

## **News as a democratic resource: Q study approach to cross-media news repertoires in Croatia**

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### **Abstract:**

The normative expectation of the 'virtuous circle' (Norris & Inglehart, 2009), in which democracy is served by informed citizens via the media, motivates our examination of audience understandings of their news consumption in relation to its different possible public and personal uses. Audience research being the least developed area of communications study in Croatia (Peruško & Vozab, 2014), we have few insights into motivations of media users or the uses they make of any media genre, including news. This study, part of an ongoing comparative project conducted in 12 European countries and beyond, conducted at the Centre for Media and Communication Research, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, is thus pioneering the insight into cross-media news repertoires of Croatian audiences and their possible democratic repercussions. 36 Q-methodological interviews were conducted in December 2014. The study shows that six news repertoires describe different types of cross-media news consumption habits of Croatian audiences, offering preliminary insights for understanding the news-democracy connection.

**Key words:** cross-media news consumption, news audiences, news repertoires, Q methodology, digital media system, democracy, Croatia

This study aims primarily to uncover the cross-media news repertoires of Croatian audiences, a post-socialist democracy, and the use of such repertoires as a democratic resource. The media repertoire approach is important as users are expected to combine content from different media sources and create their own cross media environment. Media repertoires is a concept proposed by Hasebrink and Popp (2006) to adjust media use

research, which was traditionally based on single media use in a cross-media environment: 'the media repertoire of a person consists of the entirety of media he or she regularly uses' (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012: 759). It allows us to analyze how users create their own repertoire of media platforms used for news consumption. While the impetus is normative, the study includes no pre-set benchmarks for (audience) performance evaluation but constructs the repertoires bottom-up from qualitative Q-methodological interviews. The research approach and method are defined in the next section.

The repertoire approach to media use, including news, fits well with the changed media environment in times of deep mediatization (Couldry & Hepp 2017), when various kinds of content can be used on the same as well as on different technological platforms. Research shows that the character of the media system affects the media related practices of audiences (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo 2015, 2016, Peruško & Vozab 2016). While we know something about how patterns of media use vary across different digital media landscapes, we don't know how different media are combined in the use habits of different citizens in Croatia, and what these practices mean to the different types of news audiences. Extant research on the relationship between news consumption and citizen engagement comes mainly from 'old' democracies. We aim to contribute to these *lacunae* with our study of news repertoires in Croatia.

### **The media landscape in Croatia in times of deep mediatization**

While media landscapes in the times of deep mediatization are transforming in all European countries (Peruško 2017), in Croatia this transformation (as in other European post-socialist democracies) is complexified by its relatively brief recent experience of democracy, which necessitated a normative and structural transformation of the post-socialist media system. This transformation has included the field of politics (from one party to political pluralism), economy (from liberal self-management socialism to market economy), and government/statehood (from a federal republic in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia to an independent state). Croatia's statehood and democratic transformation was complicated by the war in the first half of the 1990s. While first changes in media policy were made in early 1990s, the media system was firmly on the way to democracy only after 2000 (Peruško 2005). The process of EU accession further helped along the transformation, even though the international evaluations of the attained freedom of expression (for instance, Freedom House 2017) in Croatia remain (not entirely appropriately) lower than in its CEE counterparts. Croatia is a parliamentary democracy with a polarized political sphere. Catholicism is the prevalent religion (84% of the 4.2 million inhabitants, but the share of those who actively practice it is much smaller), with presence of other major faiths (Pew Research Centre 2017).

The media system in Croatia, both a Central European and a Mediterranean country, exhibits many similar characteristics to the Mediterranean polarized pluralist model of the relationship between media and politics (Peruško 2013) described by Hallin and Mancini (2004) as well as the South/East model of media systems (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo 2013).

This more recent categorization is the result of empirical operationalization of the four media system dimensions by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and cluster analysis, which included 24 European countries including new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo 2013). Membership in the South/East model also extends to Greece, Spain, Lithuania, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. Countries in this model have in common lower quality of its public service television, lower newspaper circulation, exhibit higher party as well as owner influence, with lower levels of independence and professionalization of journalists than the countries in the remaining two models. Intermediate values are found in the European mainstream model, and the Nordic model exhibits characteristics which are exactly opposite to those of the South/East model.

The description of the media system in times of deep mediatization (Couldry & Hepp 2017) needs to consider new highlights in the media landscape, both within the media system, as well as in relation to its position in the global media landscape. In this regard, a useful viewpoint for the contextual analysis is the digital media landscapes model (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo 2015, 2016), in which Croatia clusters in the Peripheral European system with most of the CEE new democracies, together with Portugal and Greece. Croatia and other countries in this media system have lower levels of political and social inclusiveness, lower levels of globalization, a less developed digital media market and a less open creative economy with a higher concentration of television audiences (Peruško 2017). The penetration of smartphones, which are increasingly the vehicles of the new digital media habits, is 15%, broadband internet 21%, and social media was used by 40% of the population in 2016. At the same time, television audience concentration is a high 62% (the combined audience shares of the three most popular channels) (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo 2016).

Croatia is a small country with a small and weak media market, in which advertising spending in 2015 amounted to 194 million euro – GDP in the same year amounted to 48.7 billion \$ (down from 70 billion \$ in 2008 (World Bank 2017). Revenues are in 2017 rising especially in television and the internet, while falling in the printed press (HURA 2017). The 2008 world economic crisis affected the media sector, and advertising spending in print media fell from app. 104 million Euro in 2008 to 36 million Euro in 2015, while internet spending rose from 4 million Euro to 22 million Euro; the overall drop related to the 2008 world economic crisis has not yet been compensated (estimates from HURA 2017). In addition to advertising losses, print also lost its readers – circulation of daily newspapers fell from 640.000 to 300.000 copies per day between 2008 and 2013 (Vozab 2014).

12 daily newspapers, 3 daily news internet sites, and some 50 weekly newspapers are published in Croatia (Ministarstvo kulture 2014). The first place in print newspapers popularity is held by the only tabloid newspaper in Croatia, *24 sata*, sold for half the price of other daily papers, and owned by the Austrian Styria company, which also owns the daily *Večernji list*, a quality daily, among the first 10 choices of news sources. *Jutarnji list*, owned by its competitor HANZA MEDIA, is the largest circulation quality daily owned by the same company as the regional daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* (DNP 2017).

25 commercial television channels (3 with national scope, the rest with local and regional reach) and 116, mainly local and regional FM radio stations broadcast in Croatia. The combined commercial and public service television sectors dominate the audience and advertising markets (50% of total advertising revenues), and the still strong position of the public service broadcaster HRT (Croatian Radio and Television) is ensured by historically (since the 1960s) stable license fee funding. Its position as an independent public service broadcaster is intermittently threatened from the political field, usually when conservative government coalitions come into power. PSB is also threatened by commercial media lobbies, which attack the idea of public funding for the public service, as well as the dual funding system with advertising, which has consequently been constantly reduced to the present level, where it is almost inconsequential at 4 minutes per hour in prime time. With a combined audience level of 58% for its news programs (for television and radio combined) (Digital news project 2017), HRT remains in a strong third place as a source of news for Croatian citizens (following two commercial television sources with national reach: Nova TV, and RTL TV).

In program production, HTV (the television part of the public broadcaster HRT; HR is the public service radio) broadcasts a much more diversified program schedule than its two commercial competitors, and is the only channel with documentary, education, religious, art and cultural programs. It is also the only television channel with talk show programs (political interviews as well as more relaxed infotainment programs), as well as serious current affairs programs (e.g. international political news program *Paralele*). Light current affairs programs are also broadcast predominantly on HTV, with one exception of a quality investigative journalism program on Nova TV (*Provjereno*).

Television is consistently the media of first choice for political information and news, followed by the printed press and the internet (GfK 2008, DNP 2017). After about two decades of domination, the public service broadcaster HRT relinquished in recent years the primacy in news to Nova TV, recently sold to the United Group by the previous owner the Central European Media Enterprises (CME), a Bermuda based company with TV stations in six Central and Eastern European countries. Second place in news reach is held by the Croatian channel of the German RTL company. While Nova TV was in the lead for several years, the fall of the HRT to a (close) third place is more likely the result of the change in its editorial policy in the past year with increased bias towards the new conservative government than any change in the persistently impartial and high quality news programs of commercial televisions. Television news is still the first choice of news source for Croatian audiences, according to the 2017 Digital News Project.

The first 10 most frequent news sources include also the public service Croatian radio (HR), and the first 20 news sources also include local radio, local or regional newspapers, local TV news, as well as international news channels. Among these the most popular is the regional CNN affiliate N1 with a high 10% share. Available only on cable and catering to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, N1 is closely followed by Al-Jazeera, which focuses more on the news from the neighboring countries. The success of N1 follows a

change in their editorial policy and broadcast schedule, which now focuses on Croatian news from the Zagreb studio (DNP 2017).

Recent audience trends (2016) show that the Internet is used by 75% of the population (We are social 2016). Already in 2010 the growing importance of the Internet can be seen as among Internet users the same number would drop television as Internet if they had to choose (GfK 2010). This is also confirmed by the mean time spent per medium: from 2008 to 2010 TV consumption decreased by 11%, radio 7 % and newspaper 9%, while Internet increased by 6%. The number of people using a certain medium no time at all increased per every medium except Internet. The number of people that do not read newspapers at all increased by 9% from 2008 to 2010 (Vozab 2011).

The most important news media channels or organizations in Croatia are listed in the Q cards list in **Table 1A** in the **Appendix**.

### **Beyond channels: what we know about audiences for news**

No qualitative audience studies investigating general news use have previously been undertaken in Croatia, and what we know about news audiences comes solely from quantitative survey data in academic studies and market research. These studies provide some insight into patterns of audience demographics and preferences. Older men use the media for information purposes more often than women or young people (Mataušić and Rimac 2000). The same study shows that the heaviest media users (daily users) exhibit less trust in the media than those who use the media 'several times a week'. Trust in the Parliament (while very low) is still a bit higher for the regular media users (confirmed also by Čuvalo 2010).

Regular media users also show higher approval of democracy and consider it as the best political system (Mataušić and Rimac 2000). This seems to support the 'virtuous circle' theory of Norris and Inglehart (2009), which expects a positive impact of media use on social trust. Several findings point to the conservative character of the Croatian heavy news media user in the 1990s: he is male, more likely to regularly participate in church, has negative attitudes to homosexuals and to youth sex, and exhibits more support for 'the way the country is governed' than light news media users (Mataušić and Rimac 2000).

A panel study performed in 1998 and 2002 on readers of leading political dailies and weeklies described the Croatian reader of political dailies and weeklies as a younger male, with above average education, social and economic status, and with urban residence, either employed or a student (Lazma Posavec & Rihtar 2003). The study found that the readers mainly defined themselves as irregular users, which shows that audience loyalties to specific print brands were no longer in place. Roughly 70 % of these readers also regularly used the public service television HRT for news and political information. This study disclosed a marked political division between, on the one hand, the readers of political weeklies (*Globus*, *Nacional*, *Feral*) and one daily (*Jutarnji list*), who showed higher political participation (election turnout) and 'left' - social democrat to liberal progressive – political attitudes, and on the other hand, readers with more conservative political attitudes, lower

education, and rural backgrounds, who preferred the daily *Večernji list*. In 2017, audience perceptions of the political orientation of these dailies are confirmed (DNP 2017). Diversity in the Croatian media system is still associated with the left or right political orientations of the audiences and their respective choices of news outlets, although the majority of the media are judged by the audiences to be somewhere around the political center (Peruško & Vozab 2017).

Trust is a factor that moderates the relationship of news consumption and its political outcomes. A study of citizens' trust in the media (Čuvalo 2010) confirmed the main media choices and audience characteristics from Lamza Posavec and Rihtar (2003) – overall, audiences put most trust in radio, then in television, while the printed press was in third place.

A study of the public interest performance of Croatian television showed a low share of news and current affairs programming and a predominance of fiction in the broadcast programs of commercial televisions (Peruško 2009). Commercial television channels Nova TV and RTL Televizija had overtaken the public service HRT in audience reach, although with a 29% share HRT was still among the group of public service broadcasters in Europe that ranked highest in audience attraction, following the Nordic countries.

Early research on audiences as active participants in civil society and the role of community (third sector) media (Peruško 2008a) was followed by studies on political participation and audience engagement (Vozab, 2012, 2016). 26% of all online media audiences use third sector and civil society media; these audiences are omnivores in terms of content choice and are more interested in news and information programs than the average media user in Croatia (Vozab, Peruško & Čuvalo 2017).

### **Method and data: the Q interview**

The study reported in this article used the Q methodological interview with card sorting as the main data gathering method. Q methodology is a mixed method, which combines the quantitative and the qualitative strand in a hybrid way and is used to define clusters of people based on the similarities and differences of their subjective viewpoints (Davis & Michelle 2011: 561). It is an exploratory method, which allows rich interpretation of qualitative data obtained from the Q sorting interviews with the participants. The quantification of responses through the Q sorting and further statistical analysis affords a more systematic analysis and adds clarity to the data. The well-known limitations of qualitative research in terms of generalizations about the distribution or frequency of the types of news users in the population, however, remain.

Q study interviews were performed in Croatia in the fall of 2014. Participants were chosen to reflect diversity of gender, age, education, geographical region and city size. Three age cohorts were selected (18-34, 35 – 60, 61+); three levels of education, and three types of geographical locations. North-Central Croatia was represented by the capital Zagreb, the Adriatic part of Croatia was represented by Split as the large city, and Slavonski Brod in the eastern part of Croatia was chosen as the provincial city.

36 individual in-depth interviews were recorded. Interviews included card sorting, during which the participants were invited to 'think aloud'. A short questionnaire about informants' news related habits and political engagement was administered. Q interviews were conducted 'in the form of an informal conversation during which the participant offers a narrative of a-day-in-the-life-with-the-news media' (Schrøder, 2015: 5), reflecting a typical day. The participants were asked to place 36 numbered cards, each featuring one news media platform, 'on a pyramid grid, according to how these news media play, or do not play, a greater or smaller part in their daily life' (Schrøder, 2015: 5). The pyramid consists of columns with the numerical values from zero (in the middle column) to +4 on the far right side for the most important news media, and the -4 on the far left side for the least important news media. The result was the 'self-analyzed relational news media universe' (Schrøder, 2015: 5) of each participant.

Factor analysis was carried out on the Q card sort results, to produce the repertoires of news media use (Schrøder, 2015). The Q sort interviews were transcribed and analyzed with NVivo. The narrative of the participants during the Q card sorting adds the 'thickness' of description and insights to the typology of media use revealed by the factor analysis.

Factor analysis (PCA, Varimax with Kaiser normalization) was performed with extraction criteria of eigenvalues: above 1. We selected the six-factor solution as superior with the most well-defined factors and clear factor structures. This solution comprises all 36 Q sorts and covers 68% of the initial total variance. Despite the fewer components extracted than in the other possible factor solutions and the lower percent of the initial total variance (81%), the chosen result is satisfactory when compared to the other extracted factor solutions in the structure of loadings, because only one factor in the chosen 6-factor solution is defined with lower than five Q sorts (factor 5: four Q sorts), while other factors are well defined with five Q sorts or more. The six factors represent types of cross-media news practices and types of news users that are found in Croatia in relation to the choice of media channels related to news consumption.

### **The shared news universe**

As an introduction to the presentation of the six Croatian news repertoires, **Table 1** draws a map of the Croatian news universe or the 'collective news repertoire' (Schrøder, 2005: 18) across the six news media repertoires. At the top we list the six news media with 10+ occurrences ranked with the highest values (+3 and +4) defined as central for news related practices to the greatest number of respondents.

Legacy media of television and print are thus confirmed as the primary sources of news, and serious and quality news are shown as most important. Television is still the first choice of news sources, complemented with quality newspapers in print and on-line, but born online media also come in the first five choices among the 36 Croatian informants. The leading news media include commercial and public service TV news and current affairs programs broadcast (only) on the public service broadcaster HTV, national quality daily

papers in both printed and online versions. This group of legacy media (including their digital format) is complemented by the born online media.

**Table 1:** The shared news universe: the most important news media across the six Croatian news repertoires

	News media type	No. of occurrences
<b>News media with 10+ occurrences</b>	National TV commercial news (Nova TV, RTL)	21
	National TV PSB news (HTV)	19
	TV current affairs, serious ( <i>Paralele, Otvoreno</i> - HTV)	12
	National quality newspapers online (jutarnji.hr, večernji.hr, poslovni.hr)	12
	News from born online media (index.hr, H-alter, Tportal, Huffington Post)	12
	National quality print newspapers ( <i>Jutarnji list, Večernji list</i> )	11
<b>News media with 5 - 9 occurrences</b>	Text-TV	9
	TV current affairs light ( <i>Piramida, Dobro jutro Hrvatska, Hrvatska uživo</i> - HTV; <i>Provjereno</i> – Nova TV)	8
	Commercial radio news (Narodni radio, Totalni FM, Antena, Radio 101)	7
	Regional/local TV news (Mreža TV, Jabuka TV, SBTv, Televizija Dalmacija, Televizija Jadran)	6
	PSB radio news (HR)	6
	Radio current affairs (any channel)	5
	National tabloid newspaper ( <i>24 sata</i> )	5
	Local/regional daily newspaper, print	5
	National newsmagazines online ( <i>Globus.hr, portalnovosti.com</i> )	6
	News on Facebook	7

The ten news media with less frequent occurrences (5-9) across the six repertoires, which constitute the ‘partially shared news media universe’ (Schrøder, 2005: 18), include ‘light’ current affairs TV programs, broadcast on the public service HTV, like *Piramida* (a political game show), *Good morning Croatia*, *Croatia live* (a late afternoon show), and *Provjereno*, an investigative journalism evening show from Nova TV. Also in this group are PBS and

commercial radio programs, and tabloid national, local and regional newspapers. This group also includes news on Facebook.

### The six Croatian news repertoires

Each factor in the 6-factor solution represents a subset of the 36 participants, who share the news repertoires in question. Each of the six extracted factors includes *a ranked list of the news media*, which shows which of the included 36 news media play a more important role and which of them play a less important role in the lives of the those who share the same news use proclivities (**Table 2**).

The portrait of news consumption patterns in the respective repertoires in Croatia is based on the number of *orientations* that can be traced to participants ranking of the 36 news media, as described in the Schrøder’s Danish study (Schrøder, 2015: 10-11), including the technological orientations (which platforms are used), general content orientations (overview vs. depth, light vs. serious), geographic orientation (local/regional, national/international), trust vs. entertainment (public service/quality vs. commercial/tabloid), and lean-back (receptive, common agendas) vs. lean-forward (search, personalization).

**Table 2:** Six News Repertoires of Croatian Audiences

News repertoire	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
<i>Characteristics</i>	<b>Commercial traditionalist with national scope</b>	<b>Local traditionalist: broadcast media in focus</b>	<b>internationally oriented news seeker</b>	<b>Versatile omnivore radio lovers and print avoider</b>	<b>Versatile readers – online and print</b>	<b>Multiplatform versatile locally oriented light news snacker</b>
<i>Most important news media- (rank 1-5)</i>	Radio news as part of a general commercial radio channel; National daily quality newspaper; <u>National quality newspaper online</u> ; News on Text-TV; National TV news bulletin on a commercial channel	Regional/local TV news bulletin; Local/regional daily newspaper, print; <b>News on Facebook</b> , National TV news bulletin on a public service channel, National TV news bulletin on a commercial channel	<u>International broadcasters online news</u> ; National quality newspaper, print; TV current affairs from international providers; TV news bulletin on a public channel; TV current affairs, serious	TV current affairs, serious; <u>News from born-online news media</u> ; <u>Local/regional daily newspaper online</u> ; News on Text-TV; <b>News on Facebook</b>	<b>News on Facebook</b> ; <u>National quality newspaper online</u> ; <u>Blogs with news</u> ; <u>national tabloid newspaper online</u> ; <u>News from born-online news media</u>	Local/regional daily newspaper, print; <u>Local/regional newspapers online</u> ; <u>news from born-online news media</u> ; National TV news bulletin on a commercial channel; <b>News distributed by online video sharing media (YouTube)</b>
<i>Other</i>	National daily	Radio current	<u>News via</u>	Radio news as	<u>Free daily</u>	National daily

<i>important news media - (rank 6-10)</i>	tabloid newspaper, print; National news magazines or weekly quality newspaper, print; Radio news as part of general public service radio channel; TV current affairs, light; <u>National tabloid newspaper online</u>	affairs as a part of a general radio channel and/or 24 hour radio news; TV current affairs, light; TV news and/or current affairs on national 24-hour TV news channel; National daily tabloid, Current affairs, serious	<u>news aggregators</u> or <u>personalized news services</u> ; <u>News from born-online news media</u> ; National TV news bulletin on a commercial channel; TV current affairs, light; <u>National quality newspaper online</u>	part of a general commercial radio channel; <u>National broadcasters online news</u> ; Radio current affairs as part of a general radio channel and/or 24 hour radio news; <u>National quality newspapers online</u> ; Radio news as part of a general public service channel	<u>newspapers online</u> ; National daily quality newspaper, print; National daily tabloid newspaper, print, TV current affairs, light; <u>Local/regional broadcasters online news</u>	tabloid newspaper, print; <u>National tabloid newspaper, online</u> ; <u>Local/regional broadcasters online news</u> ; Radio news as part of general public service channel; <u>National quality newspapers, online</u>
<i>Technological preference</i>	Traditional with digital awareness	Traditional predominantly broadcast, with social media awareness	Predominantly broadcast-ing with digital	Legacy with digital	Digital multiplatform with legacy	Digital multiplatform with legacy
<i>Audience location</i>	Evenly distributed	Evenly distributed	Evenly distributed	Evenly distributed	Capital and provincial city (Zagreb and Slavonski brod)	Split (predominates) and Slavonski brod
<i>Demographics</i>	35-60+; male predominantly; 16 y education	All age groups, 60+ predominates; Female predominates; 12 y education predominates	All age groups evenly distributed; +16 y of education	Distributed between 18-34 (males, 16 y education) and 35-60 (females. 12 y education);	18-34, 12-15y education	Gender balanced, 18-34 predominate, 16+ y education

Online media are underlined, **social media are bold**.

**Repertoire 1: Commercial traditionalists with national scope**

The news diet of *Commercial traditionalists with national scope* includes national news from legacy media (radio, newspapers, TV) on the traditional and online platforms, except for

online broadcast media, which are given moderate (National broadcaster online news, rank 19) or low priority (Local/regional broadcaster online, rank 30; international broadcaster online, rank 33). Quality print stands strong even though the audiences also like to read tabloid newspapers. Members in this repertoire prefer commercial and light broadcast news from radio and television, and do not watch public service news programs, serious current affair programs or 24-hour TV news. A strong position is seen for Text-TV (top-5), moderate and relatively low position for international news (ranked 24 and 33) as well as for local/regional news media. This repertoire has a moderate position for online news sites that are not provided by the media (rank 18). Public service radio is also used, but less frequently.

This predominantly male repertoire consists of middle-aged and older age groups and their news media repertoire is therefore more inclined to legacy media. Although some individuals combine legacy with digital media, others are cautious towards new media:

I'm aware that ... the speed is an excellent thing, more access to information ... but I'm from the older generation, we grew up in a time when this didn't exist ... so sometimes you feel like you're obliged to accept something new, but you don't really accept it' (Ante, 35-60, Slavonski Brod)

Common to most of the interviewees who share this repertoire is the seeking of 'quality' in news media:

My opinion is that there should be less commercialization and more interest for the people's well-being. Let's not torture people with crime news. Unfortunately, media is full of that... From the media that I use daily, I intensively gather information that I'm interested in, which are current... This is where I get all the needed information from the world, current events, politics, business, social events... (Frane, +61, Split)

### **Repertoire 2: Local traditionalists: broadcast media in focus**

*Local traditionalists* prefer local/regional news and current affairs from mostly broadcast media on traditional platforms. The only source of online media with a strong position within this repertoire is news from Facebook. *Local traditionalists* rank national broadcast media (TV & radio) on traditional platforms over national newspapers. Quality print newspapers stand relatively low (ranked 27, 32, 33 and 46), while tabloid print is relatively strong (top 10). The orientation to serious national news topics is seen in their preference for PSB TV news rather than news bulletins on a commercial channel, while they prefer light current affairs programs on TV over serious news and current affairs television programs. A relatively moderate position for Text-TV and moderate and a relatively low position of international news and online news sites not provided by media are found alongside the strong position of the local/regional news media (ranked 1, 2). Public service HTV television news and serious current affairs programs are also part of this repertoire.

Locally oriented media consumers tend to explain their media use with reference to a local tradition of media use, as in the case of Iva (35-60) from Split, who explains her use of the daily newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* in Split:

Here, in this area, if you don't drink coffee and read newspapers in the morning it's like you don't have your own arms.

Members of this repertoire are also in most cases women, who tend to intertwine their media use with their everyday activities in the household:

The TV is on in the kitchen while I cook and clean, if there's something interesting on the TV I will direct my attention to it, but mostly I hear the TV more than I see it ... or sometimes radio... (Marina, +61, Slavonski Brod)

The youngest locally oriented news consumer explains her choice of local radio information as something that gives her most useful information to navigate in her busy everyday student life:

Here is where I get the most of information about the traffic and weather that interests me for the day (Sara, 18-34, Zagreb)

### **Repertoire 3: *Versatile internationally oriented quality media omnivores***

*Versatile internationally oriented quality media omnivores* prefer international news and current affairs from television viewed on traditional and online platforms and from quality national newspapers in print and digital form. Born – online media have a relatively strong position within this repertoire (Top 6 -10). The audiences in this repertoire prefer quality national legacy media, while tabloid print has a very low rank, similar to Text-TV. Moderate and relatively low positions of local/regional news media is accompanied by a moderate position of online news sites not provided by media (rank 16). This is the only repertoire which includes news aggregators as news sources. This repertoire also highlights the public service television as its news source by including two HTV news programs within the first five most important news sources.

News consumers in this repertoire are more articulate about their preferences for news media, especially in respect to investigative journalism:

*Provjereno* is an investigative journalism program and this is what interests me. That's a very difficult, responsible and useful task and gives me far more information than ordinary daily news. (Dunja, 61+, Zagreb)

We used to buy mostly *Feral Tribune* [Croatian independent weekly famous for its critical stance towards the government in the 1990s; discontinued after

2000s. op.a.] ... today a daily quality newspaper, well I would put quality under a question mark. (Sonja, 35-61, Slavonski Brod)

#### **Repertoire 4: *Versatile omnivore radio lovers and print avoiders***

*Versatile omnivore radio lovers and print avoiders* prefer serious current affairs on TV and Text-TV, together with online born news media and Facebook. They prefer reading online editions of the local/regional and national quality newspapers. Radio also has a strong position (Top 6-10). Quality does not seem to have a high importance within this repertoire. Newspapers, especially in the printed form, have a low position, alongside the international news and local/regional news media. Local/regional daily newspapers online are an exception. This repertoire is the only one with both public radio and public television among the moderately salient news sources.

Print avoiders seem to have moved towards the online as opposed to legacy media in general, as these two interviewees show:

Well, in the last few days I even watched TV a lot because of the football topic ... but otherwise I rarely watch television and television news. (Jan, 18-34, Split)

Yes, definitely mostly Internet. I believe there's no point in buying newspapers these days because everything one needs to know is online. The exception is *Le Monde Diplomatique* which I bought a few times because of the quality of the texts and the analyses. (Mirko, 18-34, Slavonski Brod)

#### **Repertoire 5: *Digital readers – online and print***

*Digital readers* prefer news from born-online and social media, and the position of online newspapers is slightly stronger than that of the print issues. Members in this repertoire rely on television only for light current affairs programs. Public service and commercial TV news bulletins have a relatively moderate position (rank 16, 20). Commercial radio stations have a moderate position in this repertoire, but public service radio has a low position (rank 33) – this is the only repertoire which does not include any PBS outlets in the first 10 choices. Quality is not very important within this repertoire, except quality newspapers which rank higher than the tabloids. Local/regional news media have a low position, except for the local/regional broadcasters' online news (Top 6-10). International media and online news sites not provided by media have a relatively low position, with Text-TV ranked the last (36). Audiences in this repertoire tend to rely on national legacy brands, and social media, particularly blogs and Facebook.

These young participants rely on the computer in their everyday life, so this is the place where they also go to inform themselves:

These are the most important media from which I get almost all of the information. I spend most of the time working on the computer, so I surf a lot through Croatian media: *Index, 24 sata*... Facebook as well... (Alan, 18-34, Zagreb)

These informants also express preference for the most popular online-born media, Index.hr, seen by general audiences as having a progressive left-leaning political preference (Peruško & Vozab 2017):

It's most interesting for me, there I can find the most investigative journalism, they seem the most independent, I like the journalists as well... (Petra 18-34, Slavonski Brod)

Well, that's mostly Index, they really publish everything so I can find what's interesting to me there ... they are open to everything. (Zoran, 18-34, Slavonski Brod)

### **Repertoire 6: *Digital flexible locally oriented light news snackers***

*Digital flexible locally oriented light news snackers* prefer local/regional newspapers, online and print, commercial television news bulletin, news from born online media and news distributed by online video sharing media. They prefer commercial television news bulletins over PSB news or information programs, while public service radio and quality online newspapers have a relatively strong position (Top 6-10). This is the most versatile and digitally oriented among the six repertoires. Public service radio HR is included within the group of moderately salient information sources.

None of the members with this repertoire in our sample are from Zagreb, the capital. The statement by Ana (35-60) from Slavonski brod exemplifies the function of news in terms of providing local practical information:

It's important for me to know what is the situation in the city where I live. My job takes a lot of my time, I travel, so information about traffic and roads is essential for me... And I can find out about these things only in *Slobodna Dalmacija* or online ... I can find out what happens in Zagreb when I'm home in the evening, around 8 or 9.

### **What we do with news**

To further explore the motivations or consequences of news (Couldry et al. 2009), the relationship between news use and interpersonal communication offline and online was explored in a questionnaire administered after the Q sorting was complete.<sup>1</sup> The most popular forms of engaging with news in our audience sample include talking with friends and colleagues about a news story in person i.e. face to face, followed closely by mediated

discussion on email, in social media and instant messenger(s). Informants also rate (or like) or recommend a news story, and vote in online polls via news site or social network. While most respondents still choose off-line interpersonal ways of engaging with the public world in the news and information programs, with known interlocutors (friends and colleagues), a large share of these discussions is also mediated in the interpersonal formats of instant messengers or emails, as well more broadly in the many-to-many formats of social media. Citizens also engage in the on-line activities of voting and recommending a story, which can be seen to have more publicness as it is seen or directed not only to immediate interlocutors but has a quality of mass-self communication (Castells, 2007).

Other possibilities regarding participation in news production or distribution were much less common: this was the case, for instance, with sharing or commenting on news stories via social media (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit) or a news website, as well as posting pictures or video, writing a blog on a news or political issue or taking part in a campaign or group based around a news subject. Other research confirms this more passive on-line engagement of Croatian audiences, who are less likely to engage in higher intensity activities like creating posts and writing comments (Peruško & Vozab 2015).

## **Conclusion**

This is the first study that paints a picture of the cross media news use of Croatian audiences, and identifies the types of news users with their specific repertoires. The fact that the legacy broadcast media, together with print newspapers, still play an important, even a key, role for several of the user types, is a confirmation that a) 'old mass media' is not dead, and, b) the digital media are not yet prevalent in news repertoires in this Peripheral European media landscape. We need further comparative research to understand whether this is the case in other media landscapes of this type, and what other structural or cultural influences may be at play in shaping news use.

Age is more defining of repertoires than gender, especially regarding the choice between legacy and digital news: the R5 Versatile readers of online and print and R6 Multiplatform versatile locally oriented light news snackers are both composed of younger audience members (this generational division in media choice is confirmed in a representative panel study, Čuvalo, Peruško, Vozab 2017). Education plays a role in distinguishing the internationally oriented news seekers (in R3), who all have more than 16 years of education (i.e. college/university degrees).

This study also points to the importance of radio as a news source to Croatian audiences. Radio is often forgotten in the contemporary discussions of new digital media landscapes, but its prominent position is confirmed here. The importance of regional and local media is also a specificity of Croatia, related to the strong identity of Croatia's regions and their role for every-day life of the citizens. In sum, three repertoires are predominantly focused on legacy media, and three on digital media. One repertoire among the latter is oriented towards entertainment and light news, while two are very much oriented towards quality serious news (although this seems to be a characteristic of Croatian repertoires

overall). One repertoire is mainly national in news focus, one local, and one international. Finally, one of the online repertoires is clearly focused on reading the news.

The qualitative character of this study obviously does not allow statements about the distribution of the identified repertoires in the general population. The aim of the study was to identify patterns of cross-media use and types and composition of the repertoires among Croatian audiences. The same limitation holds for the shared media universe or the public opinion space. Even so, the results resonate with the results of quoted surveys of general media audiences, which show that legacy television and print still have the primary role, but are increasingly challenged by the born online news media.

Another finding also has broader implications for understanding the relationship between media and politics, and in regard to the role of the media in democracy: among the general trends of audience preferences in regard to specific channels or media, we find that not all of the citizens follow the same trends. Some media repertoires are still centered around broadcasting, others around digital media while still others are a mixture. While television still builds the largest audiences, in Croatia several types of news users do not participate in television news at all.

Future research in political communication should take into account the fact of the existence of different news repertoires and user types. This study has only started to investigate the role of news in the political and social engagement of the citizens. We need a deeper understanding of why the news is mainly discussed in interpersonal settings (both offline and online), how the audiences see the contribution of news to their practices of citizenship, and how this relates to the broader context of the political communication system and the digital media landscape in which citizenship is played out.

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## Appendix:

### Table 1A: Croatian News Sources in Q cards

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National TV news bulletin on a public service channel (HTV 1, HTV 2)</li> <li>2. National TV news bulletin on a commercial channel (Nova TV, RTL)</li> <li>3. Regional/local TV news bulletin (eg. Zagreb - Mreža TV, Jabuka TV; Slavonski Brod - SBTv; Split – Televizija Dalmacija, TV Jadran)</li> <li>4. TV current affairs, light (eg. Piramida, Provjereno, Dobro jutro Hrvatska, Hrvatska uživo)</li> <li>5. TV current affairs, serious (eg. Paralele, Otvoreno - HTV)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. TV news and/or current affairs on national 24-hour TV news channel (eg. 24 satatv, HTV 4)</li> <li>7. TV news and/or current affairs from international providers (eg. CNN, BBC World, N1, Al Jazeera Balkans)</li> <li>8. News on Text-TV</li> <li>9. Radio news as part of a general public service radio channel (HR)</li> <li>10. Radio news as part of a general commercial radio channel (eg. Narodni radio, Totalni FM, Antena, Otvoreni, Radio 101)</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

11. Radio current affairs as part of a general radio channel and/or 24 hour radio news/information channel (special news or current affairs program on any radio channel)
12. National daily quality newspaper, print (eg. Jutarnji list, Večernji list)
13. National daily tabloid newspaper, print (eg. 24 sata)
14. Free daily newspaper, print (eg. free edition of 24 sata, Metro, Zagreb City)
15. National news magazines or weekly quality newspaper, print (eg. Globus, Aktual, Novosti)
16. Local/regional daily newspaper, print (eg. Novi list, Slobodna Dalmacija, Glas Istre, Glas Slavonije)
17. Local weekly/bi-weekly/monthly newspaper, print (eg. Dubrovački vjesnik, Šibenski list)
18. National quality newspaper online (eg. Jutarnji.hr, Večernji.hr, Poslovni.hr)
19. National tabloid newspaper online (eg. 24sata.hr)
20. Free daily newspaper online
21. National news magazines or weekly quality newspaper, online (eg. Globus.hr, portalnovosti.com)
22. Local/regional daily newspaper online (eg. novilist.hr, slobodnadalmacija.hr, glasistre.hr, glas-slavonije.hr)
23. Local weekly/bi-weekly/monthly, online (eg. sibenski-list.hr, dubrovacki.hr)
24. National broadcasters online news (hrt.hr)
25. Commercial broadcasters online news (eg. novatv.dnevnik.hr, narodniradio.hr)
26. international broadcasters online news (eg. BBC, The New York Times, Al Jazeera, The Guardian)
27. News on Facebook
28. News on Twitter
29. News on other social media
30. News distributed by online video sharing media (eg. YouTube, Vimeo)
31. Blogs with news (eg. Vedrana Rudan, Zoran Šprajc)
32. News shared by email or SMS
33. Professional magazines (eg. Školske novine)
34. News via news aggregators or personalized news services (eg. mvijesti, Internet Monitor, Google News, Flipboard)
35. News from born-online news media (eg. Index.hr, H-alter, Tportal, Huffington Post)
36. National, regional or international news sites online, not provided by media (eg. National or local government, political parties, NGOs, EU, Greenpeace)

**Note:**

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the survey part of the study (such as the complete questionnaire), see the Introduction by Adoni et al. to this special issue. When analyzing the responses to the questionnaire, mean values were counted for each answer in the first part of the questionnaire results. Top-four answers are emphasized for each topic (coding q1, coding q2, coding q3, and coding q4) in the questionnaire. Mean values were also counted for each informant for their aggregate answers on different topics. These mean values were taken to count the mean value of the repertoire (aggregate means of informants belonging to the repertoire). In questions Q2, Q3 and Q4 informants were offered a 5 point Likert scale to evaluate the importance of some of the activities in their everyday lives.