetheless.<sup>41</sup>

According to C. Hedges, the situation is alarming because such “celebrity culture plunges us into a moral void”.<sup>42</sup> He warns: “Education, building community, honesty, transparency and sharing are qualities that will see you voted off a reality show (...). Humiliation as entertainment is the miserable side of celebrity culture glamour (...). We secretly gloat and rejoice in the ‘at least it’s not me’. It is the joy of cruelty, the same impulse that pushed the masses to the Roman Coliseum, public hangings and traveling freak shows.”<sup>43</sup> An even greater potential psychological danger for the contestants in *Big Brother* (even more significant than the possible humiliation after short moments of glory) is the indifference of their environment. Most contestants, S. Blagonić points out, are affected by the same fate after leaving the show: “When they leave the *Big Brother* house, they gradually cease to be famous for the same reason they became famous in the first place – for being ordinary.”<sup>44</sup> Or, as C. Hedges states in an even more explicit and straightforward manner, those who

have been cast out (rejected) become non-entities for the television audience.<sup>45</sup> This rise and fall is perhaps most felt by people who are on the margins of society both before and after the show.

The degree of development and civic consciousness of a modern society can be established with great certainty by looking at the ways the authorities and the public treats socially vulnerable groups, primarily minorities and marginal groups of citizens whose positions, beliefs and attitudes are often opposed by (or conflicted with) most of the population. A part of the public often takes and interprets the terms “minorities” and “marginal groups of citizens” as synonyms, but they, while partially overlapping, are not the same. For both terms there are many different definitions and discussions between experts about their exact scope, but we have chosen those generally considered inclusive to show a clear distinction.

According to the definition stated in official United Nations documents, a minority is “a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, sexual, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.”<sup>46</sup> As for the marginalization of a member of a society, a respectable American non-governmental and non-profit organisation with a longstanding tradition, the National Democratic Institute, explains it as follows: “Marginalization can be understood as persistent inequality and adversity resulting from discrimination, social stigma and stereotypes.”<sup>47</sup> The Croatian encyclopaedia states that marginality is the marginal position of a person; a condition in which she or he is often not a full member of a society or a group in which she or he lives, with the addition that marginalization is present “when persons or groups are culturally, socially or socio-psychologically in a peripheral, subordinate and even deviant position in interaction with a socially dominant group and its individual normative models”.<sup>48</sup>

From everything that has been stated above, it is evident that the term “marginal group” is broader than the term “minority”. Therefore, the authors have decided to use the term “marginal groups” to fulfil objectives of the present empirical study, wishing to include all the candidates that may count as members of marginal social groups in their study of the international (regional) reality show *Big Brother* broadcast in 2015. Furthermore, it was practically impossible to determine the ‘minority contestants’ due to the multinational composition of the show’s candidates, because each of them is at least a national minority compared to the rest of the participants. In addition, the term “minority” implies that its members formally or informally gather around an association or organisation, i.e. that it has at least some form of legal protection through positive legal acts. This does not apply to marginal groups, especially to homeless people and prostitutes, which is why the authors find it more interesting to keep track of these marginal groups’ members in *Big Brother*.

It should be noted that we neither directly address the potential violations of human rights of members of marginal groups or minorities (extensively enumerated by F. Quinn),<sup>49</sup> nor the question of the ethical aspects of this kind of reality shows. The reasons are simple: all selected candidates sign a voluntary participation agreement before entering the *Big Brother* house, confirming they agree to all the set terms and conditions. In addition, they are all of legal age and each of them passes a psychological assessment, wherein it can be concluded that they are aware of all the potential consequences. Therefore, no unlawful violation of human rights and moral principles is involved.

### 4 Methodological Framework and Research Goals

Faced with the mild but steady decline in viewer ratings of this reality show over the past few years – for example, its ratings on *RTL Croatia* fell from 11.650 viewers per minute in 2008 to 10.450 in 2011, which is

37 HROMADŽIĆ, H.: Mediji i spektakularizacija društvenoga svijeta – masmedijska produkcija “kulture slavnih”. In *Filozofska istraživanja*, 2010, Vol. 120, No. 4, p. 624.

38 FUREDI, F.: Celebrity Culture. In *Society Symposium: Celebrity around the World*. New York : Springer Science, Business Media LLC, 2010, p. 493.

39 GILES, D.: The Quest for Fame. In MARSHALL, P. D. (ed.): *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. London, New York : Routledge, 2006, p. 470-487.

40 TURNER, G., BONNER, F., MARSHALL, P. D.: Producing Celebrity. In MARSHALL, P. D. (ed.): *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. London, New York : Routledge, 2006, p. 788.

41 FUREDI, F.: Celebrity Culture. In *Society Symposium: Celebrity around the World*. New York : Springer Science, Business Media LLC, 2010, p. 493-494.

42 HEDGES, C.: *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*. New York : Nation Books, 2009, p. 33.

43 HEDGES, C.: *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*. New York : Nation Books, 2009, p. 33-34.

44 BLAGONIĆ, S., KOVAČ, M., MADŽAREVIĆ, P.: *Big Brother: 100 dana ispred ekrana*. Zagreb : AGM, 2004, p. 58.

45 HEDGES, C.: *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*. New York : Nation Books, 2009, p. 33-34.

46 UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS. *Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation*. New York, Geneva : United Nations, 2010, p. 2.

47 NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE. *Political Inclusion of Marginal Groups*. [online]. [2017-07-02]. Available at: <<https://www.ndi.org/political-inclusion-of-marginalized-groups>>.

48 HRVATSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA: *Marginalnost*. [online]. [2017-06-17]. Available at: <<http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=38875>>.

49 See: QUINN, F.: *Human Rights and You*. Warsaw : OSCE/ODIHR, U.S. Department of State, USAID, 1999.

approximately a 10% decrease in just three years<sup>50</sup> – several companies and commercial television networks from former Yugoslavia, which own the license, have decided to organise an international or, more accurately, a regional *Big Brother* at the end of 2015. This big project was co-produced by *RTL Croatia* and the Serbian media company *Emotion*, along with six commercial television networks from three neighbouring countries: *RTL* (Croatia), *B92*, *Pink M*, *TV Pink* and *BN* (Serbia) and *OBN* (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Their signal also covered two more neighbouring countries, Montenegro and Macedonia.<sup>51</sup>

This edition of *Big Brother* took place in a secluded and luxurious *Big Brother* house, built in the Serbian capital of Belgrade in September 2015; it gathered a total of 19 competitors from five countries with similar spoken languages: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. The contestants were selected from tens of thousands of candidates during the casting process which lasted several months, making evident the intention of producers to attract as many viewers from these countries as possible.<sup>52</sup> We are particularly intrigued by the fact that, for the first time in terms of Croatian television entertainment, almost a half of the participants seemed to be somewhat bizarre members of socially sensitive so-called marginal groups of citizens (a homeless person, a prostitute, a transgender person, a Roma family and others), which caused strong and divisive public reactions in the mentioned countries before and partially during the show. All the candidates had been unknown to the general public until then and in the 100 days of the show, i.e. from early September to mid-December 2015, they were fighting to win the prize in the amount of almost 100.000 euros.

The authors conducted a research in order to find out whether (and if so, to what extent) members of the marginal groups were used to promote the show and increase its viewer ratings. The main research method used was content analysis of television broadcasts; at the same time, the authors analysed the viewer ratings and, to a lesser extent, the public opinion on the show in Croatia. The objectives of the research were to determine whether the show's license owners succeeded in their somewhat controversial approach to halt the trend of decreasing viewer ratings and whether the concept of *Big Brother* and reality shows in general – in line with the authors' assumption – had been somewhat 'worn out', at least in South East Europe.

# 4.1 Content Analysis of the Big Brother Show

Content analysis, as explained by K. Krippendorff, is a widespread and commonly used way of researching and analysing information published in certain media, and is most often used in mass media analysis.<sup>53</sup> K. A. Neuendorf defines it as "deep analysis using quantitative and qualitative messaging techniques using the scientific method (taking into account objectivity, reliability, validity, generalization, substitution and hypothesis testing) and is not limited to the types of variables that can be measured or to the context in which messages are created or presented".<sup>54</sup>

For the purposes of this research study, an analysis of the content of the above-mentioned *Big Brother* reality show was conducted from 4<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015. In other words, from the first day of the show's broadcasting to the departure of Anton Kopajtić, the contestant who was particularly interesting to the authors as the first homeless person in the *Big Brother* house in the history of its licensed broadcasts in Southeast Europe. In that time, a total of 31 broadcasts were analysed and the research was carried out using a pre-structured matrix for analysis of media content. The source of the analysis was the television network *RTL Croatia*; the research sample was simple and the analysis unit was one broadcast show, i.e. all *Big Brother* TV shows broadcast in the mentioned period on *RTL Croatia*. The content of the show was studied in a total of 12 different categories that represent a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The results

will be presented in the final chapter. It should be noted that we neither questioned the social responsibility of the media and the public regarding the reality show, nor did we determine who, how and for what reasons had applied for participation in *Big Brother*, as this goes beyond the scope of the researched topic.

# 4.2 Analytical Categories

- P 1** Ordinal number of broadcast show
- P 2** Date of broadcast
- P 3** Time of broadcast
  - 1. Prime time (from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.)
  - 2. Late prime time (from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.)
- P 4** Age of candidates in the *Big Brother* house
  - 1. 20 – 29
  - 2. 30 – 39
  - 3. 40 – 49
  - 4. 50 – 59
  - 5. 60 and older
- P 5** Education of candidates
  - 1. Without primary education
  - 2. Primary education
  - 3. Vocational education (three-year programme)
  - 4. Secondary education
  - 5. Tertiary education
- P 6** Status
  - 1. Employed
  - 2. Unemployed
  - 3. Occasionally employed
  - 4. Retired
- P 7** Number of minutes each of the 19 candidates spent on air
- P 8** Most common topics of discussion
  - 1. Gossip
  - 2. Argument due to lack of food
  - 3. Argument due to lack of cigarettes
  - 4. Argument over hiding other people's belongings and clothes
  - 5. Discussion over cleanliness and neatness
  - 6. Argument over a messy toilet
  - 7. Argument over money
- P 9** Was the show announced during the day?
- P 10** Is the announcement sensationalist in tone?
- P 11** Value orientation of the titles
- P 12** Are broadcast announcements different from broadcast content?

Given that by agreement of cooperating television networks, the *Big Brother* show was practically unified (i.e. equal or very similar on all participating networks) we considered that there was no need for monitoring other television channels. All the broadcasters who collaborated in the realisation of the international *Big Brother* show on this project, including *RTL Croatia*, provided their viewers with the opportunity to have an almost all-day viewing of the events in the house via the Internet and live streaming services, meaning there was broad evidence of media convergence in this case. However, as referral points were needed, we took the content that was broadcast to the public via television in specific time slots – prime time (covering hours from

50 *AGB Nielsen Media Research*. [online]. [2017-06-08]. Available at: <<http://www.agbnielsen.com>>.  
 51 *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.  
 52 *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.  
 53 For more information, see: KRIPPENDORFF, K.: *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, 2003.  
 54 NEUENDORF, K. A.: *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, 2017, p. 11.

7 to 10 p.m.) and late prime time (from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.). More specifically, we did not have access to relevant live streaming data in a timely manner and the logical conclusion was that most viewers were still tracking these ‘best of’ separate events, as evidenced by reports and commentaries of viewers and media critics on other media channels, primarily via social networks and web portals. In some cases, however, we were able to use the benefits of media convergence. Namely, when unable to watch the show in its pre-allotted spot, the missed content was found and viewed on *RTL*’s television platform functioning as video-on-demand (its on-demand audio-visual media service).<sup>55</sup>

## 4.3 Tracking Members of Marginal Groups in the Show

As have already been mentioned, a total of 19 selected contestants participated in the international *Big Brother* reality show in 2015. They are briefly presented here in the same order (and with similar same shortened descriptions) as at the official website of *RTL Croatia*.<sup>56</sup>

1. **Branislav Krstić (30), Serbia** – a miner by profession. Not married, lives with his mother and sister. Participation in the show is a way out of poverty and a possibility to repay a loan he was a guarantor for.
2. **Barbara Šegetin (25), Croatia** – active in fashion and modelling. Prefers folk music, has silicones in her lips and breasts and several piercings and tattoos. Not in a relationship.
3. **Tina Šegetin (24), Croatia** – Barbara’s younger sister, with whom she is inseparable. Also interested in modelling, with silicone in her lips and several piercings. Likes going out with ‘crazy’ men.
4. **Aleksandar Ralević (22), Montenegro** – a dog trainer with a private hunting ground. Says he is a typical Montenegrin, and that his honour and honesty are the most important. Has several prison tattoos, carries a chain and drives a BMW.
5. **Steffani Banić (20), Croatia** – calls herself the main ‘vampire’ in Split and a man in a female body. Likes to go out, drink and smoke marijuana. Many think she is a lesbian, but she loves men.
6. **Darko Petkovski (27), Macedonia** – has been successfully engaged in various sports for his whole life, and is also a fitness model. He owns a basketball school and studies at the Faculty of Kinesiology.
7. **Stojan Jakimovski/Andrea Jakimovska, (43), Macedonia** – Stojan was born as a man and is an ex-police officer. Now living as a transgender person named Andrea, after seven years spent on female hormone therapy. Father of two underage children, who he is prohibited from seeing by social services.
8. **Ervin Mujaković (24), Bosnia and Herzegovina** – works as a manager in a solarium and a fitness instructor, otherwise is a soldier. Says he is a metrosexual who hates to be called gay. In the house, he will most miss his mother, whom he is close with.
9. **Zorica Marković (48), Serbia** – a retired bar singer. In addition to singing, she loves to cook and has won in a culinary reality show, along with her husband. Sees herself as a leader, hyperactive and everything must be about her. Due to rough manners, called ‘Zorka Motorka’ (in English ‘Zorka the Motorbike’).
10. **Goran Todić (48), Bosnia and Herzegovina** – studies at an acting academy and is now a retired bodyguard. Likes extreme sports, and works as a diving instructor.
11. **Rade Vasić (55), Rada Vasić (50), Miroslav Mika Vasić (23) and Dragutin Giba Vasić (23), Serbia** – father Rade is a musician, plays the accordion. Lives and works in Germany. Mother Rada is a housekeeper and the ‘boss at home’. Rada and Rade have six children, and the youngest are twin sons, Miroslav Mika and Dragutin Giba, who are with them on the show. They are both hairdressers for women by profession.
12. **Luka Mišnić (33), Serbia** – a passionate rapper and a street basketball player. Advocates in favour of legalisation of marijuana.

<sup>55</sup> HAJDUK, D.: Digitalizacija lokalnih i regionalnih televizija u Hrvatskoj. In ZGRABLIĆ ROTAR, N. (ed.): *Digitalno doba: Masovni mediji i digitalna kultura*. Zadar : Sveučilište u Zadru i Naklada Medijska istraživanja, 2011, p. 167.

<sup>56</sup> *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.

13. **Ivona Milovanović (25), Serbia** – studies pharmacy, unemployed and supported by her father, grandmother and grandfather. Worked as a hostess, and many consider her to be a ‘gold digger’.
14. **Anton Kopajtić (63), Croatia** – had a good job before retirement and then lost his house to debt. Now homeless, living at the Red Cross safe house.
15. **Vesna Bartolić (59), Croatia** – now a housewife. Used to make money doing manicures and pedicures before retiring, and says she is an excellent cook. Chatty and communicative.
16. **Mirjana Praizović (22), Bosnia and Herzegovina** – claims to be ‘five people in one’. A call girl by profession. Lives with her parents and sister. Her life motto is “I take all, I give nothing”. Likes sex, men and money. Her unfulfilled desire is becoming an actress.

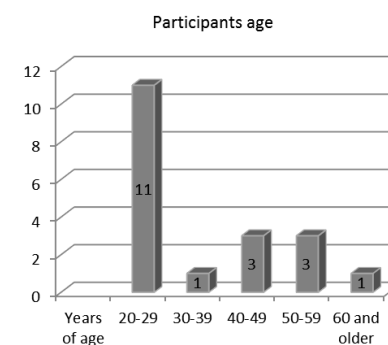
The insights we gained from information about candidates and their characteristics, their statements and the impressions they wished to leave in public (as well as formal, already outlined determinants of marginality and marginalised groups) all served as a filter for determining the members of marginal social groups among the show’s contestants. We then decided to pay special attention to the following contestants: Steffani Banić alias the ‘vampire’, the transgender person Stojan Jakimovski/Andrea Jakimovska, the retired bar singer Zorica Marković, the Vasićs, i.e. the Roma family consisting of four family members, the call girl Mirjana Praizović and the homeless person, Anton Kopajtić. The latter is probably the most bizarre case among them, because he was chosen by the producers, who must have known that they would only provide him with a temporary roof over his head; after leaving the show he would have to go back to the streets or to the Red Cross shelter. We considered the option of tracking a few more ‘marginal cases’ who were candidates, but then we decided to choose people who belong to marginal groups of citizens by default.

The behaviour of the selected housemates in the *Big Brother* house and the relationship of the audience towards them were also monitored during the aforementioned one-month period. However, in order to gain a more accurate insight into the situation, we followed the fate of the members of marginal groups by the end of the show on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and drew certain conclusions.

## 5 Interpretation of Research Results

The analysis of the sociodemographic structure of the show’s participants, conducted as a basis for drawing other conclusions, uncovered the typical contestant profile producers had chosen. The results are offered in three separate graphs.

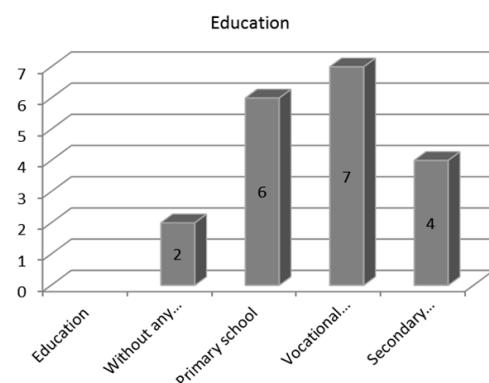
According to age (see Graph 1), more than a half of the *Big Brother* housemates (11 or 58% of them) were between 20 and 30 years old. Another contestant, 33-year-old Luka Mišnić, belonged to the younger population as well, a total of six persons were middle aged (from 40 to 50 and from 50 to 60 years of age), and the oldest contestant was the 63-year-old homeless man Anton Kopajtić.



Graph 1: Years of age of the participants in the show

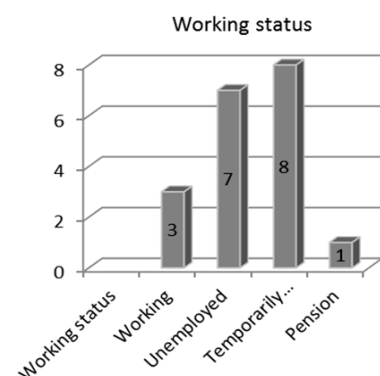
Source: own processing, 2017

Regarding the level of education (see Graph 2), two out of 19 participants (around 10.5%) were without any finished level education (even primary), six of them (31.5%) reached at least the primary level of education, seven persons had vocational education diplomas (almost 37%) and only four of the contestants achieved a secondary education (around 21%). Only three participants had experience with some form of tertiary education: Darko Petkovski, studying at the Faculty of Kinesiology, Goran Todić as a student at an acting academy and Ivana Milovanović was a student at the higher school of pharmacy.



Graph 2: Level of education of the participants in the show  
Source: own processing, 2017

The working status of the *Big Brother* housemates, shown in Graph 3, indicates that a high percentage of them (79% or 15 participants) were unemployed or occasionally employed. One person was already retired (Anton Kopajtić) and only three of them had jobs (around 15% of the contestants).



Graph 3: Working status of participants in the show  
Source: own processing, 2017

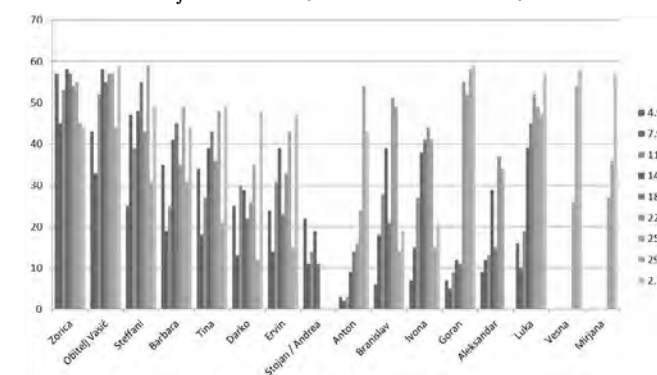
Judging by these three parameters, the profile of a typical participant in the regional *Big Brother* show in 2015 was: a person under 30, with a vocational education degree and unemployed. If compared to the latest data on the composition and attributes of the population in all five countries, this sample would differ from a representative sample, which leads to two conclusions. This sociodemographic structure is suitable for the demands of this type of show, because the contestants must have the opportunity and enough 'free' time to participate, taking into account their complete isolation from the moment they enter the *Big Brother* house to the moment they are voted out or the show ends. An almost two-third representation of younger persons among the participants is probably the result of the producers' desire to attract as many young viewers as possible since they are, as a rule, the most faithful audience for reality show programmes.

Additionally, it should be added that in the *Big Brother* house of 2015, surely intentionally, there was an equal representation of both genders (nine women, nine men and one transgender person), while the national composition of the housemates looks like this: eight participants were Serbian, five were Croatian, three came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, two from Macedonia and one was Montenegrin. This ration is pretty much representative to the ratio of the number of inhabitants of these countries, according to the latest United Nations data (Serbia around 7.057 million, Croatia around 4.29 million, Bosnia and Herzegovina around 3.517 million, Macedonia around 2.08 million and Montenegro around 622.780 inhabitants),<sup>57</sup> as well as to the fact that this edition of *Big Brother* was a Serbian-Croatian co-production, with partners from the other three countries.

The results of the analyses of other categories also confirm that high ratings were, as expected, in the producers' focus. Thus, two main television slots were chosen to show the highlights from the *Big Brother* house: prime time (from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.) and late prime time (from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.). The research indicated that in the observed one-month period, an equal amount of shows, the ratio was almost 50:50, was broadcast in both slots, and a similar ratio was kept up until the end of the show. Specifically, due to many profane contents such as cursing, nudity and sexual intercourse, and following a widespread criticism by the public, certain parts of the shows originally scheduled for prime time were pushed to late prime time. The evening shows were announced several times during the day, on all media platforms available to *RTL Croatia*: broadcast television, official web page and social networks (*Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*). The show's announcements combined audio, video and the written form, and they were almost exclusively sensationalistic, because their goal was to intrigue potential viewers. Headlines and spoken announcements were focused on the most controversial and most provocative moments and participants, such as: "This was the first sex in the *BB* house", "A brawl almost took place in the *Big Brother* house" or "Trouble in *Big Brother*: Arguments, curses and threats".<sup>58</sup>

In the observed period, the announcements on *RTL Croatia* were excessive and exaggerated compared to actual content in almost 64% of all cases, and obviously directed at creating 'artificial' celebrities, at least in case of the most interesting participants. This is in line with the earlier statements about the spectacularization of the media and society, as well as with the characteristics of so-called celebrity culture. In 73% of cases, time in the announcements from 4<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> October was given to the members of marginal groups. Compared to the fact that this group involved 9 out of 19 participants (47% of all contestants), they were one of the main trump cards in the producers' fight for viewers.

How well they assessed is shown in the comparison of the amount of time allotted to individual housemates, i.e. the number of minutes of screen time they got in the analysed television reality shows. The timing was allotted based on the assessment of the producers and, later, on the interest in certain participants shown by the viewers. The comparison is portrayed in Graph 4, noting that certain participants, such as Vesna Bartolić and Mirjana Praizović, entered the show later, while some other contestants exited quite quickly.



Graph 4: Time allotment of participants in the show during the analysed period (date/number of minutes)  
Source: own processing, 2017

<sup>57</sup> See: UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS: *Population and Vital Statistics Report, Series A., Vol. LXVII*. New York : United Nations, 2016.  
<sup>58</sup> *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.



As is quite visible, the most dominant persons were from the very beginning Zorica Marković, the Vasić family, Steffani Banić and Luka Mišnić, who turned the audience's attention to themselves with their eccentric behaviour. The retired bar singer Zorica Marković was shown to be a corpulent, loud and quite unpleasant person; Steffani Banić attracted the audience's attention mostly by yelling, causing arguments, even thanks to a sexual adventure with Ervin Mujaković, while the Vasić family was quite diverse and interesting due to that father Rade and mother Rada were direct and humorous and sons Miroslav and Dragutin were feminised, androgynous and quite selfish. Hence, 6 out of 9 members of marginal groups were a potent material for increasing viewer ratings and accordingly received more minutes on *Big Brother* than other participants. Mirjana Praizović, a call girl who entered the show later, should also be added due to her incidents – for example, she took off her clothing in front of the other housemates and vocalised different animals – that entertained and attracted viewers.

On the other hand, the transgender person Stojan Jakimovski/Andrea Jakimovska, a large and balding woman, was obviously far too 'exotic' even for the *Big Brother* viewers and she was the first to be voted out of the show by the audience, on 20<sup>th</sup> September, after which she even threatened to sue.<sup>59</sup> Anton Kopajtić, the homeless man, spent the first 15 days in the house being almost invisible – somewhat asocial, withdrawn and attracting no scandals at all. Afterwards he proved to be an intelligent, eloquent and honest person, but his qualities and sad life story did not move the viewers looking for scandal and an alternate reality, so he exited the show on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The following statement by Z. Miliša and B. Ćurak could be applied to his case: "In today's world, positive values become pale copies through media manipulation."<sup>60</sup>

It is indicative that despite the constant popularity of most of them, not a single member of marginal groups managed to end up in the final, i.e. among the four super-finalists. Add to that that the season winner was Darko Petkovski, a calm, good-natured young man, student and athlete not prone to excess, the conclusion arises that the audience, as a certain sample of the society, acted towards the marginal groups members as towards 'Others'. E. Said states that for a society the Other is much too oriental, exotic, unknown, even barbaric, and as such, foreign and different.<sup>61</sup> In other words – a person belonging to the Others can participate and entertain, but cannot win.

The most common topics of conversation and the reasons for arguments between housemates were the last category analysed in the content analysis. The results portrayed in Graph 5 indicate that the participants mostly argued due to lack and allocation of food and cigarettes and then due to gossip and allocation of money, with cleanliness and neatness being the least argued about topic. Following the participants' behaviour more closely, we noticed that almost all of them were extremely selfish and egotistical, thus their behaviour fits well within the theory of self, authored by W. James who separates the Self into two categories: the 'Me' self and the 'I' self.

The self is then also divided into material, social and spiritual.<sup>62</sup> The material self consists of things that belong to us or that we belong to, such as clothing, our body or money. The housemates were evident proof of the material self since its essence is the body. Indeed, many of them demonstrated characteristic traits of narcissism, because they used every moment to show off and stand out while constantly looking at themselves in the many mirrors set up around the house. According to C. Lasch, "narcissism is a metaphor for the human condition, the focus on outer appearance, image, obsession with the body".<sup>63</sup> The constant need for attention and confirmation in *Big Brother* corresponds excellently with the attributes of the society needing immediate gratification that is undoubtedly present in Southeast Europe.

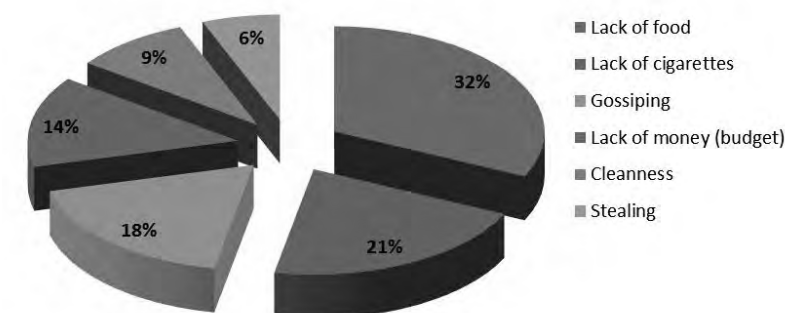
59 *Big Brother – RTL*. [online]. [2017-02-10]. Available at: <<http://www.bigbrother.rtl.hr/>>.

60 MILIŠA, Z., ĆURKO, B.: Odgoj za kritičko mišljenje i medijska manipulacija. In *MediAnali*, 2010, Vol. 4, No. 7, p. 62. [online]. [2017-07-11]. Available at: <<http://hrcak.srce.hr/55353>>.

61 SAID, E. W.: *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 2003, p. 15.

62 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: William James*. Released on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2013. [online]. [2017-07-08]. Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/james/>>.

63 LASCH, C.: *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Springfield: Paperback Press Publishing, 1991, p. 31.



Graph 5: Most common reasons for arguments among the participants in the show during the analysed period

Source: own processing, 2017

Along with the content analysis, we followed ratings of certain television shows in Croatia broadcast at the same time as the analysed reality show. The results regarding the first half of the show indicate that this season of *Big Brother* might have been a hit show for the producers, because it was constantly followed by a large percentage of the audience. Figure 1 portrays the moment the international *Big Brother* from 2015 was at the pinnacle of viewer ratings. Namely, according to data from RTL's regular monthly newsletter, *Big Brother* was by far the most viewed late night programme among the target population (between 18 and 49) in the period between 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015, with a total share of 28.1%.

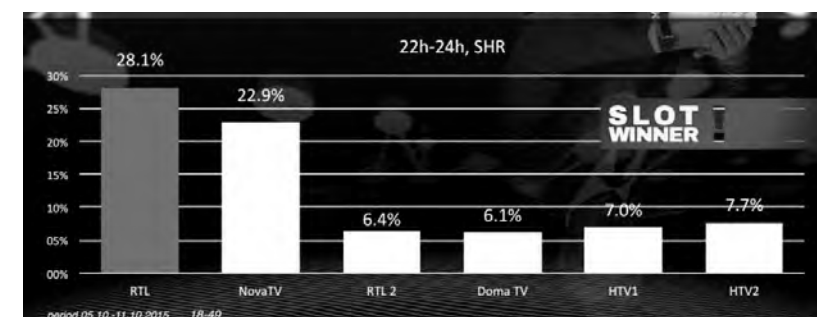


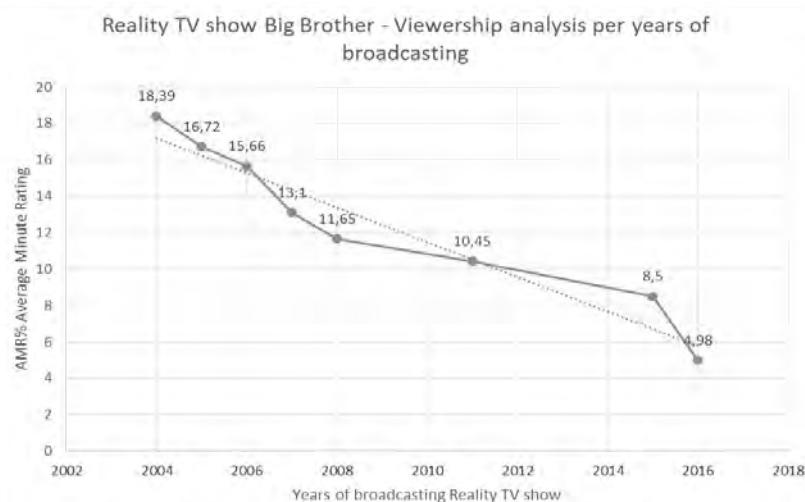
Figure 1: Viewer ratings of national television networks in Croatia, first week of October 2015

Source: RTL Television, Sales and Marketing Department Newsletter, April 2015. [online]. [2017-07-09]. Available at: <<http://www.rtl.hr/vijesti/pretrazivanje/?upit=rezultati+gledanosti>>.

However, this positive trend changed after the first half of the show, although it would have been logical to expect that tension building and the expectations of the outcome would yield reverse results. Although 7 out of 9 members of marginal groups, who were included on purpose, turned out to be quite interesting to the wider public, the ratings still kept falling. The causes might be found in the quantity and content of many critiques and comments by journalists and the media that we noted in a number of the most read national media (such as the daily newspapers *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *24 sata* and the daily updated Internet news portals *index.hr*, *net.hr* and *tportal.hr*). Over 70% of texts and reader comments regarding the 2015 *Big Brother* had a negative tone; we only emphasise a few statements matching the topic of the study: "*Big Brother* – a format 'run over' by time", "too many bizarre characters on the show", "100 days of boredom and vapidty", "a non-ethical ridicule of the Roma",<sup>64</sup> etc.

64 *Moj TV. Big Brother 2015*. [online]. [2017-06-10]. Available at: <<https://mojtv.hr/emisije/34630/big-brother.aspx>>.





Graph 6: Viewer ratings percentage for *Big Brother* per years of broadcast in Croatia on RTL television (AMR % a – Average Minute Rating)  
Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research. [online]. [2017-06-08]. Available at: <<http://www.agbnielsen.com/>>.

Finally, as indicated by Graph 6, the total viewer ratings of *Big Brother* in 2015, compared to the similar format of the show in 2011 (also a co-production spanning over the same five countries) decreased from 10.450 viewers per minute to just 8.500 viewers per minute, a 19% fall. This significant decrease in viewer ratings, thus, occurred despite including undoubtedly more bizarre and eccentric characters than those who had contested four years earlier, and despite the strong engagement of all partner networks in advertising the show across all media platforms. These low ratings were evaluated as a failure by the producers themselves.

## 6 Conclusion

The results of the research conducted for this study – the content analysis of the *Big Brother* show and additional activities such as monitoring ratings or critiques and comments by the media and the public – as well as the theoretical framework confirmed the assumptions set before the research.

We thus conclude that the producers of the observed *Big Brother* show purposely chose a large percentage of somewhat bizarre members of socially sensitive marginal groups to compete in the show in order to increase viewer ratings for this reality programme. They also used their presence in the house and their characteristics (to a large degree and in various different ways) in the promotion activities related to the show. Therefore they followed the ruling mass media trend that is – more than ever – prone to use direct and increasingly controversial moves to attract attention of the media audiences. Still, the license owners did not succeed in their attempt and the exact data indicate that the *Big Brother* show is already somewhat ‘spent’, at least in the area of Southeast Europe.

Firstly, a significant fall in ratings of this reality programme across the entire territory of former Yugoslavia is evident. For example, in 2004, when the first season of *Big Brother* was broadcast on *RTL Croatia*, it had an average of 18.390 viewers per minute. From 17<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, *RTL Croatia* organised the eight and (for now) last season. They admitted in one of their announcements that “some of the contestants in the regional *Big Brother* in 2015 were too scandalous” and “that they decided to return to *Big Brother* in Croatia, to until now the most watched format with ‘ordinary’ people”.<sup>65</sup> This time they decided to use a com-

65 PREMEC, T.: *Velike promjene u Big Brotheru: Show se vraća u Hrvatsku, ulaže se čak milijun eura, zabranjuje se ulaz nekim natjecateljima*. Released on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016. [online]. [2017-07-10]. Available at: <<http://www.jutarnji.hr/spektakli/ups/velike-promjene-u-big-brotheru-show-se-vraca-u-hrvatsku-ulaze-se-cak-milijun-eura-zabranjuje-se-ulaz-nekim-natjecateljima/32002/>>.

bination of less controversial citizens unknown to the general public and celebrities, choosing to shorten the duration of the show by half (from 100 to 50 days), but the result was a debacle. Specifically, as visible in Graph 6, there were only 4.980 viewers per minute, which is hardly a half of the viewer ratings the show had received a year earlier and almost four times less than in the first season, back in 2004. Facing an obvious fall in interest, they cancelled the announced re-run of the international *Big Brother* analysed in this study (originally scheduled to the beginning of 2017). The situation is similar in the partner country of this show, Serbia. For the same reason, i.e. a rapid decrease in ratings, the Belgrade city authorities announced they would tear down the *Big Brother* house and would repurpose the land for other uses.<sup>66</sup>

From all that has been stated as well as due to other facts – the boredom and saturation associated with the concept, critiques coming from media and journalists and the constant uproar of a part of the general public regarding broadcasts containing profane and immoral content scheduled in the early evening slot (prime time), when younger viewers are still watching – it is seriously questionable whether the *Big Brother*’s expensive and demanding concept will survive in Southeast Europe. However, this does not apply to the concept of reality shows as such, because other programmes with similar formats still have high viewer ratings. For example, according to data by AGB Nielsen, the national music or culinary reality shows, such as *Three, Two, One – Cook* (RTL Croatia), *Celebrity MasterChef* (Nova TV) or *The Voice* (Croatian Television) have regular positions in the ‘Top 20’ of most viewed shows in each season. Hence, it seems that viewers are simply bored by ‘regular’ people doing nothing but arguing all day long. Instead, they choose to watch ‘regular’ people showing a talent on television, whether it is musical, culinary or other.

However, the growing trend of spectacularization of the media and society is worrisome. In the ever more powerful and strong “spectacle society”, the day when another questionable engagement of marginal groups of citizens in the television world comes is probably not far. In other words, a time when the exploitation of homeless people, prostitutes, transgender persons and other, even more controversial marginal groups will no longer be incidental, but a normal, everyday phenomenon.

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66 *Nakon deset godina: ruši se kuća Velikog Brata*. [online]. [2017-06-19]. Available at: <<http://net.hr/hot/tv/nakon-deset-godina-rusi-se-kuca-velikog-brata/>>.

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