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Family News Talks: Deliberative Communication in Families

ABSTRACT

The authors of the research study investigated and compared the use of media among young adults (aged 19-24) in Slovakian and Latvian families, along with its potential for fostering deliberative communication both within and outside these family units. The study highlights the very limited interest among young people in actively seeking out quality news sources, with only a small fraction of them consistently visiting reliable news websites, actively searching for high-quality information, and comparing news from various sources. News in the media continues to spark discussions among family members; however, there are still many families who consciously avoid these discussions. Media news continues to incite deliberative discourse within family units, yet a considerable number of families deliberately abstain from engaging in such dialogues. This study discusses the influence of the media environment on content in Latvia and Slovakia. It emphasizes the importance deliberative communication and promoting media and information literacy.

KEY WORDS

Deliberative Communication. Family Talks. Latvia. Slovakia. Use of News.

1 Introduction

In the global *Liberal Democracy Index of the Democracy Report 2023* published by the Varieties of Democracy Institute of the University of Gothenburg, Slovakia ranks as 15th, Latvia as 18th.[1] However, in one of the components of this comparative research, an essential part of contemporary democracy, both countries are lagging behind. The *Deliberative Component Index* (DCI) is ranking Latvia as 46th, but Slovakia as 92nd. Deliberation refers to the quality of political communication including rational and argumentative exchange, mutual respect of participants and civil character of discussions.[2] It is an important democracy variable that can be developed[3] taking in account variations of the type of deliberation depending on the history and culture of respective societies[4]. The role of deliberative communication in democratic policy practices is discussed in theory as connected to usage of media, in particular, news.[5] There are several studies suggesting the importance of cultivating deliberative practices in young audiences both at school and in families that envision the option of young people initiating discussions on political issues.[6] In this paper based on the idea that media usage is the core element of opinion making and deliberation, we examine and compare uses of media as described in Slovakian and Latvian families and its potential for the development of deliberative communication both in families and outside them. Teams from both countries are members of the *MEDIADELCOM* consortium.[7] Slovakia and Latvia have some similarities in their histories. Although they have different geographical and cultural characteristics, their location predisposes them to be influenced by each other's neighbours and historical events in the region. After the Second World War, both countries came under the influence of the communist regime within the Soviet Union. This influenced their social, economic and political development for many decades. Both countries gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This transition brought new challenges and opportunities as both countries sought to build democratic institutions and economies. Slovakia and Latvia became members of the European Union in 2004.[8] Their integration into the EU brought the opportunity to work with other members and benefit from a common European space. Both countries have public and private institutions in their media system. Public media in Latvia are funded by the state budget and by licence fees. In Slovakia, licence fees were abolished in 2023.[9]

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[1] PAPADA, E. et al.: *Democracy Report 2023. Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*. Göteborg : University of Gothenburg, Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), 2023, p. 15.

[2] WESSLER, H.: Deliberativeness in Political Communication. In DONSBACH, W. (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2008. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecd011>.

[3] Ibidem.

[4] See: RYFE, D. M.: Does Deliberative Democracy Work? In *Annual Revue of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 8, p. 49-71. See also: SASS, J., DRYZEK, J. S.: Deliberative Cultures. In *Political Theory*, 2014, Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 3-25.

[5] See: KIM, J., WYATT, R. O., KATZ, E.: News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 361-385.

[6] See: MCDEVITT, M., CHAFFEE, S.: From Top-Down to Trickle-Up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions About the Family in Political Socialization. In *Political Communication*, 2002, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 281-301. See also: MCDEVITT, M., KIOUSIS, S.: Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education. In *Communication Education*, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 247-264.

[7] Authors' note: For more information see: www.mediadelcom.eu.

[8] *Member States of European Union.* [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2014/03/europeanunion.htm>.

[9] *Zrušenie úhrady – koncesionárskych poplatkov.* [*Cancellation of Payment – Concession Fees*]. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://uhrady.rtvs.sk/zruseniekoncesii>.

The Slovak Republic, with an area of 49,035 km², has a population of 5,427,917 inhabitants.[10] The number of young people (respondents of the media diary research) aged 19-24 is 321,633, which represents 5.92% of the total population. Of this number, Slovaks make up 80.7%, with Hungarians being the most numerous national minority (8.5%), followed by Roma (2.0%) and Czechs (0.6%).[11] Public service radio and television are obliged to broadcast part of their broadcasts in the language of national minorities.[12] Slovakia has had a dual system since 1991, which is based on the coexistence of private broadcasters and public broadcasters. Currently, there is one public service broadcaster in the Slovak media market – *Radio and Television of Slovakia* (1991).[13] The main full-screen broadcasters are *Televízia Markíza* (since 1996), *Televízia JOJ* (since 2002) and the special news television channel *TA3* (since 2001). The major full-screen broadcasters are *Fun Rádio* (since 1990), *Rádio Expres* (since 2020) *Rádio Vlna* (since 2015), *Rádio Melody* (since 2006) and *Rádio Europa 2* (since 2009 – popular with young people). The Slovak media system is characterised by a high degree of commercialisation. The most watched station is the private television station *Markíza*, the most popular radio station has long been the private *Rádio Expres*, followed by the public broadcaster *Rádio Slovensko*, and the top three are rounded off by the commercial *Fun Rádio*. Major print media with nationwide coverage includes *Denník Sme*, *Denník N*, *Pravda*, *Hospodárske noviny* and the tabloid newspapers *Nový Čas* (the most read daily) and *Plus 1 deň*. Among purely online newsrooms, *aktuality.sk*, *refresher.sk*, *startitup.sk* and *dnes24.sk* are popular.[14]

According to Urbaniková, the concentration of news media in Slovakia in 2021 showed a high-risk score (79%).[15] Based on a *Eurobarometer* survey, the primary source for watching news among Slovaks is television (73%, 75% EU), followed by radio (44%, 39% EU), online news portals (37%, 43% EU) and platforms and blogs (25%, 26% EU).[16] As indicated by the *Digital News Report 2022*, print media were the least popular means of accessing news (13%, 21%).[17] Among social media, *Facebook* is the most used (71%), followed by *YouTube* (63%), *FB Messenger* (49%) and *Instagram* (32%), *Facebook* is used for news gathering by 48% of respondents, followed by *YouTube* (25%), *Messenger* (15%) and *Instagram* (11%). Trust in the media had a declining level in 2022 (only 26%),[18] this is four percentage points lower than in 2021. Slovakia fell to last place in trust in the media together with the United States among the

[10] *Statistical Office: Population and Migration.* [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://datacube.statistics. sk/#!/view/sk/vbd_dem/om7102rr/v_om7102rr_00_00_00_sk>.

[11] *Statistical Office: Population.* [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://www.scitanie.sk/>.

[12] *Act on Media Services and on Amendments to Certain Acts No. 264/2022 Coll.,* from 1st August 2022. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20220801. html>.

[13] *Act on Radio and Television of Slovakia and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts No. 532/2010 Coll.,* from 15th December 2010. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2010/532/20230701>.

[14] *MML-TGI národný prieskum spotreby, médií a životného štýlu: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Základné výsledky za 1. kvartál a 2. kvartál 2023.* [*MML-TGI National Consumer, Media a Lifestyle Survey: Market & Media & Lifestyle – TGI. Underlying Results for Q1 and Q2 2023*]. [online]. [2023-08-26]. Available at: <https://www.median.sk/pdf/2023/ZS232SR.pdf>.

[15] URBANÍKOVÁ, M.: *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2022. Country Report: Slovakia.* Fiesole : European University Institute, 2022, p. 18. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/75737?show=full>.

[16] *Media & News Survey 2022.* [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/ detail/2832>.

[17] NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022.* Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/ default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

[18] Ibidem, p. 101.

46 countries analysed.[19] The impact of online disinformation is assessed as high in Slovakia. 36% of Slovaks say they have been exposed to disinformation very often or often, but 70% are confident that they can recognise disinformation.[20] In the *Media Literacy Index 2023*, Slovakia was ranked 23rd with 48 points (the ranking is done on a scale of 1 to 41, highest to lowest and the scores are 0-100 points, lowest to highest score).[21] The results of the *Eset Foundation Study* reveal that the young generation tolerates misleading information from conspiracy websites. Up to 86% think that based on freedom of speech and expression such sites can exist and are an alternative to traditional media (73%). Only 55% of respondents agree that conspiracy sites spread misinformation, half-truths, anti-social sentiment and distrust of traditional media.[22]

In Latvia, which covers an area of 64.6 thousand square metres, in 2022, the number of inhabitants is gradually decreasing, making 1,875,757 people.[23] Young people belonging to the so-called Generation Z and who are in the focus of the media diaries research, thus between the ages of 19 and 24, make up one hundred thousand five hundred people (100,549 people) or 5% of population.[24] The country is ethnically and culturally heterogeneous. Most of the Latvian population in 2022 are Latvians (62.9%), 24.2% Russians, 3% Belarusians, 2.2% Ukrainians, 1.9% Poles, 1.1% Lithuanians, 5.4% representatives of other ethnic groups.[25] Public service media regulation provides conditions and a budget for the creation of media content for minorities.

Latvia's media audience is linguistically divided, moreover, until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in March 2022, after which many Russian TV channels were closed, their influence on Latvian media users and the Latvian media system was relatively high.

The Latvian media system is characterised by a high degree of commercialization and diversity. The PSM's are the leaders of the audio-visual media market, but the largest commercial news media (*TV3*, *delfi.lv*, *Tvnet.lv*), as well as the national news agency *LETA*, are owned by foreign media corporations, thus, recent media ownership transformation trends show a process of shrinking the share of national owners in the Latvian media environment. The sustainability of the media market is threatened by a gradual decrease in the population, a stagnant advertising market influenced by the activities of global platforms,[26] high inflation,

19 STRUHÁRIK, F.: *Dôvera obyvateľov Slovenska v médiá klesla, v prieskume Reuters skončili spolu s USA na poslednom mieste.* [*Slovakia's Trust in the Media Has Fallen, Ranking Last Along with the US in a Reuters Poll*]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/2894684/dovera-slovakov-v-media-klesla-v-prieskume-reuters-skoncili-spolu-s-usa-na-poslednom-mieste/>.

20 *Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the Year 2021.* [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/74712/MPM2022-EN-N.pdf?sequence>.

21 LESSENSKI, M.: *The Media Literacy Index 2023. Report.* Sofia : Open Society Institute, 2023, p. 7. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>.

22 VELŠIC, M.: *Mladí ľudia v kyberpriestore.* [*Young People in Cyberspace*]. Bratislava : Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2016, p. 3. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/Mladi_v_kyberpriestore.pdf>.

23 *Dažādu tautību iedzīvotāju skaits Latvijā 2022.gada sākumā.* [*Number of Inhabitants of Various Nationalities in Latvia in the Beginning of 2022*]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://stor1.leta.lv/za-feb3f20/ig/c/8/6/c869ffe0-f097-4bf7-afed-4292e55cb8e0/index.62974f18f33b4.html>.

24 *Iedzīvotāji pēc dzimuma un vecuma reģionos un republikas pilsētās gada sākumā 1971-2022.* [*Population by Gender and Age in Regions and Cities of the Republic at the Beginning of the Year 1971-2022*]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__POP__IR__IRD/IRD040/table/tableViewLayout1/>.

25 *Dažādu tautību iedzīvotāju skaits Latvijā 2022.gada sākumā.* [*Number of Inhabitants of Various Nationalities in Latvia in the Beginning of 2022*]. [online]. [2023-08-27]. Available at: <https://stor1.leta.lv/za-feb3f20/ig/c/8/6/c869ffe0-f097-4bf7-afed-4292e55cb8e0/index.62974f18f33b4.html>.

26 *Latvijas mediju reklāmas tirgus apjoms 2022. Gadā – 84.4 miljoni eiro.* [*Latvia's Media Advertising Market Volume in 2022 – 84.4 Million Euros*]. [online]. [2023-02-23]. Available at: <https://www.lra.lv/lv/zinas/latvijas-mediju-reklamas-tirgus-apjoms-2022-gada-84-4-miljoni-eiro>.

which mostly increases risks for the existence of local and regional media. Journalists' self-assessment of opportunities to work independently is high, as per *Worlds of Journalism Study* data.[27] Latvia has a stable media support system. However, the local and regional media do not receive support for investments to improve their capacity and technology. When evaluating the accountability of journalism, three different journalistic cultures were observed,[28] which are characterised by high professionalism, post-Soviet journalism patterns, and an instrumental approach, when media and journalism are not free from the influence of persons representing political and economic power.

The importance of digital media and social networking sites is growing in the **daily information consumption** of Latvian inhabitants. According to media usage survey data (N=1949, 16 – 75, 2022) 88% of Latvian residents use Internet news portals (59% daily) and 84% use social media (66% daily). The use of television (74%) and radio (76%) decreased slightly. The use of the press is decreasing, and 62% of the population reads it. Video streaming services are used by 37%, audio streaming services by 35%. Most of the population (84%) use media in Latvian (young people aged 16-30 – 91%, representatives of minorities – 58%); 60% of the population use media in Russian (38% – young people; 95% – representatives of minorities), media in English are used by 34% (62% of young people; 22% of minority populations), 4% of the population use media in other languages. The most popular social networking site in Latvia is *Facebook* (*META*), which is used by 82% of the population (65% every day), *YouTube* is used by 78% (41% every day), and 82% of Latvian residents use the messaging website *WhatsApp*. Among the professional media, the most used are *PSM*s (*Latvian Television*, 68%; *Latvian Radio*, 63%; *PSM news site*, *lsm.lv*, 39%) and commercial media news portals (*Delfi* 64%, *Tvnet* 48%).[29] The interest of the Latvian population in media literacy (MIL) is relatively low, less than 50% of the surveyed admit that they are interested in MIL.[30] In 2022 the majority (57%; -4% compared to 2021) of Latvian citizens surveyed claimed that they are usually able to recognize which information in the media is reliable and which is misleading, biased or fabricated.[31] Traditionally, younger respondents, with a higher level of education and income and employed people have a higher self-assessment of the ability to recognize reliable information. These results lead to the conclusion that the higher self-assessment of young people's media literacy is related to the survey methodology and reflects the higher confidence of young people, and vice versa lower confidence of older generation representatives in their digital skills, because an experimental study in which media content should be evaluated in the context of disinformation does not indicate a higher level of media literacy among young people.[32]

27 KURCALTE, O. et al.: *Sabiedrisko mediju prioritāro mērķauditoriju izpēte. Kvalitatīvais pētījums.* [*Research on Priority Audiences for Public Service Media. Qualitative Research*]. Riga : Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.seplp.lv/lv/media/789/download?attachment>.

28 See: DIMANTS, A.: Latvia: Different Journalistic Cultures and Different Accountability within One Media System. In EBERWEIN, T., FENGLER, S., KARMASIN, M. (eds.): *The European Handbook of Media Accountability*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2018, p. 143-149.

29 *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem.* [*Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population*]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>.

30 See: ROŽUKALNE, A., SKULTE, I., STAKLE, A.: Media Education in the Common Interest: Public Perceptions of Media Literacy Policy in Latvia. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2022, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 202-229.

31 *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem.* [*Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population*]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>.

32 See: ROŽUKALNE, A.: Perception of Media and Information Literacy among Representatives of Mid-Age and Older Generations: The Case of Latvia. In *ESSACHESS – Journal for Communication Studies*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 2(26), p. 207-232.

The description of media usage, especially for information and news, media literacy and trust in media in both countries reveals there are indications of risks based on the higher level of usage of and trust in the on-line media including blogs and podcasts (compared to average in EU), relatively high level of self-confidence as media users (especially typical for younger users) and relatively low level of ability to recognize conspirative and disinformation in the practice on-line. However, survey methods don't explain the reasons and contexts of decisions people make based upon the media, everyday rituals of news consumption and methods of development of deliberative communication. This is why it is important to understand the dynamics of family contexts supporting patterns of media use, access to news and models of deliberation as they are or are not developed in Slovak and Latvian families.

2 Theoretical Part

2.1 Deliberative Communication and Uses of News

In their seminal article connecting news media use and deliberative democracy Kim, Wyatt and Katz conclude that the news-media use is an important factor in developing political conversation on different types of questions in a person's everyday life and, thus, news-media use contributes to the willingness to argue with people of different opinion, to the readiness to involve in participatory activities and to the quality of opinions made (in terms of argument quality, consideredness, opinionation etc.).[33] The very idea of deliberative democracy elaborated and advocated in the 20th century in writings of such philosophers as John Dewey or Jurgen Habermass lays on principles of popular sovereignty, inclusiveness, equality and collective decision making.[34] Deliberativeness itself can be understood as a specific variable quality of political communication that is based on arguments expressed with respect to others and civil manners.[35] From such a point of view, everyday family settings with their priorities and rituals of media use are one of the first contexts for the exercise of participatory democracy, for the development of deliberative practices and competences needed. Family itself can be viewed as a specific model of a small group where deliberative communication exercise can happen for a young person, e.g. news topics and information cues from media are discussed in the manner that include features of deliberation such as equal, autonomous expression, rational argumentation etc. Young people can be the ones who initiate the change in family media usage and communication patterns, if educational efforts are made to cultivate deliberative attitudes at school.[36] Still many authors doubt if the vector connecting deliberation and participation is obvious. Wojcieszak and her co-authors agree that deliberative discussions in the family as well as in other groups may influence readiness of political participation, however, different factors including media usage and communication patterns in the family must be studied in depth, in an individualised way.[37] In general, Ryfe suggests that deliberation is difficult to achieve because people are only involved in discussions and make

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[33] See: KIM, J., WYATT, R. O., KATZ, E.: News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 361-385.

[34] GUTMANN, A., THOMPSON, D. F.: *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 9.

[35] See: WESSLER, H.: Deliberativeness in Political Communication. In DONSBACH, W. (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2008. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecd011>.

[36] See: MCDEVITT, M., CHAFFEE, S.: From Top-Down to Trickle-Up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions About the Family in Political Socialization. In *Political Communication*, 2002, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 281-301. See also: MCDEVITT, M., KIOUSIS, S.: Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education. In *Communication Education*, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 247-264.

[37] See: WOJCIESZAK, M. E. et al.: Deliberative and Participatory Democracy? Ideological Strength and the Processes Leading from Deliberation to Political Engagement. In *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2010, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 154-180.

qualitative arguments when additional factors are in play and because it represents a certain shift in their everyday routines, writing: *"Deliberation represents a disturbance of everyday reasoning habits. People prefer to rely on routine scripts to navigate through their social world. Being jolted out of these scripts is, generally speaking, a disconcerting experience."*[38] Those scripts both in smaller groups and mass audiences are gained from mass media content including news, discussions, comments, but also non-fiction and fictional stories.

In recent decades deliberation has been broadly studied in connection with on-line communication in different fora and comments where discussions are often directly prompted by news (or fake news that underlines the importance of deliberation in the development of media literacy and vice versa).[39] However, in their statement article many authors developing the concept of deliberative democracy today critically describe the result of broad audience access to various means of expression as "quantity over quality" and the difficulty "to detect the signal amid the noise"[40] and push forward the idea of deliberative decision making in smaller representative groups.

Being informed to create and express rational arguments to come to rational decisions always was a part of deliberation elements because public discussions are vulnerable to manipulations.[41] Discussion on who and how, by what motivation engage in gaining information and facts needed for in depth deliberation about particular issues, and what scale of width and depth of discussion still holds necessary democratic standards brought to the table the discussion of (more informed, representative) mini-groups.[42] Still, dependence on news sources and interdependence in social media as well as questions of manipulation and disinformation vs. motivated searches for information, motivation to become involved in deliberation and create qualitative arguments makes the importance of understanding the user's perspective and their choices in the media environment central. Given the risk of decline of trust in news media and tendencies described as "news fatigue" or "news avoidance", special attention must be paid to young citizens entering the public sphere.

2.2 Generation Z and How It Changed Media Usage Patterns

Generation Z (also known as i-Generation, net generation, digital nomads) is the first generation to have grown up their entire lives in the digital era and in the world of the internet.[43]

They have never experienced a world without them, and their approach to technology differs significantly from that of earlier generations – Generation Z is completely aligned with technology. For this reason, the generation is often referred to as digital nomads. The Gen Z cohort includes the population born between 1997 and 2010.[44]

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[38] RYFE, D. M.: Does Deliberative Democracy Work? In *Annual Revue of Political Science*, 2005, Vol. 8, p. 56.

[39] See: SEMAAN, B. C. et. al.: Social Media Supporting Political Deliberation across Multiple Public Spheres: Towards Depolarization. In FUSSEL, S., LUTTERS, W. (eds.): *CSCW'14: Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*. New York, NY : Association for Computing Machinery, p. 1409-1421. See also: JENNINGS, F. J. et al.: Social Media and Democracy: Fostering Political Deliberation and Participation. In *Western Journal of Communication,* 2021, Vol. 85, No. 2, p. 147-167.

[40] See: DRYZEK, J. S. et al.: The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation. In *Science*, 2019, Vol. 363, No. 6432, p. 1144-1146.

[41] FISHKIN, J.: *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation.* Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 125.

[42] See: PARKINSON, J., MANSBRIDGE, J.: *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[43] See: FRANCIS, T., HOEFEL, F.: *'True Gen': Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies.* New York, NY : McKinsey & Company, 2018.

[44] See: TURNER, A.: Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest. In *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 2015, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 103-114. See also: PRIPORAS, C.-V., STYLOS, N., FOTIADIS, A. K.: Generation Z Consumers' Expectations of Interactions in Smart Retailing: A Future Agenda. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 77, p. 374-381.

Compared to sociology, in which generational studies developed in the 20th century, when trying to explain social changes, or social anthropology analysing intergenerational relationships via kinship, in media studies the concept of 'generation' has received much less attention than age groups or age cohorts.[45] Given that media use is age separated, Mannheim's (1929/1952) generation theory[46] is important. It spans both age and life courses, bringing together people born at the same time and location with their shared experiences creating unique consciousnesses that define a generation in the historical process. Although the separation of age groups is becoming increasingly blurred, media behaviour is determined by life cycle, but media products and media events that shape the generations' collective memory and common mediatised experience are important for defining the unique characteristics of a generation.[47] A generation is characterised by a special sense of belonging. In Mannheim's theory of generational succession, it is the shared experiences gained during formative years that determine the structure of a generation in relation to social and historical changes. This idea is close to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus[48] which describes a stable system in which individual desires are internalised through family parenting and education, which is understood in relation to the surrounding society.[49] A multidimensional understanding of generations is offered by the cultural approach,[50] which links the characteristics of a generation to the social and cultural transformations of a specific period, defining a generation in relation to its common values and life scenarios, which are also influenced by the media system and the development of media technologies.[51]

Generation Z demonstrates a pragmatic and rational worldview, marked by optimism and a pursuit of personal ambitions while acknowledging the influence of external forces. Proficient in efficient internet navigation and adept at online shopping, they exhibit a strong work ethic, leveraging life's opportunities, all while maintaining assertive communication.[52] It is the most technologically advanced of all the generations, as mentioned earlier. Mobile technology is their dominant and most popular technology.[53]

According to information by Howarth published in January 2023, up to 64% of members of Generation Z use *Instagram* at least once a day. They further state that *Instagram* is still the most popular platform among social media for Generation Z worldwide. *Whatsapp* came in second place, with 59% of Generation Z members using it daily. *Facebook* is in 3rd place, with 45% of Generation Z members logging on to this platform daily.[54] According Williamson, Gen Z

45   See: BOLIN, G., SKOGERBØ, E.: Age, Generation and the Media. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3-14.
46   See: MANNHEIM, K.: The Problem of Generations. In KECSKEMETI, P. (ed.): *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-320.
47   See: SŪNA, L.: 'Senior Pop Music?' The Role of Folk-Like Schlager Music for Elderly People. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 91-108.
48   See: BOURDIEU, P.: *In Other Words. Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 1990.
49   See: BOLIN, G.: Media Generations: Objective and Subjective Media Landscapes and Nostalgia among Generations of Media Users. In *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 2014, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 108-131.
50   See: AROLDI, P., COLOMBO, F.: Questioning "Digital Global Generations". A Critical Approach. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 175-190.
51   See: OPERMANN, S.: Understanding Changing News Media Use: Generations and Their Media Vocabulary. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 123-146.
52   See: MCCRINDLE, M., FELL, A.: *Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation*. Norwest : McCrindle Research, 2019.
53   *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>; HOAI, T. L.: *Yes, the Internet Is Redefining Gen Z's TV Habits*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <https://www.decisionlab.co/blog/yes-the-internet-is-redefining-gen-zs-tv-habits>.
54   HOWARTH, J.: *25+ New Generation Z Statistics*. [online]. [2023-07-24]. Available at: <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/gen-z-stats>.

will use different platforms in different ways to fulfil all of their needs.[55] Members of Generation Z use social networking especially when these platforms increase their good mood and decrease their stress levels. Equally important for them are social interactions and the feeling that posting keeps them in their reference communities.[56]

As the dominant medium for Generation Z is the mobile phone, which they live with all day, changes have also occurred in the use of traditional media. Generation Z prefers to follow their social media pages over traditional media. If they are even watching traditional media, they pay the most attention to television. America's Generation Z spends less time watching traditional television than any other generation. They are the only generation that spends less than an hour a day watching (0:58 min); the average for all generations is 2:43 hrs.[57] At the same time, they are characterized by simultaneous other activities in addition to watching TV, most often browsing the Internet and communicating on social networks.[58]

A very interesting fact is that Gen Z can only hold their attention for a very short time – 8 seconds, 4 seconds less than Generation Y. If something doesn't engage them in a short time, they look for new stimuli. As a result, ten-second or shorter video ads are popular with them.[59] The research company *Altitud* has found that this 8-second concentration of Gen Z acts as a highly evolved "eight-second filter" to evaluate vast amounts of information. On the internet, they rely heavily on trending sites within apps to aggregate the most popular latest content. They also turn to trusted influencers to find the most relevant information and entertainment. When something proves worthy of their attention, they are intensely engaged and focused on it.[60] Also based on the above, instead of lengthy TV programs, they prefer short videos presented on social media, which they spend most of their media time watching.[61]

Robert-Agell et al. set out to explore the relationship between Generation Z and radio. It was the most comprehensive study on the topic in Spain. They found that Gen Z is interested in exclusive digital content as well as that designed and created by Gen Z for Gen Z, building a community around media content and media brands, and a mix of paid and free access. They stress that the level of media literacy is also an important factor.[62] It is absolutely characteristic of Gen Z that they get all their information, even news from home and the world, online, almost never in print. They seek entertainment on a variety of platforms, but rarely on television.[63]

[55] LEBOW, S.: *How Gen Z Consumes Media in 5 Charts*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>.
[56] CHATZOGLOU, P. D. et al.: Generation Z: Factors Affecting the Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). In MYLONAS, P. (ed.): *Proceedings of the 15th International Workshop on Semantic and Social Media Adaptation & Personalization (SMAP 2020)*. Zakynthos : IEEE, 2020, p. 1-6.
[57] LEBOW, S.: *How Gen Z Consumes Media in 5 Charts*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/how-gen-z-consumes-media-5-charts>.
[58] Ibidem.
[59] *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>.
[60] FINCH, J.: *What Is Generation Z, and What Does It Want?* [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://www.fastcompany.com/3045317/what-is-generation-z-and-what-does-it-want>.
[61] Ibidem.
[62] See: ROBERT-AGELL, F. et al.: No Habit, No Listening. Radio and Generation Z: Snapshot of the Audience Data and the Business Strategy to Connect with It. In *Profesional de la información*, 2022, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. e310515.
[63] *The Everything Guide to Generation Z*. [online]. [2023-07-20]. Available at: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4976390/E-books/English%20e-books/The%20everything%20guide%20to%20gen%20z/the-everything-guide-to-gen-z.pdf>.

2.3 The Family Talks about the News

Young people are showing less and less interest in news coverage from traditional media such as television, radio and print, which provide traditional news formats.[64] According to Belfrage these formats do not fit into young people's lifestyles, for practical, time, and geographical reasons, so they are using them less and less, if at all.[65] The declining interest in news is confirmed by the annual *Digital News Report*. Their reports regularly document the declining interest of young people in traditional sources of news such as television, radio and print and, conversely, the increasing interest in news from social media.[66]

Diddi and LaRose also focused their study on the younger generation (college students) and found that those who discuss news more frequently in their families tend to be more active consumers of news and have a better awareness of world events.[67] Shehata states that a major influence on Generation Z's news consumption is their family background, socioeconomic status and their family's use of traditional media during their childhood.[68] However, with the advent of the digital age and the increased use of digital (especially social) media, the influence of family and upbringing may weaken.

According to Bengtsson and Johansson, social media is gaining popularity and often serves as a source of information even for traditional media. News portals on social media increasingly use a combination of personal posts, shared content, photos, videos, advertisements and are often defined as "news". This leads to a problematic distinction between 'news media' and 'social media'. [69]

In the literature, we often encounter research on the influence of families' communication styles on individual members' media use, on media regulation, and on the interpretation of media content (add sources). We can hypothesise that different communication styles and dynamics within families may influence whether individual members prefer newspapers, television, the Internet, or social media. Family communication also influences how media content is controlled and managed in families, and whether individuals learn to critically perceive and analyze media information.

McLeod and Chaffee authored a model of communication patterns in families that relates to family communication style and its influence on media use. Research has identified two types of communication styles in families: social orientation (avoiding controversial topics) and conceptual orientation (emphasising openness to differing views).[70] Families with a social orientation were less likely to openly discuss controversial topics or ask critical questions about media and news content. This approach can lead to selective consumption of information and confirmation of existing beliefs. Conversely, families with a more conceptually oriented approach tend to evaluate the media more critically, have discussions, and also ask questions

[64] See: THURMAN, N. et al.: My Friends, Editors, Algorithms, and I: Examining Audience Attitudes to News Selection. In *Digital Journalism*, 2019, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 447-469.

[65] See: BELFRAGE, M. J.: Young People Do Consume News in Social Media. In ANDERSSON, I., DALQUIST, U., OHLSSON, J. (eds.): *Youth and News in a Digital Media Environment: Nordic-Baltic Perspectives*. Göteborg : Nordicom, 2018, p. 105-113.

[66] NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

[67] See: DIDDI, A., LAROSE, R.: Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits among College Students in an Internet Environment. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 2006, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 193-210.

[68] See: SHEHATA, A.: News Habits among Adolescents: The Influence of Family Communication on Adolescents' News Media Use – Evidence from a Three-Wave Panel Study. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 6, p. 758-781.

[69] See: BENGTSSON, S., JOHANSSON, S.: A Phenomenology of News: Understanding News in Digital Culture. In *Journalism – Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 2021, Vol. 22, No. 11, p. 2873-2889.

[70] See: MCLEOD, J. M., CHAFFEE, S.: Interpersonal Approaches to Communication Research. In *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1973, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 469-499.

about media and news content.[71] Based on the above, it can be concluded that these families are more likely to follow different media sources and try to understand different perspectives. They tend to critically evaluate media and news content and discuss it with different viewpoints in the family. This approach encourages the creation of more informed and open discussions.

Earlier studies have shown that parents who talk to their children about the news in traditional media have children who are more likely to watch television news later in life.[72] According to Atkinson, younger children learn about news and media through observing and imitating the behaviour of parents and older relatives.[73] Parents can be the role models that their children follow in forming their media preferences and attitudes towards news. The family can play a key role in the development of critical thinking in young people.

Also, teenagers who are avid newspaper readers are likely to come from households that actively encourage such behaviour.[74] However, similar imitation behaviour can also be observed with online media. Vaala and Bleakley found that parents' reading of online news predicted that their children would also pay attention to online news.[75]

Interestingly, in the results of research conducted in the UK on a sample of 1,000 parents and children, almost 40% of parents reported that they never listen to or watch the news media with their children. 21% of parents never talk to their children about the content of news in the media. Those who do talk do so most often while watching TV, at dinner, and while riding in the car. Younger parents reported that they talk more often about news from online media than from traditional media.[76]

This suggests that parents can significantly influence children's attitudes towards news through the transmission of family values and beliefs. For example, a family that considers media independence and credibility important is likely to encourage children to choose responsible and reliable media.

With increasing age, the opposite trend can be observed, with older children teaching their parents. This is mainly about digital skills in relation to the use of new media, but also about the topic of choosing trustworthy media in an attempt to alert parents to the misinformation content of some news websites. According to Tutiasri and Kusuma parents tend to overlook the source of information and often do not verify content on social media.[77] The lack of checking information received has several causes: parents do not know how to check the information because they do not know how to control technology as well as their children. Another reason is too much trust in the sender from whom they receive the information. It is in such cases that children take the initiative to explain to their parents not only how to work with new technologies, but also to focus their attention on safe and trustworthy sources from which to obtain and share information.[78]

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[71] See: AUSTIN, E. W., PINKLETON, B. E., FUJIOKA, Y.: The Role of Interpretation Processes and Parental Discussion in the Media's Effects on Adolescents' Use of Alcohol. In *Pediatrics*, 2000, Vol. 105, No. 2, p. 343-349.

[72] See: ATKIN, C. K., GANTZ, W.: Television News and Political Socialization. In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1978, Vol. 42, No. 2, p. 183-194.

[73] See: ATKINSON, D.: A Critical Approach to Critical Thinking in TESOL. In *TESOL Quarterly*, 1997, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 71-94.

[74] See: COBB, C. J.: Patterns of Newspaper Readership among Teenagers. In *Communication Research*, 1986, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 299-326.

[75] See: VAALA, S. E., BLEAKLEY, A.: Monitoring, Mediating, and Modeling: Parental Influence on Adolescent Computer and Internet Use on the United States. In *Journal of Children and Media*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 40-57.

[76] PICTON, I.: *Family News Literacy. How Parents and Children Engage with the News: Findings from a Survey of 1,000 UK Parents*. London : A National Literacy Trust, 2019, p. 11. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://cdn-literacytrust-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Family_news_literacy_report.pdf>.

[77] See: TUTIASRI, R. P., KUSUMA, A.: Millennial Generation and Family Literacy within the Dissemination of Hoax. In *Informasi*, 2020, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 153-164.

[78] See: PAVELEKOVÁ, J., ČÁBYOVÁ, Ľ., HRUŠKOVÁ, A.: Reading Behaviour in the Digital Age: Impact of Covid-19 on Consumer Behaviour. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 25-41.

3 Methodology

The idea to investigate the media diaries of students of Mass Media Studies and Journalism was conceived as a spin-off activity of the international H2020 *MEDIADELCOM* project, an EU-funded project involving 17 teams representing 14 EU countries.[79] The aim of the research is to investigate the stereotypes of media use in the selected target group (first year students at colleges focusing on media studies in Slovakia and Lithuania) and in their families.

A qualitative approach was chosen to investigate their personal and familial media stereotypes, with the oral history method being utilized. As Hendl and Remr state, the oral history method is used by researchers to collect individuals' personal accounts of certain events, their causes and consequences.[80] Unlike the life history method, it focuses on predefined themes rather than the individual's story itself. Researchers seek to find connections between individuals' life experiences and broader social and cultural contexts.[81]

In this context, a specific method – the media diary – has been chosen. According to Hyers, media diaries provide a subjective contextual understanding of users' habits, behaviours, experiences and engagement with digital media in order to understand social and personal changes in young people's lives. A central feature of the diary is that it makes the personal visible alongside the social and allows a focus on users' time and time periods.[82] Our choice of method supports the arguments of researchers such as Lev-On, Lowenstein-Barkai, who state that media diaries belong to a narrative form of qualitative data collection (they can be written, visual, audio or multimodal digital form, for example via mobile phones or on paper),[83] or Berg, who highlights that narratives such as the media diary make connections to users' everyday practices with digital media in research that typically uses several methods and is mostly used in a mixed methods context. Yet they can also be used as a single method in ethnographic research.[84] Students were tasked with writing an essay that chronicles their daily media interactions and includes insights on journalism quality, information perception, and interviews with family members from different generations regarding media stereotypes. The essay format was selected to address any potential omission of specific Generation Z media habits in the questionnaire construction.

According to Hasebrik and Hepp, studies that use qualitative media diaries, for example, are interested in how different media and media content relate to each other (often based on the concept of media repertoires),[85] how media communication interactions are integrated into larger structures of (mobile) worlds,[86] or how certain topics and/or media contents affect and are

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[79] Authors' note: The aim of the project is to develop a diagnostic tool (multi-scenario model) to provide a holistic assessment of the risks and opportunities related to deliberative communication and consequently social cohesion in Europe. Source: *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>.

[80] HENDL, J. A., REMR, J.: *Metody výzkumu a evaluace.* [Research and Evaluation Methods]. Praha : Portál, 2017, p. 86-87.

[81] See: GAVORA, P. et al.: *Elektronická učebnica pedagogického výskumu.* [*Electronic Textbook of Educational Research*]. Bratislava : Univerzita Komenského, 2010. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <http://www.e-metodologia.fedu.uniba.sk/>.

[82] HYERS, L. L.: *Diary Methods*. London : Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 15-20.

[83] LEV-ON, A., LOWENSTEIN-BARKAI, H.: Viewing Diaries in an Age of New Media: An Exploratory Analysis of Mobile Phone App Diaries versus Paper Diaries. In *Methodological Innovations*, 2019, Vol. 12, No. 1. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799119844442>.

[84] See: BERG, M., DÜVEL, C.: Qualitative Media Diaries: An Instrument for Doing Research from a Mobile Media Ethnographic Perspective. In *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 71-89.

[85] See: HASEBRINK, U., HEPP, A.: How to Research Cross-Media Practices? Investigating Media Repertoires and Media Ensembles. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 362-377.

[86] See: HEPP, A., BERG, M., ROITSCH, C.: A Processual Concept of Media Generation: The Media-Generational Positioning of Elderly People. In *Nordicom Review*, 2017, Vol. 38, No. S1, p. 109-122.

reflected upon in their everyday lives.[87] Qualitative media diaries may also differ in openness. They can be implemented as fully open-ended tools, but also use standardized elements in combination with open-ended questions.[88] For the evaluation, *MAXQDA* was used,[89] a program that offers tools for organizing and analyzing qualitative data from text, audio, image, audiovisual, and bibliographic files.

This article has taken advantage of the diary-based methodology used in the research of the *MEDIADELCOM* project. Discoveries of the diaries are assessed and compared to answer following research questions:

RQ$_1$: What are the main patterns of media usage in Latvian and Slovakian families in the intergenerational context?

RQ$_2$: How (if at all) is the media usage and news consumption by younger members of families (so called Generation Z) different from their parents' media usage and news consumption?

RQ$_3$: Are the family everyday practices in news consumption leading to a supportive environment for the development of deliberative communication practices and skills and are young people able to change it, i.e. do families talk about news, and, if yes, are students those who initiate conversations and discussions?

In the Slovak part of the research 113 essays from students of the bachelor's degree program concentrating on media and communication studies were analysed. Among this cohort, 28 individuals identified as male, while 85 individuals identified as female in the age group 19-23. Research data were collected in April 2022. In the Latvian part of the research 132 essays were analyzed from undergraduate journalism, communication and media studies students. The total number of students was 132 in the age group of 19-24. In total, there were 16 male and 116 female essays. Research data were collected in April of 2022 and 2023.

4 Results

The media diaries were primarily analyzed from the perspective of Generation Z. The adoption of this methodology was driven by the main objective of elucidating and comprehending the behavioural patterns and communication dynamics exhibited by young individuals in relation to news media consumption and news dissemination activities.

4.1 Results of the Research in Slovakia

Practices of News Use

The research data shows that participants are in contact with the media almost all day. The device through which they predominantly consume most forms of media is the mobile phone. This was confirmed by all of respondents. The preference for using a mobile device as the main technological device through which information is obtained in general has been confirmed

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[87] See: KOCH, C. et al.: "Space Means Science, Unless It's about Star Wars": A Qualitative Assessment of Science Communication Audience Segments. In *Public Understanding of Science*, 2019, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 157-175.
[88] See: YTRE-ARNE, B.: Media Use in Changing Everyday Life: How Biographical Disruption Could Destabilize Media Repertoires and Public Connection. In *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 34, No. 5, p. 488-502.
[89] Authors' note: It also includes some tools for analyzing quantitative data (e.g., mixed methods tools) and therefore allows for interpretations from the evaluation of a combination of methods and statistical evaluations. Source: *Software MAXQDA*. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://www.maxqda.com/>.

by the last 3 years by *Digital News Report* research.[90] Via mobile, respondents contact their friends, follow current stories and news on their favourite sites or influencers' sites, listen to music and podcasts, watch entertaining videos, and some follow traditional or online media sites. *"My mobile device accompanies me in some way throughout the day, either actively or passively. The reason for this is that I want to be on the phone immediately if anything happens, or text with friends and a friend I don't have nearby. It also serves as a tool for me at work and in a way I can't imagine life without this device anymore."* (Female, SK105).

Drawing from an examination of the media diaries, it is evident that their daily media consumption patterns bear a striking resemblance to one another. Eighty percent of the surveyed students indicated that they reach for their mobile phones immediately upon awakening. While still in bed, they peruse updates from friends, followed by global news, and some proceed to check school or work-related information. If time permits, they also browse entertainment websites.

Most often they use *Instagram*, *Messenger* and also *WhatsApp*. Merely five percent of respondents indicate that they deliberately refrain from media exposure in the morning, opting instead to engage actively with their mobile phones during breakfast or during their commute to school or work. During their morning routine, they typically listen to *Spotify* or have *YouTube* videos playing while performing personal hygiene tasks. Subsequently, as they commute, a majority of individuals choose to listen to music or podcasts via *Spotify*, with a portion of them opting to watch entertaining videos on platforms such as *YouTube* or *TikTok*.

The predominant activity during driving involves listening to the radio. A minority of participants activate it with the intention of enhancing their morning disposition or utilizing it as ambient audio while taking notes in the afternoon. Among the younger demographic, *Rádio Express*, *Fun rádio*, and *Rádio Europa 2* emerge as the favoured radio stations.

"I travel to school by car so I use the Spotify audio platform on my mobile phone. If I don't have the mood and time to connect Bluetooth I'm also happy for radio. My favourite radios are Fun rádio, Rádio Europe 2 and Rádio Express" (Female, SK18). During school they mainly follow social networks, during break they watch entertaining videos from *YouTube* or *TikTok*. After school or work duties are over, they relax again with fun videos from *YouTube*, *TikTok*, or listen to various educational podcasts. In the evening, they spend time watching movies from *Netflix*. Before falling asleep, they still pay attention to entertaining videos or social networks.

Traditionally, a common practice involved communal media consumption, where family members would gather in the evening to view the scheduled linear TV program. The choice of content was determined through consensus or the influence of the dominant family member. In our research, approximately two-fifths of the students said that they watched movies, series or documentaries with family, partners or friends in the evening, with agreement being the predominant mode of choice. An interesting finding is that almost equal proportions are media content from television production and from the streaming platform *Netflix*, one-fifth each. However, more than half of the students did not comment on this fact.

Family Talks about the News

Family talks about the news in the media is a topic that touches on communication and interaction between family members regarding current events, topics and news. This form of family communication provides an opportunity to share information, opinions and impressions about social, political and cultural issues that affect the world around them. By discussing the news, family members can enrich each other with new knowledge and perspectives, which can foster mutual understanding and togetherness. More than three quarters of respondents talk

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90   See: NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford : Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-28]. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf>.

to their families about the news in the media. Themes such as politics and political situations, misinformation and hoaxes, Covid, war or other current events at home and abroad are the most frequently mentioned words in respondents' answers on this topic.

This aspect of family cohabitation may have several causes and influences. Among the most common ones we can mention include: discussions of current events in the media which can help to educate and inform family members; parents can use these opportunities to teach children critical thinking and understanding of the world around them. Diddi a LaRose state that those who have more frequent news discussions in their families tend to be more active consumers of news and have a better awareness of world events.[91] For this group, we observed an interesting trend. We found that older children have an impact on the education of their parents and grandparents. Although these are now adult children, we observed a common phenomenon where parents took the initiative in educating their children and explaining news information. This trend may be rooted in two main factors. First, we found that children show less interest in watching news in traditional media (television, radio, print periodicals). Second, we can conclude that they prefer to get their information from superficial sources on social media, where information is often presented in a very short and fast-changing format, e.g., they consider news on *Refresher* to be very popular and trustworthy. On the topic of the quality of news coverage, the news website *Refresher* was mentioned by almost half of respondents, in most cases in a positive sense. *Refresher* is one of the most visited web sites for young people. This corroborates the results of research by Boczkowski et al., which found that young people encounter news casually, rather than actively seeking it out, as part of their constant connectivity through social media.[92] This approach does not differentiate news from other types of information, such as posts from friends and family on social media. It is also associated with low levels of attention to information: young users click on news stories sporadically, if at all, and mostly interact with them in a superficial way.

From the individual statements, we can select those that point to the importance of explaining to younger generations the context and issues related to news in the media. *"Whatever topic we are really talking about, my mother is the person thanks to whom a lot of information, events and so the overall functionality of the world gives me a whole new dimension"* (Male, SK53). *"My dad is the type of person who has at least some insight in almost every field, so he can often give me advice"* (Male, SK111).

When families talk about news and important topics, it can foster a sense of belonging and support within the family. Family members may feel that they have common interests and share values, which can strengthen family bonds. *"I mostly talk to my parents about political and world affairs, but of course also about the information we have come across throughout the day. I always come to them if something interests or offends me"* (Female, SK34). Overall, discussions about the news in the media have beneficial effects in the family, contributing to a better and more informed family life. These conversations can create awareness of the world around us and strengthen family relationships at the same time.

Different events and news in the media can be emotionally charged and can cover sensitive topics such as political events, military conflicts, environmental, social or economic issues or health crises. Family discussions can provide a space for expressing emotions (both positive and negative), coping with stress and sharing feelings of safety and support. In our research, we identified repeated accounts that suggest that shared family discussion, particularly between elderly parents and their offspring, can be disrupted by disagreements on certain topics, such

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[91]   See: DIDDI, A., LAROSE, R.: Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits among College Students in an Internet Environment. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 2006, Vol. 50, No. 2, p. 193-210.

[92]   See: BOCZKOWSKI, P. et al.: Incidental News: How Young People Consume News on Social Media. In BUI, T. X., SPRAGUE, R. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS 2017)*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2017, p. 1785-1792.

as the war in Ukraine, religious beliefs, or the Covid-19 pandemic. Children often express the view that grandparents are prone to misinformation, which contributes to negative perceptions of these discussions. *"I can most often argue with my grandparents, especially on topics related to corona, vaccinations, abortion, religious topics and the conflict in Ukraine"* (Female, SK26). *"My family and I sometimes have a difference of opinion, but that is normal as there is a difference in age"* (Male, SK108). *"Sometimes it ends up in a more acrimonious exchange of views, but we almost always agree on at least some things"* (Male, SK111).

Family conversations about the news can provide opportunities to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills. In general, parents can teach children how to verify sources of information, recognize manipulative techniques, and understand different perspectives. As children get older, their ability to participate in their relatives' education and promote critical thinking increases.[93] When children are able to think critically, they can act as teachers to their relatives, leading to mutually beneficial interactions within the family. Parents and older relatives can learn new knowledge, digital skills, and current trends from children, especially in the online environment. Such family learning also boosts children's confidence in their own abilities and the feeling that their voice and opinions matter. In the statements of our respondents, we often encountered opinions about the need to discuss and educate their relatives, especially grandparents. *"With the elderly it is already more difficult when it comes to discerning true information. My grandmother is no exception and often unfortunately considers not entirely true information from her friends to be true. That's why when we visit her, which we repeat every weekend, we always have discussions about the media and the content that reaches her"* (Female, SK37).

Family Does Not Talk about News

In the evaluation, we also examined the responses of those who said they do not talk to their family about news in the media. We found this exact statement from only 6.5% of respondents; a third of respondents did not comment on this topic at all. A family that does not talk about news in the media may have different reasons and motivations behind this choice. This situation can be interesting and brings with it a number of aspects worth considering. News in the media often brings negative events and tragedies that can negatively affect the mood and mental health of individuals. Some families agree not to unnecessarily expose themselves to negative topics and instead focus on the positive and personal aspects of life. *"As for news in the media and politics, I don't like to talk about this topic either because I know that everyone has a different opinion on it, as it is with everything, but also many times it ends up in an argument"* (Female, SK107). *"We talk about news or current affairs sporadically at home, as we have different opinions and the debate leads to an argument 90% of the time. In case my parents open such a discussion, I usually do not react because I like them and I do not want to argue"* (Female, SK122).

There is a lot of debate at the moment about the credibility of the media and its propensity to manipulate information. As a result, some families choose not to rely on media reports and prefer to seek information elsewhere, such as through verified sources or direct experience.

Initiator of Discussions on News

The vast majority of students do not mention the initiators of the news interviews. We found only five essays that mention them. Conversations are initiated either by parents or by the students themselves. *"The members of my household do not follow the news and are not interested in it; the vast majority of information is brought into the household by me and then discussed by them. I am also the most active one in the family as I initiate these conversations"* (Male, SK64).

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[93] See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Developing Social Media Literacy: How Children Learn to Interpret Risky Opportunities on Social Network Sites. In *Communications. The European Journal of Communication Research*, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 283-303.

The dearth of mentions regarding news interview initiators among generation Z is indicative of the complexity of their engagement with current affairs. While some students take it upon themselves to initiate these discussions within their families, others rely on friends or peers who are passionate about staying informed. These distinct approaches emphasize the multifaceted nature of news engagement among students and highlight the crucial roles played by individuals in their immediate social circles.

Media Use

The most used social network for them is *Instagram*. Nine out of ten students ranked it as the network they use most often. *"I follow not only celebrities, influencers and friends on Instagram, but also various information profiles such as Startitup, Interezsk, Denník N or zomriofficial"* (Female, SK1). Other social networking sites through which they communicate with friends and family are *WhatsApp*, *Messenger*, with some stating that they only have *Facebook* because of *Messenger* so that they can communicate with the older generation. Even one-twentieth of students stated that they refuse to use *Facebook*. *"I probably wouldn't include Facebook among the apps I use every day anymore, because I've gotten tired of it lately and I spend very little time on it"* (Female, SK1). A small number of students also mention using *Twitter* in their essays. These findings of ours are similar to the results from *Trilia* and *Orogina*'s research, who highlight that up to 90% of Generation Z consume content via social media, with only 29% also consuming it via traditional television.[94]

Most media content is received by students via mobile devices or computers (especially at school and in the evening). The computer often replaces the TV screen, or vice versa – the TV screen serves as a large monitor through which they watch films and series. *"The medium I don't watch at all is TV, I replace it with Netflix because there are no ads, I can watch the news on the internet, then radio because nowadays I can listen to music on Spotify without ads, and finally paper newspapers and magazines because subscriptions are cheaper on the internet and it saves paper"* (Female, SK14).

The students' statements about which media they do not follow are interesting, although about a third of the respondents did not comment on this topic. Half of the students, representatives of Generation Z, said that they do not watch television. Critical statements about television were that there are a lot of advertisements on television, that television is not attractive to them, and that they can find and watch films and series via the internet or the streaming platform Netflix. *"There has been no TV in our household for many years, I am very grateful that we have been able to replace this medium with other media. We are not so 'forced' to watch and listen to something that someone else is just serving us"* (Female, SK53). If they watch TV, a very common reason is that they watch it with their parents or grandparents, or they put it on in the background but don't pay attention to it, or they turn it on if they want to watch an interesting film. *"I only watch TV news when I am visiting my grandparents or when we have the TV on at home and I forget to turn it off"* (Female, SK12).

The second medium most rejected by respondents was newspapers and magazines. It was by two-fifths of the respondents. Similar findings are reported by Watson, who states that the preferred news source for Generation Z is social media.[95] The main reason given for rejecting printed newspapers in most of our respondents' statements was that they can find everything they need online and much more quickly than in print. *"I don't use print media like magazines and newspapers at all, for the reason that it is more expensive and time consuming as I have to go to the shop and buy them, but I also find it outdated and so useless as nowadays I can find*

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[94] *Meet Gen Z: The Social Generation. Part 2.* Boston, MA : Trilia/Origin, 2019, p. 5. [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <https://brand-news.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Gen-Z-Report.pdf>.

[95] WATSON, A.: *Gen Z News Consumption in the United States – Statistics & Facts*. [online]. [2023-07-29]. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/topics/9902/gen-z-news-consumption-in-the-us/#topicOverview>.

everything I need on the internet" (Female, SK36). Exceptionally, some said they buy lifestyle magazines *Eva* and *Emma* or that they read print newspapers and magazines at home when their parents or grandparents buy them.

One-third of our respondents said that they consciously refuse radio broadcasting. The main reason they gave for not listening to linear broadcasts was that it was important for them to listen only to music or shows/podcasts of their choice and not to have broadcasts interrupted by commercials. *"Radio is no longer one of the media I use on a daily basis because it has been replaced by my phone, specifically the Spotify platform where I can choose and play what I'm in the mood for"* (Female, SK83).

Respondents of our research get information about events at home and in the world from the portals *refresher.sk*, *Startitup.sk*, *Interez.sk* or *zomriofficial* and through social media networks *Denník SME*, *Denník N* or *Aktuality.sk*. Some of them also follow linear news programmes from TV stations – *Televízia TA3*, *TV Markíza* or *RTVS*. Occasionally, our respondents reported that they also watch foreign media, for example *CNN* or *BBC News*. *"I also watch these networks during the day because I follow various websites such as Aktuality.sk, Interezsk or Denník Sme, where news from home and from different parts of the Earth are published. On Aktuality.sk and Denník Sme I mainly follow political events in Slovakia and currently also the situation in Ukraine, which I usually check in the afternoon. I like to follow the Interezsk profile the most, because it publishes various facts, interesting facts and events from different areas, and sometimes also various quizzes"* (Female, 22 years old, SK80).

Instead of linear TV, they prefer streaming platforms, especially *Netflix*, but also pay-TV services such as *HBO* or *HBO MAX*. Among auditory platforms, they seek entertainment on *Apple Podcasts* (especially music) and on *Spotify* (various types of podcasts).

4.2 Results of the Research in Latvia

Practices of News Use

The majority (two-thirds) of families evaluated in the study consume news (and other types of content) individually. It is especially true for members of Generation Z. Since the use of various gadgets, media, apps and information sources is an essential part of everyday life, most students do not separate the use of news from entertainment and solving practical issues in the digital environment (study work, planning public transport use, organising entertainment, making notes during lectures etc.) and communication with other people (e.g., checking *WhatsApp* messages, communication with fellow students, work colleagues, relatives).

For most, news is the smallest part of the daily information that appears in front of their eyes on smartphones or computer screens. Other types of information, mostly entertainment of various genres (*TikTok* videos, music, movies, TV series) are much more important than media news. These students' attitudes toward news can be characterised by the "people's theory",[96] which is identified by the belief that "the news will find me" or "if something important happens, I will know about it". These students are more likely to state that the news causes stress, increases the amount of negative information, causes fatigue, and encourages news avoidance.[97] Therefore, part of the students analysed in the study deliberately avoid regularly following the daily news. However, there is a small group of students who have developed a habit of regularly consuming professional media news via large digital media sites. *"Usually, I read the news on lsm.lv (Public service media site), but from my father, who always reads news*

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[96] See: NIELSEN, R. K.: Folk Theories of Journalism: The Many Faces of a Local Newspaper. In *Journalism Studies*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 840-848.
[97] See: KARLSEN, R., BEYER, A., STEEN-JOHNSEN, K.: Do High-Choice Media Environments Facilitate News Avoidance? A Longitudinal Study 1997-2016. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2020, Vol. 64, No. 5, p. 794-814.

on delfi.lv on weekdays, I have also been influenced to look for news on delfi.lv (largest digitally born media in Latvia)" (Female, LV58399).

In fact, students who purposefully and regularly search for news on professional media websites both use information from other media (including following the news on TV if it is turned on at home, read books etc.) and their media composition is more diverse, which means that they do not only use social networking sites, but the information is obtained from different sources. This indicates greater activity in the process of media use.

A third of the students explain in their essays the situation of collective news usage, which is mostly related to the physical presence of the family in the same room and joint activities, such as eating dinner. Situations of collective media use have been recorded in essays both by students who actively use various media and by students who do not find regular following of the professional news essential. The joint consumption of news is random, depends on the rhythm of the day and is related to the media choice of other family members.

Collective news usage frames daily activities, it happens both in the morning and in the evening, when the whole family meets at home, and when driving a car, if several family members, including a student, go to university or work in the same car.

For the most part, shared news consumption in students' essays is described as inactive, the TV or radio is turned on in the background of other activities, because *"I unconsciously watch the evening Panorama"* (Female, LV58399), parents choose the content. *"Usually, our media day starts early in the morning. Since my whole family is characterised by collective media use, we use the kitchen TV for this purpose"* (Female, LV63526).

It is important to clarify that news is not the only and not the main content collectively used in the family. Many students note that they watch their favourite movies, series, popular music concerts and sports broadcasts together with their families. The media is thus a part of the family's time spent together, besides, the possibilities of smart TVs to watch content from *YouTube* or *Netflix* or other video streaming platforms together are increasingly important.

News consumption is characterised by three interrelated trends. Most students learn the news using social networking platforms. These students admit that their level of awareness is superficial, they know events only at the level of headlines.[98] Some students follow the accounts of professional news media on social media. The third group, which is small, purposefully goes to news sites to regularly get acquainted with current information. These students more often discuss the news with family members and are the initiators of these discussions, sometimes focusing on evaluating the credibility of the news and discussing cases of misinformation. This means that professional media and other information are clearly identified and separated by more active and news-interested students.

Family Is Talking about the News

More than two thirds of researched students mentioned that news or media in general are sometimes discussed by their family members even if media are used separately: *"Although the family consumes media mostly individually, we often share interesting content with each other and sometimes discuss it in the evenings or weekends when we are together"* (Female, LV71027). However, in most of the families it is not a regular practice.

Conversations about the news in student families describe not only the most current events (the course of the pandemic, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, state security issues), but also common interests of family members, for example, pets and gardening. Local news is important for those students who study in the capital Riga, but on weekends, when travelling to their hometowns to meet with their parents, family members discuss local events

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[98] KURCALTE, O. et al.: *Sabiedrisko mediju prioritāro mērķauditoriju izpēte. Kvalitatīvais pētījums.* [*Research on Priority Audiences for Public Service Media. Qualitative Research*]. Riga : Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.seplp.lv/lv/media/789/download?attachment>.

and people. This indirectly strengthens students' identity related to their place of birth. It is interesting that conversations on news with family members are sometimes moving on-line or are at least partly supported by social media, since family members share interesting news between themselves to discuss: *"Each family member shares what she/he has read, seen on news portals, as well as private publications based on verified content on personal social media accounts. Until the beginning of the war* (Russia's invasion in Ukraine – auth.)*, the family often talked about educational and cultural news. Other types of media content are also discussed in the family, for example, the statements of some persons, current topics"* (Female, LV63138).

A wide spectrum of news is discussed, from global events to local politics or the private lives of entertainment personalities. In conversations, family members form their opinion on the current situation, they help to compare the perspectives and values in the family and parents try to form their children's ethical code and propose sets of good/bad practices. But also young people sometimes promote specific topics to develop their family's media literacy or interest in news. In this context, usage of media itself is discussed.

However, some students point out that discussions are limited by differences of opinion, such as on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and, in such cases, students avoid topics that could cause controversy or even conflict during family time together. *"In our family, only Yuriy* (mother's husband – auth.) *talks about the news. We don't discuss anything with him, because we have different opinions and therefore a conflict can arise"* (Female, LV71326).

Conversations about the news and the ability to exchange opinions characterises the family relationship, the level of empathy and tolerance. Thus, for students the family is not always a place where it is possible to freely, with no risk, exchange thoughts on controversial issues when discussing current news.

Regularly talking about news or media content provides an opportunity to find out not only shared views, but also different views in families regarding the use of media and news. Some students believe that *"the use of serious news does not correspond to my age"*, others are simply not interested in socio-political issues, because *"the media is mostly used for entertainment"*. The use of news and its discussion with parents can be associated with part of the growing up process, becoming mature. It characterises the life and range of interests of an adult from the students' point of view. *"Conversations in the house are regular and usually discuss information on any topic that has been heard or seen in the media, however they are divided by age groups. My cousins talked to me about current videos and pictures taken from social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, but adults tend to talk more about politics, economics, and advertisements that have been seen on TV channels. The only aspect that both age groups have in common in creating a conversation related to the media is movies and series"* (Female, LV71233). *"Mostly we discuss topics of economy, politics, and world news. The brother rarely engages in discussions, which is due to his young age"* (Male, LV70102).

The availability of different media, the fragmentation and the hybridity of the media environment also affect whether families talk about the news. *"The news is rarely a topic of conversation in the family, sometimes the biggest topics that are happening in the world are discussed - the war in Ukraine, the elections, the work and decisions of the Parliament, etc. Other media content is discussed only when it comes to common friends and their published content on social media, other topics are not discussed because each participant has too different filter bubbles"* (Male, LV71076).

These conversations about current events suggest whether media and news conversations are one of the platforms where a pluralistic environment of opinion is still possible or not. At the same time, it is not always clear whether what is common to a family is defined by media technologies and devices, or the content consumed together, or interest, or ideas about what is characteristic of a person in the media context at a particular stage of their life.

Initiator of Discussion on News

In the essay, every tenth student identified a person who encourages conversations about the news in the family. In most cases, it is a parent or grandparent who initiates the discussion: *"Dad is using the computer next door in his office with the door open. At such moments, you can occasionally hear dad asking mom something he overheard from the TV or informing mom about some new news from the news media"* (Male, LV62146). *"Mom often likes to tell what she has heard on the radio, and it leads to discussions about current events, as well as what she sees on Facebook, often it leads to conversations about a mutual acquaintance (news)"* (Female, LV50637).

Sometimes students mention themselves leading conversations about the news, justifying it with the information obtained during their studies and the desire to discuss it with their parents: *"Becoming a journalist I am teaching my family members..."* (Female, LV63334).

Family Does Not Talk about the News

In very rare cases, explicit information appears in student essays that families do not discuss news. Individual students have mentioned this, explaining that the family is interested in other issues, personal events, and relationships. *"Dad mostly does not choose what he has seen or heard in the media as topics of conversation. Mom and my sister discuss topics that are well known to both, such as the events of the day, personal feelings and the like"* (Male, LV70081).

Differences in interests determined by socio-demographic characteristics and the hyper-individualism of media use are mentioned when explaining why it is not customary to talk about the news in the family. *"News in the media do not particularly serve as a topic of conversation for family members, because age and gender differences are visible"* (Female, LV63580).

These explanations identify a situation where sharing in the digital environment has become one of the most important processes of media use,[99] some young people do not transfer it to the family environment. *"Obviously we all have our own interests, so often, even when we're around, we don't share the information we get from our favourite media unless it's important news"* (Female, LV71087).

Media Use

Students who have evaluated their repertoire of media use in detail are very self-critical about the impact and time expenditure of media, they are concerned that media use is related to time killing, often it is just during a fun *TikTok* when time passes unnoticed. The use of media by students who work in parallel with their studies differs. They have much less time for social networking platforms and entertaining content.

Constant checking of information on at least two social networking platforms, direct communication on messaging sites shows ritualised media use[100] both in the group of students who mostly use media individually and those who use media together with parents or roommates. Even when watching TV in the living room of their family home or listening to the radio in their parents' car, students use their smartphones in parallel. Instrumentalized and active media use, when purposefully searching for information for studies or work, stimulating conversations about news in the family, is characteristic of a small part of researched students.

Respondents state that both younger and older media users check news and communicate on *Whatsapp*, *Snapchat* or *Instagram*, and use an e-mail platform to communicate both for work and personal life matters. In some cases it is part of the conditions of a job or studies.

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99 See: STIEGLITZ, S., DANG-XUAN, L.: Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media − Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior. In *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 2013, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 217-248.
100 See: MCQUAIL, D.: *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6th Edition. London : Sage Publications, 2010. See also: MCQUAIL, D., DEUZE, M.: *McQuail's Media and Mass Communication Theory.* London : Sage Publication, 2020.

Sometimes affiliation to certain applications is entangled in a deeply mediatized lifestyle as a form of interveillance.[101] The usage is even perceived by the user as "required": "*[..] during the day BeReal was used, because it was required by the application itself by asking to publish next everyday picture*" (Male, LV63581).

Some of the students, comparing their and their parents' use of media, are surprised that parents and especially grandparents use the media to the same extent, spend a lot of time on social networking sites and are skilled at using various news sources. They admire their grandparents when they overcome difficulties and learn the possibilities of digital technologies and now freely integrate them into their daily lives. As the students conclude, the media is used to the same extent, but the topics of interests and applications are different.

In only a few cases, arrogance is expressed that representatives of the older generations are less skilled in the use of digital media and devices. A positive surprise about their closest family members media use is much more often expressed, and students admit that they did not know this before and that they had stereotypes about their parents and grandparents' media consumption habits.

Media use in families is determined by available media technologies and the interests of each family member. The pandemic may have increased individualised news and media use, when professional and educational activities were moved to family residences in a short period of time, because "*We don't use media together, mom occupies the living room, I use them in my room – on my computer and phone*" (Female, LV55143).

Describing the media usage environment at home, many students advise that every room and every member of the family has a TV set, a computer, a tablet and, of course, a smart phone. These options determine both the time of media use and the selected content. This situation brings to mind Deuze's metaphor of "silent disco" discussing the commonalities and differences of media usage process when each partygoer listens to different music, but everyone dances together.[102]

5 Discussion

The use of media by younger audiences is very important from the perspective of the media normative approach and deliberative democracy theory. The interest of young media users in current events, the ability to use professional media information affects both the possibilities of civic participation and the development of journalism in a hybrid media environment.[103] The daily practices of using news are also characterised by essential media literacy skills, which are especially important in the media ecosystem where misinformation, fake news, and propaganda are constantly present.

It must be admitted that media literacy issues are not popular in family conversations about the news, issues such as security (in connection with the war in Ukraine), locality (if the news touches on known places) and personalities (if the news mentions well-known people) are more important in these conversations. However, few students admit that professional media are used to get access to trustable information and few of them have been discussing deception and fake news issues with their parents, emphasising the importance of quality news sources.

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[101] See: JANSSON, A.: Perceptions of Surveillance: Reflexivity and Trust in a Mediatized World (the Case of Sweden). In *European Journal of Communication*, 2012, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 410-427.

[102] KLIMKIEWICZ, B.: *Pluralism in a Hybrid Media Environment from the User Perspective.* Fiesole : European University Institute, 2019, p. 4. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/65604/CMPF_2019_02.pdf?sequence=4>.

[103] Ibidem.

When looking at data on media literacy, we can observe media consumption determined by technological discourse, i.e. the availability of different technologies, content diversity and social media algorithms create a media consumption environment that directs and develops students as media audiences' approaches to media consumption. There are a number of threats to this type of media consumption. There are reasonable grounds for concern about students' indiscriminate or uninterested access to a variety of significant media messages whose fragmented or distorted consumption is closely linked to the understanding of geopolitical topics, personal digital security, the risks of democratisation and issues of media addiction.

Fragmented and superficial media consumption also abounds with cases where students demonstrate the typical practice of using multiple smart devices, both individually and collectively, at the same time, thereby combining news content with entertainment or communication on social media. We can often see that media consumption is also determined by a number of external factors such as, for instance, regular usage of public or private transport, or cases when media consumption has become a nightly ritual, which, of course, is seen as a contemporary trend in media consumption. If a student is living with their parents, their media usage and news consumption patterns continue to have an impact on the student's everyday life in terms of morning infotainment programs on TV, evening TV news or preferred radio stations. However, the diaries do not demonstrate any presence of individual or collective reflection that would follow media consumption, which, in the context of media literacy, rather highlights the passivity of the audience and to some extent echoes the findings of the *Latvian Facts* study, which showed that young people in Latvia have a high confidence in social media content (49%) and practise uncritical sharing of unverified information (40%).[104] The situation is similar in Slovakia, where researchers found that up to 41% of young people believed misinformation.[105]

One of the most important aspects of media literacy is the self-regulation ability with a view to finding a balance in quality media consumption for awareness, education, communication and entertainment. Although the students do not refer to specific tactics for organising their media consumption, some diaries display efforts to construct a personal media consumption ecology, seeking a balance between the time devoted to journalism content, educational needs, entertainment and communication. Most diaries show a strong reliance on media consumption as a random flow of coincidences, and there is confidence in the content shared by friends. This passive approach to media consumption expressed in the diaries is rather consistent with the study by *Latvian Facts*, where 58% of young people believe that media literacy and a decrease in the spread of false information could be facilitated by tighter controls and harsher penalties for dissemination of fake news.[106] This coincides with the interpretation of media literacy within the paradigm of a protectionist approach, where media literacy is based on regulatory constraints and repressive mechanisms that treat media audiences as passive, threatened and in need of protection.

At the same time Generation Z prefers to enjoy more choice, variation and autonomy in selecting content types and channels of communication. They claim to choose *Spotify* over radio and *Netflix* over TV because it gives the user an illusion of more control. This motivation, however, plays out in the mostly entertainment content used and foregrounds the individual, not the society as a collective.

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[104] See: *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem.* [*Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population*]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>.

[105] GREŠKOVIČOVÁ, K. et al.: Superlatives, Clickbaits, Appeals to Authority, Poor Grammar, or Boldface: Is Editorial Style Related to the Credibility of Online Health Messages. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940903>.

[106] See: *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem.* [*Study on Media Literacy and Media Usage Habits of Latvian Population*]. Riga : NEPLP/Latvijas Fakti, 2022. [online]. [2023-08-24]. Available at: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5313/download?attachment>.

The analysis of the data from our research suggests that digital technologies break down the boundaries between generations,[107] however, we see that the process of media use creates new gaps, because the media use is characterised by different content and functions, which contribute to the individualisation, alienation and loneliness of members of the same family. According to media consumption trends, family members who each use their own smartphone, computer, tablet, and TV set rarely talk about media content that is important to all.

To understand the generations in our study in the context of media use, it is important to identify the historical events that determine the personality formation of students and their parents. The formative years (age from 17 to 25 years)[108] of students' parents are characterised by the dramatic socio-economic transformation, when Latvia and Slovakia regained their independence and re-created their national identity; the development of the free media system played an important role in this process. Therefore, Manheim's defined generation characteristics factors "location" and "actuality"[109] are important because the mediatised experience of people born at the same time in Slovakia and Latvia can be seen through the lens of significant historical events and development of media technologies that shaped culture. The nature of the relationship between students and their families in the process of media use is consistent with Bolin's idea that the structure of emotions, perceptions and reactions shared by generations reflects dramatic events experienced in a specific geographical location and society.[110] Moreover, current events such as the recent pandemic and the ongoing war caused by Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, firstly, inevitably mark the students' formative years, and secondly, they form a common emotional structure that binds the individual to society; thirdly, they connect generations because the emotions and experiences of the immediate and everyday mediated reality of war reveal much more than individuals' media repertoires or media diets.

6 Conclusion

The analysis of diaries about family media usage showed that in most families there is the intergenerational gap in media usage patterns, and with technological advancements the family members use their media mostly separately, so there is less and less opportunity and motivation for collective use and discussion on media. This shows the risk which can result in individualisation, alienation and loneliness of family members and generations. Gen Z uses media clearly different from older generations. Even if their parents and even grandparents developed patterns of using computers, tablets, social media and smartphones there is a difference in both – what and how it is used. Younger people in both countries prefer *Instagram*, *WhatsApp* and also *Snapchat* and *Messenger*, sometimes *Facebook* and *Youtube*, and play music and films on *Spotify* and *Netflix*. Only part of them search for quality news and only rare persons read printed press, mostly niche media. Older generations use *Youtube*, *Facebook*, *Messenger*, *draugiem.lv*, have habits to use TV and radio (mostly as a background medium), but quickly adopt media like *Netflix* or *Spotify*, use *Youtube* and other sites that can replace traditional media in the function TV and radio served. Family has a certain impact on the content priorities of young people, however, the main influence in terms of media, devices, and content formats

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[107] See: OPERMANN, S.: Understanding Changing News Media Use: Generations and Their Media Vocabulary. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 123-146.

[108] See: BOLIN, G.: Generational "We-Sense", "They-Sense" and Narrative: An Epistemological Approach to Media and Social Change. In *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de las Ciencias Sociales*, 2019, Vol. 42, p. 21-36.

[109] See: MANNHEIM, K.: The Problem of Generations. In KECSKEMETI, P. (ed.): *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-320.

[110] BOLIN, G., SKOGERBØ, E.: Age, Generation and the Media. In *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3-14.

comes supposedly from the peer environment or, in the form of new technology-based habits and lifestyles, – form the media itself. In addition most of the young use media much more and in more diverse ways.

For this research it is significant that only a small part of all young people have habits like visiting quality news sites on purpose or regularly, searching for quality news, and comparing news from different sources. Even if there is a part of students in both countries who clearly indicate it and are very conscious of the importance of this, most of the Gen Z representatives encounter news casually through social media, rather than actively seeking it out, as part of their constant connectivity through social media. The flexible shifting between channels and media on smart phones and internet connected computers and the integration of the media consumption directly into the experience of living space and time are deepening the gap between older and younger generations and the risk for the young of losing the significance of news as a source of credible information needed for deliberation, opinion making and participation in the democratic processes.

The perceived importance of the news and risks for the consumer are still causing discussions among family members even if they are not regular. This attitude in Slovakia is observed slightly more often than in Latvia. In those conversations, family members who are more motivated to use news and/or are more inclined to socially active roles are initiators, and they are aware of the informational and educational aspects of those conversations. It must be said that also students in some families become the initiators. However, some of the families consciously avoid such a conversation because of disagreement within family or fear, emotional suffering, stress and other mental damages the news content can bring. So the question on family practices leading to a supportive environment for the development of deliberative communication practices and skills can only be partially answered positively. There are families where it is so (and the young person is the initiator) and families that avoid news and conversations about news, whereas the majority of Gen Z people consume news occasionally, and the majority of families only occasionally talk about news. Because this situation can be interpreted as the reaction on past traumas (in the case of parents and grandparents) and fears and stresses of the unstable socioeconomic and geopolitical situation (in the experience of Gen Z in Latvia and Slovakia), deliberation and discussion for democratic participation and political action must be a matter of particular purposeful education in the context of media literacy.

The results of this research also make us think about the influence of the media environment on the media and its content in both countries. In both Latvia and Slovakia there is a significant dependence of the media sector on advertising. This dependence leads to a preference for topics or approaches that gain more advertising space, which could influence the choice of certain topics in the media.

In addition, there are concerns about political control of the media and its independence. In both countries there are attempts to influence the content of the media, which could affect the objectivity and quality of journalistic work. These concerns about media independence are a key factor in the context of democracy and media freedom and one of the reasons why Generation Z avoids the news media.

The ethnic structure of both countries is another factor that influences media content. Latvia has a significant Latvian majority and a Russian minority, which is reflected in the media and its content. This ethnic diversity can lead to different perspectives and interests in media coverage, not only on political issues but also on cultural and social topics.

Both countries face challenges related to disinformation campaigns on social networks and online media. These platforms have a huge reach and allow the rapid dissemination of unverified information, which can have serious consequences for public opinion and political discourse. Disinformation activities can come from a variety of sources, including foreign actors such as the Russian government and its allies. These activities may be aimed at influencing public opinion and fuelling polarisation within the country.

Disinformation and low trust in the institutions of the European Union and NATO can be found in the media of both countries, negatively impacting foreign policy and citizens' perception of these organizations. Therefore, it is important for both the media and the public to be capable of recognizing and exposing disinformation activities and actors and to actively work towards maintaining a healthy media environment and promoting information literacy.

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