

HARD NEWS AND TABLOID STORIES SIDE BY SIDE IN LEADING LATVIAN NEWS MEDIA

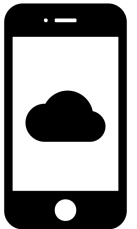
Mg. sc. soc. Raivis Vilūns

28.06.2019

Digital space

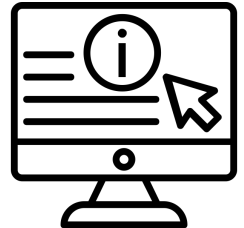
For the last twenty years virtual news consumption, or more precisely online media has steadily been outpacing all the classical media formats one by one. As with the development and increasing accessibility of devices like tablet computers and smartphones, more and more people everyday choose to use online media.

- 81,6% of households have access to the internet (CSP, 2018)
- 51,9% of all Latvians read news online (CSP, 2019)



Online news media

- Market leader is Delfi.lv with 800 000 visits per month (Gemius, 2019)
- Followed by Tvnet.lv (680 000) and Jauns.lv (530 000)
- Others are closely following



Pressure driven (enabled) by technology

- Intense economic pressure
- Need to be the “first one to break the story”
- Technologically driven pressure, but also pressure to use and embrace technologies

The question is: **does this pressure somehow influences the way media content is created, generated and presented?**



Different opinions on the effects

- Journalists admit to feeling time pressure (Harro–Loit, Josephi, 2019)
- Evidence of more factual mistakes when compared to print media (Karlsson, 2011, 286)
- In Chile the results are the opposite - online media is seen as more serious and reliable (Mellado et. al. 2018)
- While in Sweden in political reporting in 2010 there were no significant differences (Gehrsetti, 2014, 387)

No direct data about Latvia



Tabloid value adoption

Tabloid style media often are characterized by the continuous path finding to the “simple” audience using themes and means of expression that are familiar to the common man (Conboy 2005).

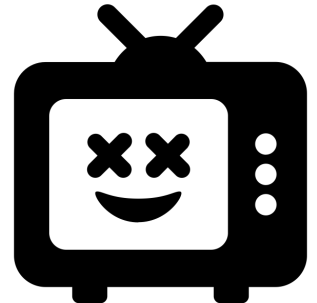
With pressure to gain new audiences media sites adopt clickbait style headlines, expand topics that they are reporting on etc. (Jóhannsdóttir, 2018)



Soft news

Gaye Tuchman (1973) by interviewing media professionals ascertained that soft news is human interest stories, that are not deemed newsworthy and don't concern government policy, broad social issues.

Recent studies (Boukes, Boomgaarden, 2015) show that hard news content presented in a soft way informs broader audiences and reaches people that classical hard news media can't.



Hard news - Soft news - Other news

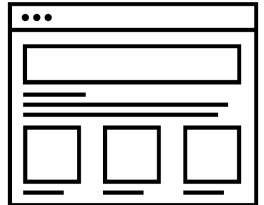
- Scholars find the categorization approach of soft vs hard news too limiting (Patterson, 2000, Lehman–Wilzig, Seletzky, 2010, 44). They offer terms - general news and other news.
- Hybrid news (infotainment)

The question is: **Does the tabloid content, soft and hybrid news and other types of content effects that hard news. Do different types of news engage or converge with each other?**



Problems with online media research

- Everything is in a constantly changing state
- News content is constantly being changed and updated
- Front pages are curated
- Archives are unreliable
- People use social media as a way to access the news

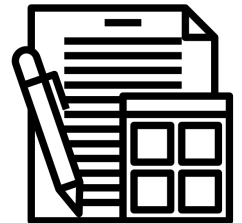


Pilot study of Delfi.lv

The main goal is to find a way how to study online news content as a whole, as an ecosystem

Pilot test

- Data was gathered and analysed by using quantitative content analysis
- From 21st of June till 26th of June as random times with random intervals the frontpage was achieved and TOP 7 news stores were added to the data.
- The news stories were opened and **related stories** (automated solution most online news media use) were archived



Pilot study results

- 80% of the content displayed on the front page can be considered hard news (economics, politics, social issues)
 - Of those 90% about 30% where international news
- 10% related to national holidays
- 10% related to sports events
- One human interest story about wild bears
- No tabloid style stories

Related content in almost all cases is from the same type of news block

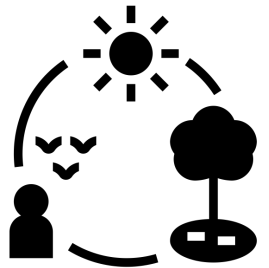
Conclusion - different types of content don't mix, front pages upper part is left to hard news and important events (national holidays, sport events etc)

Results are inconclusive. Data set could be considered to limited.



Research perspectives

- There are only few studies done that would talk about digital media as a “one stop digital space”, there is lack of research that would try to understand how every news story coexists with other news story.
- The focus should be on the way tabloid or soft news style content influences the perception of the digital news media, how the news story converge with hyperlinks and related content modules.
- The ecosystem of a news media site



References (1)

- Andersson, U. (2013). From Broadsheet to Tabloid: Content changes in Swedish newspapers in the light of a shrunken size. *Observatorio Journal*, 7(4), 1–21.
- Brikše, I. (2016). Sabiedriskā labuma radīšana digitālo mediju vidē. Grām.: Brikše, I. *Komunikācija. Mediji. Universitāte*. Rīga: Mansards. 145.–167. lpp.
- Buhl, F., Günther, E., & Quandt, T. (2018). Observing the Dynamics of the Online News Ecosystem: News diffusion processes among German news sites. *Journalism Studies*, 19(1), 79–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1168711>
- Boukes, M., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2015). Soft News With Hard Consequences? Introducing a Nuanced Measure of Soft Versus Hard News Exposure and Its Relationship With Political Cynicism. *Communication Research*, 42(5), 701–731. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214537520>
- Bærug, J. R. (2017). *The Collapsing Wall. Hybrid Journalism. A Comparative Study of NewsPapers and Magazines in Eight Countries in Europe*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press.
- Conboy, M. (2005). *Tabloid Britain: constructing a community through language* (1st ed). New York: Routledge.
- Franklin, B. (2014). The Future Of Journalism: In an age of digital media and economic uncertainty. *Digital Journalism*, 2(3), 254–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.930253>

References (2)

- Gans, H. (2009). Can Popularization Help the News Media? In B. Zelizer (Ed.), *The changing faces of journalism: tabloidization, technology and truthiness*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Ghersetti, M. (2014). Still the Same?: Comparing news content in online and print media. *Journalism Practice*, 8(4), 373–389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2013.813201>
- Glogger, I. (2019). Soft Spot for Soft News? Influences of Journalistic Role Conceptions on Hard and Soft News Coverage. *Journalism Studies*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1588149>
- Harro–Loit, H., & Josephi, B. (2019). Journalists’ Perception of Time Pressure: A Global Perspective. *Journalism Practice*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1623710>
- Harcup, T., & O’Neill, D. (2016). What is news?: News values revisited (again). *Journalism Studies*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193>
- Jóhannsdóttir, V. (2018). Commercialization in the Icelandic Press: An analysis of hard and soft news in major print and online media in Iceland in times of change. *Journalism*, 146488491876849. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918768494>
- Karlsson, M. (2011). The immediacy of online news, the visibility of journalistic processes and a restructuring of journalistic authority. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 12(3), 279–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884910388223>

References (3)

- Kuiken, J., Schuth, A., Spitters, M., & Marx, M. (2017). Effective Headlines of Newspaper Articles in a Digital Environment. *Digital Journalism*, 5(10), 1300–1314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1279978>
- Kultūras ministrija. (2017). Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratība. Kvantitatīvais pētījums. Rīga: Latvijas Fakti. Izgūts no: https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/Medijpratiba_petijuma%20rezultati_Latvijas%20Fakti_18_07_2017.pdf
- Lefkowitz, J. (2016). “Tabloidization” or Dual—Convergence: Quoted speech in tabloid and “quality” British newspapers 1970–2010. *Journalism Studies*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1190662>
- Lehman–Wilzig, S. N., & Seletzky, M. (2010). Hard news, soft news, ‘general’ news: The necessity and utility of an intermediate classification. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 11(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884909350642>
- Mellado, C., Humanes, M. L., Scherman, A., & Ovando, A. (2018). Do digital platforms really make a difference in content? Mapping journalistic role performance in Chilean print and online news. *Journalism*, 146488491879238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918792386>
- Nguyen, A. (2012). THE EFFECT OF SOFT NEWS ON PUBLIC ATTACHMENT TO THE NEWS: Is “infotainment” good for democracy? *Journalism Studies*, 13(5–6), 706–717. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2012.664318>

References (4)

- Norris, C. H.–B., Pippa. (2001). “To Entertain, Inform, and Educate”: Still the Role of Public Television. *Political Communication*, 18(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846001750322943>
- Prior, M. (2003). Any Good News in Soft News? The Impact of Soft News Preference on Political Knowledge. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 149–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211172>
- Plasser, F. (2005). From Hard to Soft News Standards?: How Political Journalists in Different Media Systems Evaluate the Shifting Quality of News. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 10(2), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X05277746>
- Tuchman, G. (1973). Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(1), 110–131.
- Viluns, R. (2017). Detecting Tabloidization of Online Media in Latvia. *Journal of Comparative studies*. 10 (39), 76–94.
- Vilūns, R. (2018) Tabloīdmediji. No Zelče, V. (red.). *Latvijas mediju vides daudzveidība*. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds. 284.–288. lpp

Thank you!

Mg. sc. soc. Raivis Vilūns
r.viluns@gmail.com