

**RIGA STRADIN'S UNIVERSITY**

**ANDA ROŽUKALNE**

**The Magazine Reading Patterns of Latvia's Media Audience**

**Summary of Doctoral Paper**

(Speciality – SOCIOLOGY)

**Supervisor : asoc. Prof. Sergejs Kruks**

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Department of Communication Studies

Supervisor: Asoc.prof. Sergejs Kruks

Reviewers: Prof. Vladimirs Meņšikovs (Latvia)

Asoc.prof. Dinārs Dimants (Latvia)

Asoc.prof. Aukse Balcytiene (Lithuania)

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## **The topicality of the paper and the approach to the problem**

A genuine boom of magazines has occurred in Latvia over the recent eighteen years: their number and diversity have dramatically grown. Magazines are attractive also to advertisers and thus they receive an increasingly large proportion of the money that advertisers channel into media. Compared to the other types of media, the development of magazines in Latvia over the recent twenty years have been the most dynamic. Even at the outset of the economic recession in early 2009, when the contribution of advertisers to the magazines was falling by 46%, the proportion of magazine decreased by a few percent only<sup>1</sup>.

While people read newspapers and other press publications in order to follow developments, magazines are read to construct one's personal identity, to build the ideal model of existence and structure the value system of life. Magazines provide a forum for debates and for exchange of ideas, thoughts and information; they serve both the public education as well as play the role of the communicators of the popular culture. How is the sense of belonging to a particular publication formed, what does each individual reader consider as the greatest value of his/ her magazine in terms of content and what kind of sensations he/she experiences when reading the magazine? These are the questions that the author has placed in the centre of the present doctoral research in belief that the analysis of the magazines' audiences can provide answers to these questions.

The audience is the key word when speaking about the influence, role and development of magazines. Yet it is the readers of magazines, their interests, desires and sensations they get from reading magazines that is the most difficult to explain and the least studied aspect. Quantitative market data on the number of readers and circulation of publications are available in relative large amount while less attention has been attributed to the readers, their needs, feelings and gains from reading magazines. The author's goal is to study the magazine reading habits of the audiences of different groups of magazines published in Latvia, to find out what magazine readers come across in the process of the consumption of the content of the most popular magazines and what are the unique features of magazines that dictate the loyalty of their readers.

### **Definition of the problem**

In Latvia there is a shortage of studies that would deal with the behaviour of media audience, their needs and their motivation for the consumption of the media. The researchers and media workers' precepts on the audience are formed by quantitative studies and feedback from individual representatives of the audience. Audience is mostly seen as a sum of quantitative data and readers are described and perceived as representatives of demographic groups. The audience's wishes and traits are interpreted in as assumptions, based on the number of sold or subscribed copies. Questions such as why some magazines disappear from the market in a few months while some others become an irretrievable part of the lives of several generations, why readers form a close emotional link with magazines and why exactly particular magazines are read, are still only partially answered, the answers being based on the

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<sup>1</sup> Results of the study of the press audience in the spring of 2009,  
<http://www.tns.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=2958> (01.06.2009.)

processes taking place in the market rather than on an in-depth study of the readers' behaviour.

Although the present research attributes great attention to the audience, it considers also the communicators' or editors' perception of their audience. In addition to the study of readers' habits and reading needs, the obtained information is collated with the editors' perception, analysing also the ways the editors obtain information about their readers and the extent to which they are able to satisfy their readers' needs.

### **The goal and tasks of the research**

On the basis of the theoretical substantiation of the understanding of the media audience and examples from research works, the present doctorate thesis aims to study the audience groups of five Latvian-language magazines in order to find out the reading motivation of the particular publication, the readers' attitude to the magazine's content, the satisfaction from the reading and the usefulness of the magazine's content. The author intends to set off the audience's assessments and views against the editors' perception of their readers, in order to outline the regularities that develop between the key participants of the communication process: the communicator and the recipient of the message.

By the audience's reading habits the present research means both the motivation for choosing a particular magazine, duration of its reading, chosen topics, attitude towards the magazine's content and the usefulness of the content in different social situations, thus outlining the unique functions of magazine reading.

### **Tasks:**

1. To describe the understanding of media audiences and the theoretical development of this understanding, assessing the social and individual traits of the media audience;
2. To analyse the research approaches to the habits of media consumption, outlining their sociologic context; to analyze how these affect the understanding of media audiences;
3. To analyse the basic postulates of the theory of media uses and gratification and the development of the theory, assessing its applicability to the interpretation of the studies of the media audience;
4. To illustrate the specifics of the magazine as a medium and its functions from the perspective of the magazine audience;
5. To analyse the studies of magazines and magazine audiences and the main goals and methods of these studies in order to outline the place of the present research in the context of the studies by other authors;
6. To analyse the possibilities and limitations of the method of qualitative research in the studies of the audience's media consumption habits;
7. To analyze the similarities and the differences in the understanding of the key participants of the communication process - the "communicator" or the editors

and the “recipient” or the audience - about the functions of magazines’ content and the gratification of the audience:

8. To characterise Latvia’s media market and its specifics and analyse the structure and the key development phases of the magazines published in Latvia;

9. To compare the secondary quantitative data of the magazines’ audiences with the qualitative data obtained through empiric study, explicating the reasons of the magazines’ popularity from the perspective of the audience’s media consumption habits, its reading motivation, its sense of identification with to that or other publication and other aspects;

10. To identify the magazine reading habits of the readers of magazines of different contents, the usefulness of the magazine’s content and its social context.

### **The expected results**

Considering the great popularity of consumers’ magazines and their impact on the audience, a list of the magazine reading functions of the audiences of the most popular magazines in Latvia will be compiled and supplemented with the conclusions reached by other authors about the audience’s media consumption functions. Setting off the audience’s attitude to the magazines against the editors’ perception of their readers, the main forces that influence the editors’ decisions in the process of the creation of the magazine’s content will be established, clarifying the audience’s role in the paradigm of these forces of influence.

The audience will be studied with qualitative social research methods, the magazine reading habits will be analysed in-depth in several dimensions: not only the duration, frequency and place of the magazine reading will be addressed but also the readers’ attitude towards the magazine’s content, the reasons for reading it, the gratification received in the process of reading and other aspects.

The present research studies the audiences of the following magazines: „Privātā Dzīve” (Private Life), a publication that deals with the life of celebrities and has the largest circulation of all; „Ieva”, a weekly edition with the largest audience in this category; „Cosmopolitan”, an international women’s magazine, sold in the largest number of copies and selected for the present study in order to test out how Latvian readers perceive the format and content of a magazine created in another country; “Mūsmājas” (Our Home), a home service magazine with a largest audience in the particular group of magazines, „Copes Lietas” (Angling Matters), magazine with the largest number of subscribers in the diverse group of hobbies and special interests magazines.

### **The theoretical foundation and methods of the doctoral research**

The theoretical foundation of the present research rests on the sociology school of media functionalism Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, Swen Windahl, Michael Gurevitz, Karl Lazarsfeld, Denis McQuail etc. and the theory of the media uses and gratification that

these authors have created and developed formulating the individual's behaviour in the process of media consumption. This theory tries to explain the media use by and functions for individuals, particular groups and the society. It shows that people are active users of media and individuals chose how and where to use media in order to derive gratification from them.

In order to follow the development of the understanding of the audience and its typological diversity, the present research resorts to studies by J.Blumler, Virginia Nightingale, Arthur Berger, Lawrence Grosberg, D. McQuail, Ien Ang. The issues of the audience's activity and passivity have been described based on conclusions by Elizabeth Perse, Marie Gillespie, M.Gurevich. Findings by Katz, Gurevich, Michael Jensen, Karl Erik Rosengren and other scholars have been used in order to evaluate the traditions of and approaches to the research into the media audience.

Sociological description of media use is based on findings by McQuail, Vindahl, Nightingale. Conclusions by media sociologists Jean Baudrillard, Pierre *Bourdieu*, Jane Muccracken, David Gauntlett, Niklas *Luhmann* about the social impact of media and the social context of their use have been used.

The recent works by Nick Stevenson, Joki Hermes, Kate Brooks, Angela McRobbie and other authors on media use and studies of the magazines' audience that underline the increase of the active role of the audience in the shaping of the importance of media also constitute an important part of the present paper.

### **The novelty, scholarly and practical importance of the present research**

In the period of dynamic development of media content and technologies, when previous beliefs about the tasks and impact of the media on public are being revised, the issue of the audience's behaviour, its habits of media use, choices, motivation and application of content is very topical. The doctoral paper contributes to the sphere, which has been studied little and in a fragmentary way: qualitative research of the media audience aimed at in-depth understanding of the audience's behaviour in the process of media use and the readers' needs and wishes that are satisfied by magazines' content in order to interpret habits and functions of magazines' use from individual's perspective.

The novelty of the present study is related to the fact that it comprehensively examines one particular type of media that has acquired great importance and determines the media users' behaviour, leaving an impact on their lifestyle and in general influencing the public culture. Furthermore, studies of magazines' audiences with qualitative research methods are rare; scholars tend mostly to examine the content of magazines or collect quantitative data about the audience. Thus such research is unique both in terms of its content and the applied methodology. The obtained data about the readers allow in-depth understanding and explanation of the magazines' audience's behaviour. The audience's understanding is compared to the approaches of the authors of the content, thus revealing the relations between the communicator and the audience and explicating previously un-studied or little studied aspects in these relations as well as formulating those important audience's needs that the content of a particular media can satisfy. Such research allows finding out both the social categories of media consumption as well as the social relations and individual differences that are shaped during media use by the audience.

The present study is useful in the realm of theory as it develops the theoretical understanding of the behaviour of the audience of one type of media. The findings of the study are applicable in media practice, too, because the growing diversity of media and media products results not only in changes in media use but also in media creating products that can satisfy new needs that media were previously unable to meet or satisfy needs in a way that previously media were unable to do. Since in Latvia information on media audiences is for the most part collected by agglomerating quantitative data, which besides are collected in the interests of advertisers or media management, the present research, which centres around agglomeration of qualitative data about the audience, can be regarded as one of the first studies of such kind that are targeted at the audience's interests.

## **Research method**

Three main fields of research can be discerned in the research into the audience: media consumption depending on how much time is dedicated to the particular media; the consumed content of the media; and different "relations between the individual consumer and the media content that he or she consumes or the media as a whole"<sup>2</sup>. The doctoral research studies the audience's interests and needs, explicating the individual's relations with the content of the particular magazine and the magazine as a whole. The paper aggregates information on the relations between the audience and the authors of the media, setting off the analysis of the audience's interests against the editors' perception of their audience. It is important to note that the quantitative research method that is chosen for the study of the audience „is rooted in other forms of social research”<sup>3</sup>; it is able to reveal both the individual's attitude towards the media as well as the social conditions of and influences on his or her behaviour. However, the individual media use and its explications become increasingly important because “the audience lives among the media-based convergence of interests to a much larger degree than it bases itself on shared place of residence or social past”<sup>4</sup>.

For empirical study the author of the present study has chosen qualitative approach as it is one of the tools that allows in-depth insight into and analysis of the questions raised in the present paper. Through qualitative interviews the present study finds out the attitude of the members of the audience towards particular magazines, their specific content and the opportunity to use it in each individual's unique experience.

The paper addresses the contradiction between the way the media content is constructed by its authors and the way the audience perceives, uses and interprets it since from the perspective of media sociology the issue of the importance, ideology of and resistance to the media content constitutes the most analysed sphere. This is an inter-disciplinary work as the chosen approach to media use and gratification is combined with a sociological study, psychology concepts and influences of other sciences related to the choice and use of media and the audience's behaviour in the process of media use and receipt of gratification.

To collect data for the present doctoral study, the author has held in-depth interviews with editors and readers of magazines, collating the data in the course of research.

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<sup>2</sup> Rosengren, Karl Erik, *Uses and Gratifications: a paradigm outlined; The Uses of mass communications : current perspectives on gratifications research*; Ed. by Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, Beverly Hills : Sage Publications, 1974. P. 277.

<sup>3</sup> Ruddock, Andy, *Investigating Audiences*, London: SAGE Publications, 2007. P. 10.

<sup>4</sup> McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory*, Fifth Edition, London: SAGE Publications, 2005. P. 209.

The paper reflects the data obtained from 12 interviews with editors-in-chief of five magazines and 35 interviews with readers.

**Selection of respondents for the research.** Trying to define the essence of qualitative research Cristians and Carey describe it as an attempt to restore the critical and liberating function of intellectual research. „It does not regard social sciences as sciences about society but rather as sciences about individuals. It does not consider social sciences as “impartial” in the simple and primitive understanding of the word, but rather as an active intervention in the social life with its requirements and goals”<sup>5</sup>. Cristians and Carey believe that people live interpreting, they not only react or respond but live interpreting their experience through cultural agents. Therefore we do not ask how the media influence us, but rather “what is the interpretation of the meaning and values that the media create like and how they are related to the reality?”<sup>6</sup> Qualitative research is based on the importance of data and the value of meaning. „A qualitative research regards individuals as being totally different from each other”<sup>7</sup>, Wimmer and Dominick underline.

This approach is pursued in the present research that treats each respondent and the information that he/ she provides as important both in itself and for the sum of data. The goals of the research and the regularities of qualitative research were taken into consideration in selecting respondents. Although the primary criterion dictated the choice of the readers of concrete magazines belonging to the largest groups of the audience identified in qualitative research, each respondent was appraised also based on criteria whether his/ her magazine reading habits can provide unique information in the context of the entire research.

The first stage of selection was based on general reading habits: the reader selected for the research had to qualify for the status of a regular reader. In the next stage of selection the consumed content was taken into consideration, i.e. the readers were selected according to the principle that their approach to the choice of content should differ from that of the others and their answers should give significant information about the choice of content. This criterion implied also the evaluation of content: readers with differing views (including clearly positive and clearly negative assessments) of the magazines’ content were selected. In the third stage of the selection of respondents the use of content was considered, i.e. the way the reader applies the acquired information and the social context of its use. By thus selecting respondents in the course of the research the author tried to achieve that the description of the magazine reading habits of each participant reveals reading aspects that differ from those of other respondents covering the selection of the magazine’s content, the reading process, attitude towards the magazine, the use of its content, different goals of reading and models of the motivation of reading.

**Stages of research.** The present research was carried out in three stages:

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<sup>5</sup> Cristians, C. G., Carey, J. W., *The Logic and Aims of Qualitive Research, Research Methods in Mass Communication*, Ed. by Bruce H. Westley, Guido H.Stempel III, 2-nd edition, London: Prentice Hall (UK) International Limited, 1989. P. 359.

<sup>6</sup> Cristians, C. G., Carey, J. W., *The Logic and Aims of Qualitive Research, Research Methods in Mass Communication*, Ed. by Bruce H. Westley, Guido H.Stempel III, 2-nd edition, London: Prentice Hall (UK) International Limited, 1989. P. 359.

<sup>7</sup> Wimmer R. D., Dominick, J. R. *Mass Media Research: an introduction, 5th edition*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997. P. 100.

I stage: interviews with the editors-in-chief of all magazines. Based on information obtained in these interviews, the list of questions addressed to the magazines' readers was enlarged.

II stage: selection of the magazines' readers, interviews with them, processing of the obtained information.

III stage: the second interview with magazines' editors to ask them questions that were formulated as a result of the interviews with the readers.

### **The size and structure of the doctoral paper**

The paper consists of five parts and 17 chapters, 204 pages in total. The first part comprises 6 chapters. The first chapter evaluates views on the essence of media audience and its perception. The second chapter summarizes different approaches and methods of the study of the audience. The third one gives an overview of the topical studies of the audience. The fourth chapter deals with media use, outlining the social and individual context of media use and providing an insight in media sociology. The fifth chapter deals with the course of development of the theory of media use and gratification and its applicability in studies of the media audience. The sixth chapter gives an insight into the criticism of this theory and the critics' main arguments. The second part is dedicated to the analysis of the essence of magazines as a type of media. The second chapter of this part comprises an overview of the development of the system of magazines in Latvia from 1990 to 1995 as the events in this period illustrate the processes of the emergence of the entire currently existing system of magazines' publishing. The second part's third chapter describes the topical processes of the development of magazines in Latvia in early 21<sup>st</sup> century as they provide the background of the present research.

The third part of the doctoral paper explains the profile of the research, revealing the method and principles of data analysis. The fourth part of this paper presents the author's own research and consists of five chapters. The following five chapters are dedicated to a more detailed analysis of the reading habits of the audience of each respective magazine and the information provided by its editors, underscoring the uniqueness of each publication and the specifics of the habits of its reading.

The fifth part presents the main conclusions summarising the data obtained in the course of study of magazines' editors and the audience and illustrating the main principles of the shaping of the magazines' content and reading of it. The paper ends with a summary of the conclusions arrived at in the course of research.

## **Summary of findings and conclusions**

### **Magazine reading habits and the functions of reading consumer magazines.**

Studies of the magazine audience for the most part focus on readers of particular magazines and particular groups of the audience. Some studies focus on particular magazines that have earned phenomenal popularity and influence and on their audience. Audiences of influential magazines come into researchers' focus because the content of these magazines illustrates social relations, the roles of genders, processes taking place in the consumer society and changes in values, on the whole leaving an impact on various social processes.

**Readers' activity and passivity.** Analysis allows describing the audience as for the most part active, yet with different expressions and intensity of activity. While the activity of some readers takes the form of subscription to the magazine and discussing its content with the others, for some others the reading of the magazine is associated with the need to understand their identity and regularly to apply in practice the advice that the magazine offers. The level of the audience's activity differs in different periods of the magazine's use: often readers are more active when becoming acquainted with the magazine and after several years of the magazine's use the reading of its content becomes so much of a habit that the attitude towards it cools down.

Some readers even recognise their dependence on the magazine's content; they read the magazine from cover to cover, are able to substantiate their need for each part of the content, keep the copies and identify themselves with the magazine's audience: such behaviour could be qualified as a very active media use, although the familiarity with the magazine and loyalty to it are often related to passivity. The readers' habits of magazine use can also be divided into an instrumental and ritualised use. Individual readers knowingly look for concrete content in the magazine or use it instrumentally, while others use it ritually, i.e. read it even if they do not find the particular issue interesting, because it offers familiar and pleasant sensations. Yet an active use of a magazine can be both ritualised and instrumental, therefore depending on the situation of use and the individual's wishes, the ritualised and instrumental uses of magazine can be combined.

**Sources of the readers' satisfaction.** The sources of the readers' satisfaction are mostly related to the magazines' content and the social context of the applicability of the acquired information. If the readers receive the content that is useful for them, it is associated with satisfaction; if the received content is applicable also outside the reading process, the degree of satisfaction is higher. The readers who read magazine in a ritualised way receive satisfaction from the magazine itself, without analysing the content and its applicability.

The readers who are satisfied with the content, mostly use magazines in a ritualised way, bringing the familiarity with the magazine and the emotions it provokes into the foreground. Some readers, although using the magazine on regular basis, demonstrate critical attitude towards its content: this phenomenon may stand in line with the expression of activity that Biocca formulated as "resistance to the influence of the medium". The activity of magazine readers is very similar to what Perse described as

emotional ‘engagement’<sup>8</sup>, many readers acknowledging an emotional link with particular parts of the content and the magazine as a whole. Speaking about the attitude of many readers towards the magazine or particular parts of its content, there is a phenomenon that can be identified as fan’s attitude: it is when a reader brings the influence of the magazine’s content into his/ her daily life and relations with other people or admit in an interview the wish to use not only the content but also goods that carry the name of the favourite magazine (as is the case with, for example, readers of „Ieva” or „Cosmpolitan”).

Speaking about the motivation for reading magazines, it should be underlined that media functions vis-à-vis individuals can be perceived as motives or reasons why the individuals use media products. The explanation of these functions can allow discerning types of satisfaction that the individual receives from using media products. In interviews readers speak about their ability to identify with the understanding of life, values or life style that magazines offer, the possibility to satisfy their need for information and curiosity, the practical applicability of the magazine’s content and its usefulness in their daily lives or for the fulfilment of their goals; magazines give readers the sense of belonging to their audience, help them to understand the most significant interests of their generation, often they encourage, make them reconsider their views, make them laugh, arouse them to do something, entertain them and help them to distance themselves from the others. All of these reasons, both separately and in any combination are important for the readers to come to the decision to read the magazine.

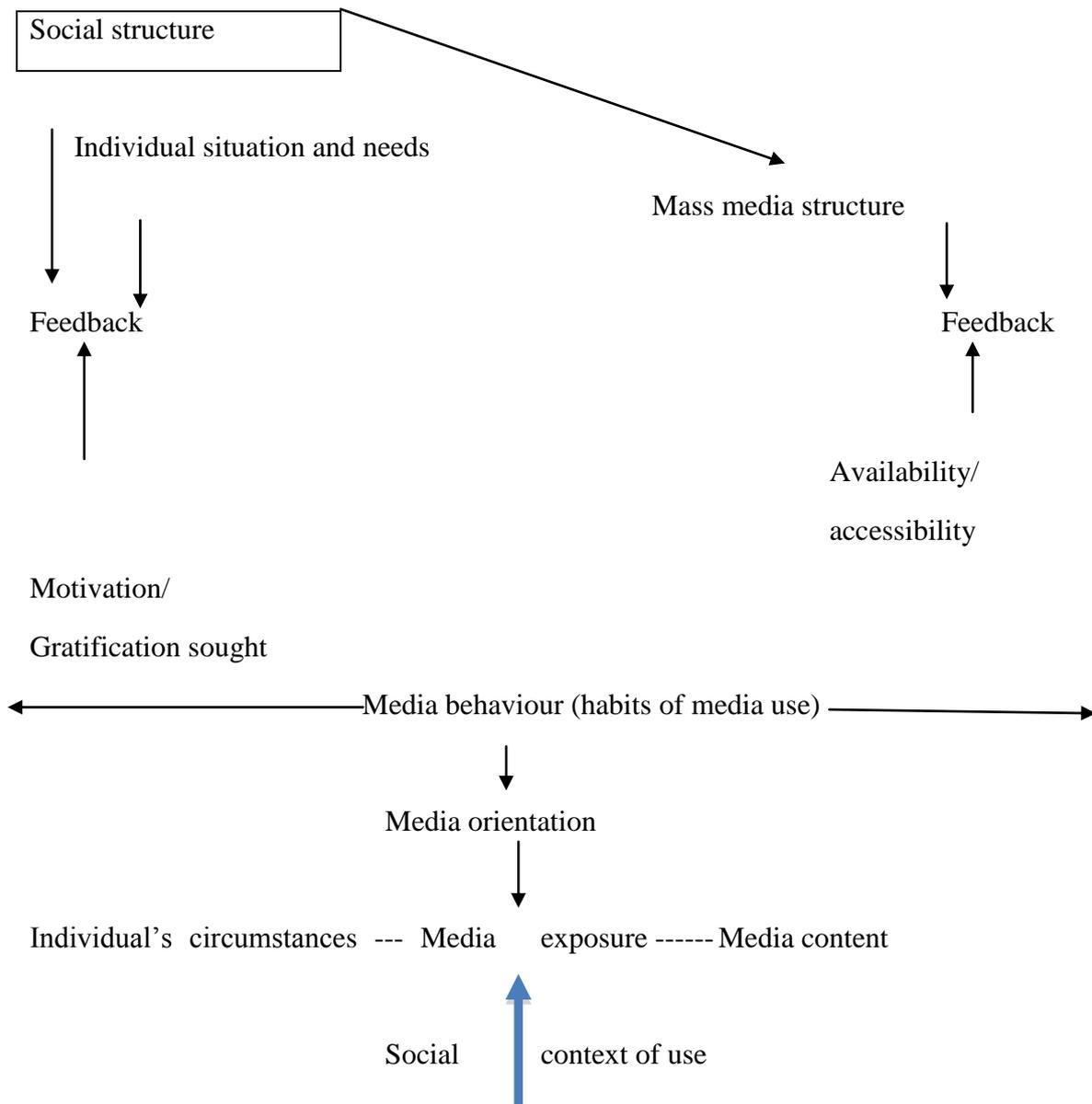
There has always been a difference between general habits of media use and the way things happen on daily basis. Readers underline that in the course of time, even if they remain loyal to one magazine, their attitude towards its content change, daily events in their turn influence the reading process of each particular issue as well as reading habits. Yet these changes for the most part are not that important on the whole to affect the wish to read the particular magazine.

Media use is illustrated by the structural model of media use, the interviews with the readers however provide additional information that describes also social relations in the process of media use.

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<sup>8</sup> Perse, E.M. *Media effects and society*. Mahwah, N.J.; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2001, pp. 35. – 40.

**Table No. 1. A structural model of media use<sup>9</sup>.** Source: McQuail (2005:422)



The model shows relations between the habits of media use, behaviour and daily choice, illustrating, for instance, media use on a particular day. The upper part of the chart presents the individual's habits of media use as caused by two main factors: the individual situation and structure of mass media, reflecting the overall social structure. One of the factors is a more or less stable social situation that the person finds him/herself in and in which the needs associated with media arise (such as the need to be informed, the need to relax and the need for social contexts etc.).

The second factor (in the chart shown as the structure of mass media) consists of the media's offer in a particular place and in particular economic and educational conditions that a particular person finds him/herself in. Besides, these two factors are related not only to regular behaviour patterns but also to a constant location, tendency or package that can be described as the person's *media orientation*. It is shaped by

the person's social background and his/ her previous media experience that make a particular medium attractive to him/ her and dictate specific choices, interests, habits of use and expectations about which media are good. It creates a link to the lower part of the chart: what stands there is what characterizes daily situations with a particular choice of particular media and content.

Three changeable aspects can affect these choices:

- Daily menu of the specific media content and the presentation of the content (shown in the chart as "media content");
- Circumstances existing at the particular moment, such as the amount of free time, the possibilities to dedicate one's time to the media, the availability of alternative activities (shown as "individual's circumstances");
- The social context of choice and use: influence of the person's family and friends.

The interviewed respondents certainly mention the conditions of media use that are shown in the chart, yet they lay a much greater emphasis on their views and values, dreams and perspective of their lives as the most important aspects that determine their use of the magazine. Analyzing the media content the readers underline the joy, pleasure and enjoyment that the magazine can bring them and these sensations consolidate the regularity of media use. However, displeasure or irritation can also motivate a person to read a particular magazine because these sensations, too, can provide gratification since it is to receive different emotional experience that people use media.

The present research very clearly reveals a tendency that the reading habits of magazines are determined by one's wishes, the use of content in the process of reading and the usefulness of the magazine's content that is not related to the reading itself as a person performs different actions and finds him/ herself in different social situations and social contexts. Readers underline that outside the very process of reading the magazine's content, his/ her belonging to its audience, knowledge and status that the magazine has provided are of very great importance, it determine the person's reading habits, attitude towards the magazine and the choice of its content.

An important criterion of magazine's use is the person's wish to socialise, the chance to discuss the magazine's content in situations unrelated to the reading process and to share his/ her thoughts with the others and find him/herself in an advantageous situation being able to demonstrate his/ her competence on issues addressed in the magazine. It means that magazines help people in the process of socialisation, allow them to identify themselves with different role models and achieve control in a concrete social environment.

A part of the readers who read a particular magazine for years, fully accept its content and trust it can be described as fans. As Lawrence Grossberg put it, such newspaper and magazine readers are very important because their "loyalty to media products can reach the point of identifying themselves with it and a very high level of enthusiasm"<sup>10</sup>. From the perspective of media industry fan movement is very

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<sup>10</sup> Grosberg, L. Wartella E., Whitney C., *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*, London: SAGE Publications, 1998. P. 267

beneficent. Fan movement caused by particular media subsequently itself affect the media.

According to other researchers, the person's motivation of media use is difficult to separate from his/ her needs and problems, although in analytical terms they are different aspects. Motives are mostly identified, same as gratification (the imagined or the expected) that many scholars and researchers have tried to identify and place in a certain framework or under a certain typology. Several models of use and gratification theory exist, yet they all have something in common: the desirable gratification is of the same worth as the individual's personal beliefs and values. The interviews with magazine readers also outlined the fact that it is only when personal needs and values are identified, interaction with the medium and the process of its use take place as a result creating new gratification that continues shaping certain values and beliefs. This is one of the fundamental rules that determine the dynamics of magazine reading.

Having analysed the approach of media use and gratification one may draw the conclusion that the gratification received by the different readers in the process of media use is similar but the use of each particular medium from the perspective of each individual is unique and can reveal needs and gratification of a new type.

Speaking about the motivation of media use, already in 1972 Rosengreen and Windahl defined four types of motives: changes, compensation, escape and compensating gratification. These were defined as a combination of intra and extra individual possibilities to meet particular needs in a particular way. Yet these motives of media use to a large extent refer to the motivation that has arisen in order to look for a functional alternative in the process of mass media consumption. Certainly, mass media may be consumed for the sake of the media themselves, not only as an alternative. This could be one of the most essential differences among the motives of media consumption: motives to consume mass media as a value in itself and as a functional alternative and thus a more or less secondary choice. However, motives are very little addressed in media research; more often they are transformed into needs, problems, goals or gratification.

**Magazine reading habits of different groups of audiences.** Although this is a qualitative research, the reading habits of the representatives of the audience of each magazine can be evaluated also from the demographic angle. Although the differences in attitude among the interviewed readers are negligent, there emerged a few regularities dictated by the respective age group, gender, occupation or educational level. Younger readers (20-25 years of age) are more favourably and less critically disposed towards the content of magazines and the values they represent. At the same time, their approach to content is more selective, young people demonstrate ritual use of magazines (except "Cosmopolitan") more rarely. The reading habits in general are less stable in the younger age group, their sense of belonging to concrete publications is weaker that can be explained with the processes of the development of personality. Younger readers more often look for answers to questions important for them in magazines. The higher the level of education and the social status, the more often the readers demonstrate critical attitude towards the content, very clearly separating the content they consider valuable from that they consider unnecessary and critically perceive the publications in general and their importance. Their responses

suggest that the reading of particular magazines is determined by social situations rather than by an individual need for concrete content.

Among men's responses very clearly stood out the wish to apply the magazines' content in practice, to find there answers to questions or a solution to a problem. For young women important is the realization of their place in life and the comparison of their lives with the model that the magazine offers. For women over 30 most important is the frame of mind that the magazine creates, the possibility to use the magazine for self-defining and for making out their identities. The entertainment that magazines offer and the opportunity to kill the time are important for both genders and all age groups. Yet the research reveals that it is the convergence of readers' interests and the gratification they receive from using the magazines' content in different social situations rather than the readers' belonging to a particular demographic group that dominate in magazine reading habits.

**Functions of reading consumer magazines.** Agglomeration of the data provided by the research allows compiling a list of the functions of magazine reading; from the audience's perspective some functions on the list refer to all the magazines that were studied while some others concern the functions of one or two magazines only.

Readers consume magazines for following reasons:

- on regular basis to experience pleasant and familiar emotions, to give oneself moments of pleasure and joy that one wants to experience again, to go through an enjoyable and necessary ritual (Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Mūsmājas, Privātā Dzīve);
- to yield to daydreams, to plan one's life and imagine him/ herself in the context of the described events or personalities (Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Ieva, Privātā Dzīve, Mūsmājas);
- to study and sense the layers of interests and perception of life shared by the respective generation (Cosmopolitan, Ieva);
- to have a sense of one's own significance and compare it with the social status of other people (Privātā Dzīve, Cosmopolitan, Ieva);
- to experience a sense of belonging to a particular group of society (Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Mūsmājas);
- to define one's model of life, to transform, improve and specify it in the context of models that the magazine offers thus gaining an idea of which model dominates (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Mūsmājas);
- to satisfy one's curiosity and follow unique information that other media do not offer and use the acquired information in daily communication (Privātā Dzīve, Copes Lietas, Cosmopolitan, Mūsmājas);
- to share one's thoughts about the magazines' content and thus in a social context to test his/ her views and understanding of values and issues that are topical in society (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva, Cosmopolitan);

- to compare one's concepts with the views offered in the magazines, to share experience and define one's place in small groups of society: in family, among colleagues and friends, in a local community (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas);
- to use the provided information in one's career, when dealing with tasks and problems related to one's professional activities (Privātā Dzīve);
- with the help of information acquired from the magazine to attract the attention of other people, to earn recognition or consolidate one's prestige (Privātā Dzīve, Cosmopolitan);
- to sense support, boost one's confidence and gain strength in difficult periods of life (Ieva);
- to plan one's time, to structuralise one's rhythm of life, creating predictable feelings and a sense of stability (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Mūsmājas);
- to receive practical advice that helps to make decisions and choices and to orientate oneself in diverse daily situations (Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Ieva, Privātā Dzīve, Mūsmājas)
- to make fun of people that follow the models that magazines offer and to compare one's views with the values postulated in the magazines' content (Privātā Dzīve, Cosmpolitan);
- to experience surprise, joy, compassion, inspiration, personal discovery and amazement about the issues addressed in the magazine and the described people (Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Privātā Dzīve, Mūsmājas, Copes Lietas);
- to pursue and develop one's hobby (Copes Lietas, Mūsmājas);
- to compare one's achievements with those of others and enjoy a spirit of competition (Copes Lietas, Cosmopolitan);
- to enjoy a feeling of security and follow latest developments that is necessary for different social situations (Ieva, Privātā Dzīve, Cosmopolitan, Copes Lietas, Mūsmājas);
- to distance oneself from the others, to dedicate time to oneself, to have a chance to go deep into one's thoughts and feelings, to be alone, to have a moment of rest without feeling guilty about it (Ieva);
- to compare one's material conditions with those of the others, to evaluate one's shopping habits and material needs (Ieva, Privātā Dzīve, Cosmopolitan, Mūsmājas);
- to learn more about celebrities and about human nature in general (Ieva, Privātā Dzīve, Cosmopolitan);
- to copy the lifestyle and habits of famous people (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva);

- to raise one's spirits, to calm down and fight loneliness (Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Mūsmājas);
- to shape, strengthen and test one's feeling of home (Mūsmājas);
- to use other services that the magazine offers: quizzes, specimens, meetings with other readers and to develop closer social contacts with magazine (Cosmopolitan, Ieva, Mūsmājas, Copes Lietas);
- to make oneself at home in society, to find like-minded people and to know how to behave (Privātā Dzīve);
- to obtain information for small talk (Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Privātā Dzīve);
- to get help in making decisions about shopping, testing both one's knowledge and taste (Cosmopolitan, Ieva, Mūsmājas, Copes Lietas);
- by denying the values that the magazine offers to define one's own values and express one's individuality in a broader social context (Privātā Dzīve, Ieva, Cosmopolitan, Mūsmājas);
- to keep alive a dream about a beautiful and successful life, to believe in one's abilities, to learn how to deal with problems (Cosmopolitan, Ieva).

**The Most Important Factors of Magazine Reading Patterns.** What follows is the analysis of the readers' main statements about magazines, their reading habits, their sense of belonging to the values that a particular magazine represents, their assessment of the magazine's content, its applicability and gratification received in the reading process or in applying the content in a social situation.

**Sense of belonging.** As the magazines that the present research covers are very different, different are also the readers' attitudes, yet one can mark also common trends. First, the readers clearly define their sense of belonging to the magazine.

If the magazine satisfies the readers' needs and earn favourable attitude, the sense of belonging to it is stronger. If the attitude towards the magazine's content and values is negative and the reading is motivated by habit or influence of social environment, the readers try to distance themselves from the magazine and describe their sense of belonging to it with a tinge of irony. Some readers admitted feeling proud of belonging to the audience of a particular magazine, feeling something in common with the other readers, may it be harmony of their values, shared interests or the sense of belonging to the same generation. The sense of belonging is marked by regularity of reading the magazine, loyalty to it, pleasure and gratification received from its content. The sense of belonging is linked also with pride in one's association with the values of the particular magazine. The sense of belonging does not always mean uncritical attitude: readers may note the magazine's shortcomings at the same time asserting their interest in its content and their ties with the magazine.

**The superficial and the significant in magazines' content.** Each reader can rather clearly describe the elements of content, for the sake of which he/ she reads the magazine, and list the most significant elements for him/her in the content, admitting that a part of the content is less important for him/ her, yet does not present an obstacle for him/her to accept the magazine as the whole. For many readers the sense

of unity that is associated with the magazine is more important than the elements or structure of content. Describing the important for them part of content, readers most often mention concrete articles or topics which are useful for them, match their interests or have made them think.

The insignificant part of content is usually associated with elements of easy entertainment. Even if, for example, horoscopes, jokes or news are the first thing that the person reads in the magazine, it does not mean that he/she regards these parts of content as important; it is rather that they help him/her to enter the right mood, prepare him/her for the reading of the important part of content. The content that readers find important is related to their steady interests. Often interests, pleasure and rejection of some ideas that the magazine postulates are combined in the readers' attitude. Yet it does not intrude in their reading of the magazine.

Even those readers who admit on the whole reading the magazine "from cover to cover", can point out unimportant parts of the content and elements, the absence of which would make the reading of the magazine unimaginable for them. Although the structure of the magazines' content is different, in all magazines the important part of content is larger than the unimportant one.

**Sincerity, credibility and honesty.** No matter what is the readers' attitude towards magazine's content - ironic or eager - for all of them it is important that they can trust the magazine content, that it is sincere and the information that it provides is not affected, incredible, senseless or empty.

Readers often associate credibility with whether or not the offered content suits them and is applicable in practice, whether or not it provides any ideas, gives inspiration or urge them to act and change something in their lives.

Regular readers say that their reading is motivated by their trust in the content and mention that they have sometimes tested the received information in practice and a positive result has raised their level of trust in the magazine. Some readers remark that they regard the contribution of particular journalists as professional and honest and this makes them consider the content as such, too.

**Pleasure and displeasure, joy and enjoyment.** Readers relate pleasure to the publication as such, to its content and to the reading process. Many readers like the process of buying the magazine that gives them the sense of anticipation of a free moment when he/she will be able to read it. Readers enjoy leafing through the magazine, looking at pictures, planning reading, anticipation of soon being able to read the magazine, to dedicate time to him/her self and his/ her interests. Sometimes a person derives pleasure from looking at pictures or from the sensation of touching a high-quality paper with his/ her hand, from an enjoyable tactual sensation. The reading process, when combined with drinking good coffee, eating chocolate or taking a hot bath is also associated with pleasure and joy. The process of reflection on an article or discussion about content is also related to enjoyment.

Judging from the interviews with readers, pleasure is stronger than displeasure against a particular part of content or against the magazine's position in general. Displeasure is sometimes caused by an idea that the magazine imposes on the readers, the behaviour of a featured person or the professional level of articles.

Yet the impulses of displeasure are much weaker if the reading of the magazine is motivated by habit or if it carries a strong ritual character when each issue of the magazine is expected in order to receive familiar and pleasant sensations. Displeasure is more short-lived than pleasant contemplation about the magazine. A boring or annoying article is not a reason for a person to dislike the magazine as a whole. Some readers however voice displeasure against the existence of the magazine itself, against its popularity and his/her own craze for its content.

Pleasure is to a larger degree associated with the reader's identity than with his/ her interests or beliefs. If the reader regards him/herself as part of the addressed audience, he/ she voices stronger liking for its content.

Both pleasure and displeasure is linked with the values that the magazine represents. Thus, for example two readers who regard themselves as passionate anglers may express different attitudes towards the humane approach to fish that the magazine postulates: one would ridicule it and consider it as keeping up with trivial short-lived „green fashion” while the other would understand and support it actively and himself follow the same attitude towards nature.

Readers derive pleasure from surprise about an unusual event or a described person, from the harmony of the values and emotions that the magazine offers with his/ her own feelings and interests.

**Entertaining value.** Magazines are part of readers' entertainment; the image of the magazine is related to pleasant memories and sensations. Readers underline the lightness, ease, freedom and lack of compulsion that magazines present. Even if the content meant for entertainment in some magazines is not of particularly high quality, readers do not set high demands to it and accept it tolerantly provided it does not disrupt the magazine's identity. However, different readers are able differently to appreciate the magazine's entertaining potential. While some female readers regard, for instance, magazine “Cosmopolitan” as on the whole motivated towards entertainment and not overly serious, some others see in it their own model of life and consider only separate parts of content as entertaining.

Readers associate entertainment in a magazine with materials that make them smile, cheer them up, surprise them and are repeated in each issue, always bringing predictable sensations. Entertaining materials often are brief, do not possess great information value and their reading does not require much time.

**Use of content.** Regular readers use the magazine's content in diverse ways and find it useful in different situations. Two important types of use can be discerned: first, readers apply in practice a piece advice, a practical recommendation, an idea, encouragement that the magazine offers; second, readers use the content to fit into society, to sustain conversation, to find persons who hold the same views, to stand out with special knowledge and take part in discussions on issues addressed in the magazine. In both cases the use of magazine's content is of great importance outside the reading process itself.

The magazine's content can be shared both with one's family and with people who previously were strangers. Some readers use magazines to give themselves a moment's rest, to find time for contemplation or for gathering information and to grant him/herself the chance to distance oneself from the others.

Some readers admit that the magazine's content is applicable or even necessary in their professional life and if the magazine was useful only to fill up their free time they would read it in a different way and would focus on different parts of the content.

Readers use the magazines' content also to daydream, to imagine him/herself in the place of the featured people, to plan purchases of trips, to compare their own experience and views with those they have read about.

Sometimes the magazine's content or the overall position serve as a support in difficult times, as an encouragement or a boost to one's confidence, as a push for changes in one's life.

**Relations with the magazine.** Readers develop their relations with the magazine in different ways and the range of relations is rather broad: from careless and ironical attitude to recognition of addiction to the magazine's content and the sensations that it brings. Even those readers who treat the magazine's offer with irony, are able to distinguish it from self-irony: they understand that the reading of a magazine is not always the most necessary thing for them to do yet admit that they can afford a little entertainment or yielding to a light wave of curiosity. Relations with the magazine are often affected by one's contacts with the other people: sometimes the readers would prefer to hide their wish to read the magazine because it to a certain extent characterizes themselves, while on some other occasions the favourable attitude of the others towards the magazine encourages one to discuss its content, to share one's views on it, to integrate topics from the magazine in one's daily conversations. However, the relations of many readers with their favourite magazines are full of trust and reliance.

A part of the readers take from the magazine's content only that sensation which they find necessary in the particular moment of their lives while some others willingly associate themselves with the magazine's content as a whole and with the life perception that it represents. Some readers like to develop closer relations with the magazine's editors: they take part in quizzes, send their letters or even their own articles to the editors and take part in discussions on the magazine's websites. Readers like it if the magazine is associated not only with content but with something else, too: with a gift, or with a different product that causes pleasant sensations.

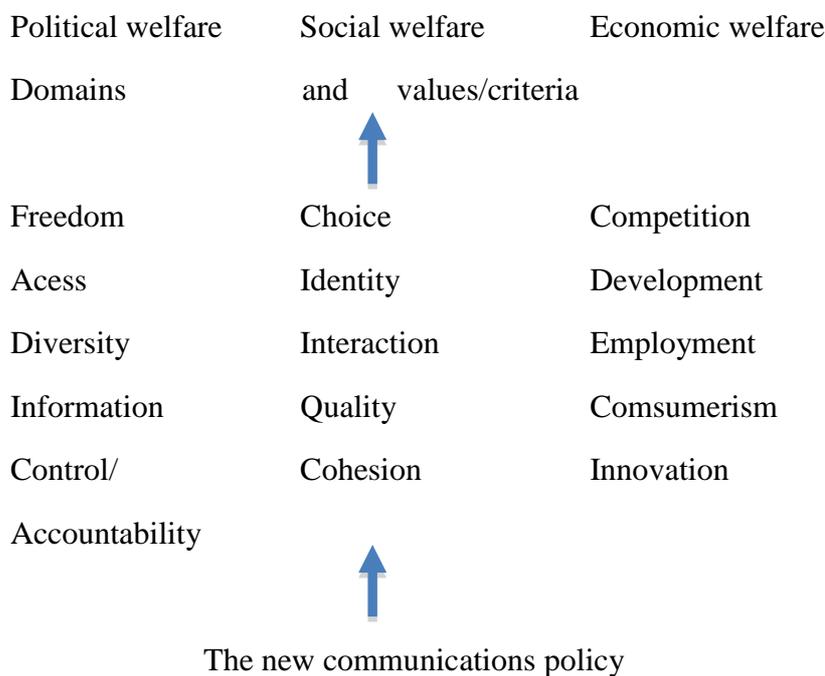
**Forces that affect the work of magazines' editors.** To explain the data obtained in the course of the research, several paradigms can be applied that deal with the impact of the internal forces within the media organisation on communicator and also the impact of the external social forces on the activities of media professionals. Nowadays media stand on the crossroads of three important influences: economy, politics and technologies. These forces affect the media audience, too and in a way make it into a force that affect media.

George Gerbner wrote already in 1969 that the process of mass communication is subject to the influence of miscellaneous external forces: customers or advertisers, competitors, legislators and political authorities, experts, other institutions and the audience. These forces, each to a different degree, affect the operation of the media organisation. McQuail, writing about media policies brings out the paradigm of the new communications policy that he jointly with Jan van Ciulenberg formulated in 2002. This paradigm is determined by the current media development tendencies: internationalisation, digitalisation and convergence. This is the third period of media

policy, in which innovations, growth and competition take place on the global level. The new communications paradigm is based also on new and adapted media's goals and values. This communications policy is dictated by political, economic and social goals, but their interpretation has changed and the requirements to it are also different. An important trend of this period is the domination of economic goals over the political and social ones. All values of the communications policy are also being re-defined.

**Table nr.2. The new communications policy paradigm.** Source: McQuail (2005: 240).

**Ultimate goal/public interest**



In the case of consumer magazines the impact of the political and social environment are less important, while the pressure from the economic environment is very marked and is exercised through advertisers.

The above-mentioned paradigm of pressure specifies the impact of various forces yet does not reveal the intensity of their influence. In the case of the audience of consumer magazines, editors believe that the audience's needs do not affect their work or affect it to a very small degree only and thus do not take the audience's interests much into consideration since it is the publishers that daily yield a much greater impact on editors and on the content of magazines thus asserting the importance of the external (advertisers) and internal (management) pressures and the dominance of the value of profit. Even those editors whose magazines have internet versions and portals ("Cosmopolitan", "Copes Lietas") admit it, although in internet environment interactive communication with the audience is traditionally regarded as a strong factor that influences content and transforms the editors' work. Thus within the framework of the professional routine of magazines' editors the audience does not play any important role.

As a result of the internal pressure from publishers, editors attribute much more attention to such external force as competitors. In their daily work magazine editors take into consideration the activities of their competitors and orient the content of their magazines on competitors to a larger extent than on the audience's needs. Their competence about their competitors is on a much higher level than their knowledge about their audience and consequently the content of magazines often comes as a reaction to innovations in the competitors' content. Such behaviour is dictated by the media managers' influence because they, too, see each magazine and thus also their own success in the context of the competitor's impact instead of orienting themselves at the audience's behaviour.

Chart No. 2 describes the external and internal forces that affect the editors of consumer magazines. The location of forces (arrows) point to the intensity of the operation of each force of influence: the forces located closer to the centre yield a stronger impact than those that stand farther away.

**Table nr.3. The Magazine editors impacting forces**

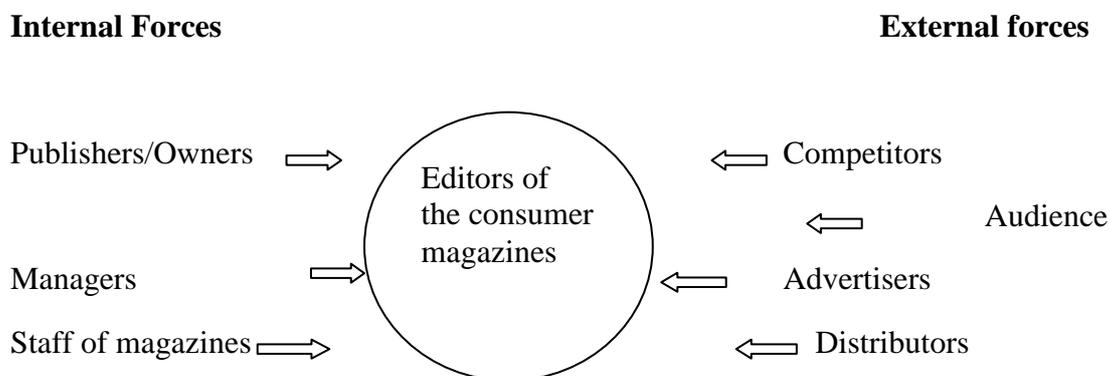


Chart No. 3 shows that heads of publishing houses and advertisers yield the strongest influence on the editors' work. In fact advertisers affect the editors' work in two ways: directly through contact with them and through heads of publishing houses because the managers of publishing houses shape rules and policies that dictate the interaction between advertisers and editors. Publishers/ owners also yield strong influence: it can take expression through a direct contact or work indirectly as goals set for heads of publishing houses. The influence of staff on the editor is not strong since they have to respect the publisher's "rules of the game". Of the external forces the advertisers yield the greatest influence and affect daily decisions as their wishes and interests make the editors adapt the structure of magazines accordingly and shape the content so as to satisfy the advertisers' wishes. The assessment by advertisers in the shape of a feedback reaches the editors much faster than the audience's reaction, namely advertisers formulate their satisfaction with the magazine in a much clearer and direct manner, while the audience's attitude is vague, belated, generalised, impulsive, scattered, irregular and non-structured.

One cannot declare that the audience's magazine reading habits, motivation for reading and the attitude towards the magazine are of little importance to the editors and managers of publishing houses; they regularly assess the readers' behaviour based on the magazines' subscription and sales figures. Yet what is of primary importance in the assessment of the data are the expected income from advertisement (or fall of

income if the number of readers decreases) and profit rather than creation of content that meets the audience's needs and wishes. Thus quantitative data are interpreted as indicators of the quality of magazine's content. If quantitative data display trends of shrinking audience, changes of content are expected from editors, yet the main goal behind such changes is profit rather than higher quality of content, i.e. by high quality content media managers mean content that increases demand. Editors accept such positioning, since on their compliance depends their remaining in the job and the appraisal of their achievements. Yet as professionals they do not always put equation mark between the required content and high quality content as it is understood in journalism.

Classical principles that the very existence of media relies on such as freedom, diversity, responsibility and credibility (from the audience's perspective) are of lesser importance in the work of magazine editors because these principles do not support the content of consumer magazines. Although editors highly value the opportunity to make decisions independently, they are well aware that profit rather than social values are of primary importance for the media organisation that they work for. Individual editors (those of "Ieva" and "Cosmopolitan", for instance) believe however that it is possible to combine the interests of profit and social values; the readers of these magazines also indirectly admit such a possibility. The foundation on which the content of a consumer magazine is built consists of the editors' ability to meet the publishers' goals of profit and the presentation of these goals (including social and general human values) to the readers as important and necessary to them. In fact uncritical readers, as they illustrate their reading habits, accept such behaviour of magazines believing that publishers and editors offer mostly readers-friendly and useful content and act in the readers' interests rather than in the name of profit. Critically minded readers also accept the offered content believing that they have "unmask it" and thus it does not affect them that much and that in general content is acceptable if it provides such aspects as entertainment and useful information (as is the case with magazines „Privātā Dzīve” and „Cosmopolitan”).

The influence of the media audience on the magazines' content is external and informal; the impact of the internal forces within the media organisation and the market is much stronger than that of the audience.

**Table nr. 4. The main forms of media governance.** Source: McQuail (2005: 235).

	<b>Formal</b>	<b>Informal</b>
<b>External</b>	Law and regulation applied via courts and public regulatory bodies	Market forces, Lobby groups, Public opinion; Review and criticism
<b>Internal</b>	Management, regulation by firm or industry; Organizational culture	Self-Professionalism, Codes of ethics and conduct

The social forces that influence media can be divided into several groups. The main internal forces can be identified within the media organisation itself: management, technical possibilities and media professionals. The external forces in McQuail's opinion should be divided into the economic (competitors, news agencies, advertisers and owners), the social and political pressures (legislative and political control and other social institutions).

Although in McQuail's paradigm distribution channels are placed in one category with the audience's "interests and demands"<sup>11</sup>, it should be underlined that in Latvia's situation the influence of distribution channels is of largely economic character and the audience's influence, which in the case of magazines is rather weak at that, does not stand comparison with it. In the context of consumer magazines and the present research economic forces represented by owners of publishing houses and advertisers are the dominating aspects that influence professionals' work; for owners and advertisers on their turn essential are the also the competitors' influence on the market situation and the distributors' attitude towards the magazines circulating in the market. It should be added that in a market saturated with consumer magazines the role of magazines' distribution channels grows: distributors (capable of stimulating sales by placing the magazine in advantageous, conspicuous places) can strongly influence the magazine's success in the market. In fact the publishers demand editors visually and content-wise to adapt magazines to the conditions that distributors have provided (dislocation of shelves, specifics of the placement and clear visibility of magazines), thus in fact encouraging impulsive buying of the magazine rather than loyalty to its content.

In case of consumer magazines the goals of profit dominate; in fact profit is the key goal since these magazines, unlike other types of media, such as public broadcasting and daily newspapers, do not address ideas, cultural or social goals. While the media audience does not regard themselves as consumers or as an element of the market, this is exactly how media professionals see them; thus judging from the data of the present research one might agree that the media industry considers the audience as de-humanized and exploitable, moreover, "the audience serves the commercial media to a larger extent than the latter serve their audiences"<sup>12</sup>. Ian Ang also wrote that media institutions are not really interested in learning to know their audiences; they can prove the existence of their audiences by way of technical measurements, which, while able to persuade the customers of media companies, will never create a true sense of belonging in the audience. Yet, a research of the readers of consumer magazines reveals a kind of an agreement between the readers and editors, namely, the readers accept the goals of profit that are important to the editors and their treating the readers as instruments towards these goals (the readers accept the presence of a large amount of advertisement in magazines, the adaptation of the content to the advertisers' interests and the importance of the ideology of the consumer society), which fact identifies the readers as a part of the consumer society.

Normative press theories underline the necessity for media to attribute primary importance to the audience's needs and interests and regard the customers' and the state's interests as being of secondary importance. However in the case of consumer magazines, customers' or advertisers' interests dominate in the behaviour of media

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<sup>11</sup> McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory*, Fifth Edition, London: SAGE Publications. P. 282.

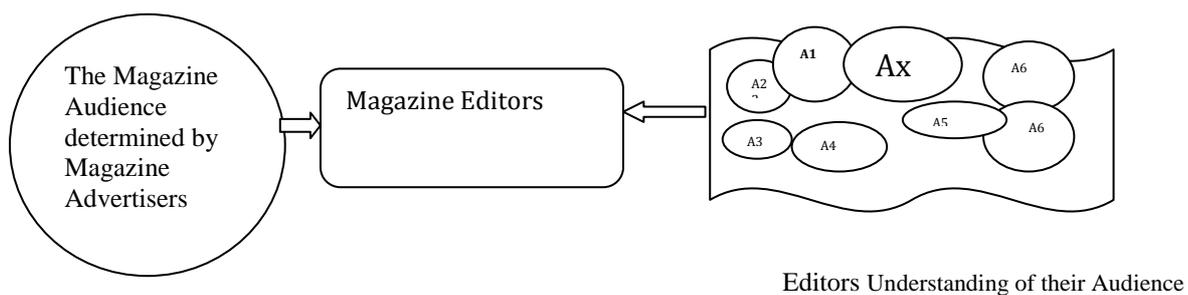
<sup>12</sup> Jakson P., Stevenson N., Brooks K., *Making Sense of Mens's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001. P.401.

organisations and the audience's interests are respected only as far as they are in line with the advertisers' interests, which the publishers want to satisfy. In fact the goals of profit are associated with the medium's ability to satisfy its audience, thus one can talk about the combined goals that the media management and professionals agree to meet. On the whole the present research illustrates the situation in which publishers of consumer magazines dominate in their relations with the readers, imposing on the latter their own profit-based interests and subjugating them to the advertisers' demands.

**Editors' relations with publishers and advertisers.** An undercurrent of tension pervades the interviews with the editors caused by the contradiction between the editors' independence and their need to satisfy the publishers' commercial goals formulated as demands to achieve certain sales results and a pre-set level of income from advertisements. One of the main tasks of consumer magazines is to create an advertisers-friendly content and, as the interviews allow the author to judge, the editors reckon with these conditions taking them for granted.

The Latvian editors' attitude towards advertisers is comparable to that underlined in Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks' research into men's magazines carried out in the UK. The authors describe advertisers as "an inevitable evil<sup>13</sup>" that helps to define both the magazine's success from the publishers' perspective and its place in the market. It means that in Latvia, too, editors must constantly plan the future of their magazines in the context of the latest market opportunities, changes in the market and changes in the social culture. Editors, their understanding on which topics are exciting and their perception of the audience play a very important role in the creation of the magazine's content and in communication with the readers. Several magazines rather accurately reflect the interests of their editors rather than the needs of their readers.

**Table nr. 4. The understanding of magazine advertisers and editors about magazine audience**



In the editors' minds commercialisation and the publishers' demands prevail over the audience's wishes because they need to adapt the magazine's content to the publishers' profit-based interests. Yet, from the audience's perspective this aspect is not an obstacle for the popularity and the success of the respective magazine on the market. This is a kind of a paradox and it asserts that editors are able to achieve a

<sup>13</sup> Jackson P., Stevenson N., Brooks K., *Making Sense of Mens's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001. P. 62.

balance among the interests of their readers, publishers and advertisers. It can be explained from two angles: on the one hand the editors try to act in the audience's interests in spite of the pressure from the publishers' part, on the other hand the audience believes that the publishers act in their interests and thus the magazines' content is favourable and friendly to the reader. Here we see the media effect of "the magic ball" at work, the readers having developed belief that magazines offer the content that they need. The readers' daily experience offer proofs to this belief. The social environment that endorses the reading of a particular magazine and makes the acquired information applicable in relations with other people is of essential importance in the shaping of the readers' opinion about the magazine. In many situations such information is even necessary for the individual to be on the same wavelength as the others, to be able to understand particular developments and follow changes in values. In fact the readers treat the magazines with a great degree of trust and loyalty, accepting also the "unnecessary" and the "unpleasant" content, as if "trading it" for the necessary information.

**The editors' identity.** Although it is publishers that dictate the strategic guidelines of the magazines' content, almost all editors associate the magazine's content with their own personalities, insisting that it complies with their own character, perception, the leader's abilities, taste and professionalism. The editors' performance is assessed based on the success demonstrated by the quantitative indicators of the number of subscribers and the sold copies. The editors' self-appraisal is also very closely related to these figures. The satisfaction of the readers, contact with the audience and in-depth understanding of it are not among the top priorities for the magazine editors although they admit the need for much broader information about their audience. The editors' statements reveal a controversy between their wishes to include in the content what they think interests their readers on the one hand and the need to comply with the publishers' concept of the magazine's content on the other. The magazine managers perceive their audiences through the prism of the topics and sections of their magazines, aspiring to meet their readers' needs by writing about concrete topics. Yet in their understanding of the creation of the content the editors stand much closer to their customer (the advertiser) than to their consumer (the audience). It is interesting to note that editors perceive their publications both as a sort of a resistance to publishers and advertisers and as disdain of the readers' needs.

**The editors' knowledge about their audiences.** The editors' daily work is very closely associated with the advertisers' demands to reach certain groups of readers. Interviews outline the perception of the audience as a sum of demographic groups, thus editors distinguish between the desirable and the unwanted audiences. Describing their readers, the editors too, attribute primary importance to demographic data, for the most part failing to analyse their readers' lifestyle, characters, values or other aspects of their identities. The editors' daily decisions are not centred on the needs and wishes of their readers, the sources of their reading motivation or the received satisfaction. Yet individual editors describe their readers as resembling themselves, in belief that they represent the group that perceive the world in a similar manner, have similar views, values and habits as themselves do. These editors mentioned during the interviews that considering the magazine's content, they imagined concrete readers from the circle of their acquaintances or family members and for this reason regularly contacted them to learn their views about the magazine's content. Thus, the editors' behaviour is dictated by some opinions that often coincide with their own self-appraisal, in fact consolidating the uninformed and short-sighted attitude towards the

audience's wishes. Such approach is typical also for the editors, who admit being different from their typical readers in terms of age or other criteria and insist that the difference helps them better to define their readers' interests. The author of the present research believes that in this way the editors gradually lose contact with their audiences and thus the readers' views do not play an important role in their decision-making.

Editors draw a large part of their conclusions about their readers' tastes, assessments and behaviour from quantitative data, letters of the most active readers, meetings with representatives of the audience and individual polls carried out by the editors themselves. For the most part the feedback provides information about the topics that interest the readers most or least or give an impression of their reaction to a concrete article. This information, too, stimulates the adaptation of the magazines' content to the advertisers' interests centred on the demographic groups of the readers.

In their daily work and the decision-making process very important for the editors is their long-time experience of the particular materials or cover designs that have produced the best sales results. This experience helps them in different decision-making levels: from setting out tasks for journalists to the choice of a cover design. The editors apply this information in practice, in the course of time developing beliefs of what interests the readers most or least. Thus from the editors' perspective the readers' buying behaviour reveals the audience's interests. The analysis of the most successful covers encourages the editors to make "cover-centred" decisions, attributing much lesser importance to the overall content of the magazine. The editors for the most part consider their audiences from the positions of short-term relations (the first editor of magazine „Ieva” Ms. Inga Gorbunova is an exception), abstaining from developing long-term contacts based on content and the readers' needs. Thus editors encourage instrumental rather than ritual use of magazines. From the editors' perspective buying of the magazine is more important than lasting attraction of the reader to the content and gratification caused by content; in fact editors interpret gratification as buying. Thus in their behaviour editors copy the practice imposed by advertisers and media management regarding the reader first and foremost as a consumer who might bring profit. In their daily work magazine editors attribute primary importance to short-term impulses that result in the sale of the publication, such as assumption based on the analysis of the sales data that a particular cover personality or a cover message could stimulate sales of the magazine. In fact editors follow the approach of impulsive reaction typical for the advertising business, trying to stimulate the sale of the magazine with the tool of the content of each issue. Thus they in fact follow the scheme of creating content based on information about what people "buy" rather than what they "read", in the process of creating of content considering only the reasons why people "buy" without paying attention to the reasons why they "read". Similarly how editors distance themselves from the publishers' requirements, they want to distance themselves also from the undesirable effects that the content of magazines might cause in the public system of values ("Privātā Dzīve", "Cosmopolitan", "Ieva").

Describing their work, editors underline that they are mostly guided by their professional instincts, intuition and experience while studies of the audience are useful in the best case only as an assertion of the already known facts and are not applied almost at all to plan their work and priorities in a longer term perspective. Editors lack constantly updated information on the readers' interests and broader

studies of the audience on regular basis are necessary. Yet most editors themselves believe that the existing studies have yielded predictable results and are of little use in their daily work. One might say that editors for the most part describe the audience's wishes and the gratification it receives by speaking about concrete topics or successful articles, briefly addressing also the magazine's identity. According to the editors, it is the magazine's specific character that lies at the basis of its popularity and makes them think that the readers will eagerly accept everything that is included in the content of their favourite magazines.

**Analysis of magazines' success.** The analysis of the competitors' activities and the content of their publications is an important part of the editors' daily work. Many editors illustrated their work by describing what made the content of their magazines differ from that of their direct competitors. The editors attribute the success of magazines to different factors of luck, quality of personnel and the magazine's identity, its special perception of reality, special frame of mind and attitude towards life. Yet the interviewed editors tended to focus on the advantages of the structure of their publications and the successful aspects of their content.

In the course of research editors of two magazines were replaced. These processes probably assert the conclusion drawn by other researchers that the working environment of the heads of magazines is marked by great dynamism and insecurity. In Latvia the process of the change of editors in magazines is often very rapid, frequently recurring and intense because publishers regard the replacement of editors as a tool to improve the magazine's content, sales figures and place in the market. It means that magazine editors work under the conditions of stress under which the audience's interests and needs are addressed only in the context of its wish and capability to buy the magazine without paying a thought to the deeper layers of its interests and reading motivation. In their daily work editors concentrate more on meeting the publishers' demands than on the nuances of the audience's perception.

To summarise the conclusion should be drawn that the editors to a large extent identify themselves with the content of their magazines, clearly differentiate their publications from those of their competitions and accurately define their audience and their beliefs about its interests based on their work experience and the quantitative sales or subscription figures. The audience's influence and knowledge about it do not play an important role in the editors' daily work. The most valuable audience for them is the one that is attractive to advertisers. Although identifying themselves with their magazines, in fact the editors create content that is desirable for advertisers and dictated by the heads of the media. Paradoxically, in testing the hypothesis it was established that while editors do not carry out research into their audiences on regular basis and lack information about its behaviour and the ideological and professional models of their work do not comprise orientation at the perception of the audience, the content that these editors offer is able to attract readers, creating their strong interest in it and the sense of belonging to the values that the editors offers. Thus under the conditions of market pressure editors rely on the marketing tools rather than on knowledge about the audience to keep their readers.

### **Summary of the research results**

Quantitative data, which describe the reading habits of the most popular magazines, show that the structure of magazines' audience rather evenly spreads over all age,

education, income and demographic groups and all regions. It leads to the conclusion that the main aspects that affect reading habits are the audience's values, views, interests and daily agendas. Socially-demographic aspects that the perception about the audience are traditionally built on have much lesser importance in the audience's choice of magazines and reading motivation than the social and cultural environment of each particular individual, his/ her daily habits and interests.

To summarize the data accumulated and conclusions reached in the course of research of reading habits one may say that the questioned representatives of magazines' audience have very different reading habits and ways of use of magazines' content. It is important to note that reading habits are affected by the readers' demographic portrait to a rather small degree, although it is based on demographic criteria that publishers plan their target audiences, develop magazine formats and construct offers to advertisers. The irony of it is that editors and publishers while not caring seriously to study the audience's interests and gratification, are able to offer content that is accepted and popular among their readers. Magazine reading habits are determined by the convergence of interests that media offers; from among that readers choose the magazines that are able to satisfy their socially determined need to pursue a particular life style and whose content can be used in social situations unrelated to the reading process. For this reason one's magazine reading habits are marked by his/ her interest about several magazines of different content. In the reading process of very great importance is ritualised magazine use: it marks loyalty and a sense of belonging to the values that the particular magazine represents. The readers who establish a closer link with the editors (by writing letters, asking for advice, taking part in quizzes, events and other activities not directly related to the reading process) gain a larger degree of gratification and evaluate the magazine's content less critically.

The development of magazine reading habits is influenced by the reader's individual interests, wishes, experience, values and the social situation. The structure of magazine reading motivation is very diverse, yet dominated by the readers' need to define themselves vis-à-vis the magazine and other readers, to find out and shape their identity, to dedicate time to themselves and to receive practically applicable information. Readers emphasise that the applicability of the magazine's content is most important, gratification can be derived from several layers of magazine reading: the process of obtaining and reading the magazine, the acquired information and its application in situations unrelated to the reading process. The gratification received in the reading process is not always related to one's liking for the magazine: the magazine's content is applicable also when the reader has critical attitude towards it or when the ritualised magazine's use prevails. Very important for the readers is the usefulness of the magazine's content in different social situations where the acquired information can be applied in developing relations, in making decisions and in defining one's status and values. In fact society in a way imposes and controls the reading of life style magazines, readers find the content of magazines necessary if they wish to feel at home in diverse and unpredictable situations.

From the audience's perspective consumer magazines are at the same time a part of life style and a tool to pursue the particular life style. Thus magazines become an important part of the readers' daily lives, which fact in turn means that the content that the editors offer in a way determines and subjugates the audience. The editors' decisions in turn are largely affected by the publishers' and advertisers' pressure resulting in a situation when the readers receive content that suits media management

rather than is of primary importance for the audience. Yet editors, identifying themselves with the content of their magazines, aspire to safeguard their independence and thus in making or implementing individual decisions try to resist both the publishers' demands and the audience's views, eventually however for the most part pursuing the publisher's policy.

The readers' attitude towards magazines and the diversity of reading habits reveal the tendency of loyal readers of a particular publication splitting in many groups depending on their interests, levels of gratification and use of content. It makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the regularities that shape reading habits. Thus we may speak about the process of the audience losing its homogeneity; as the media offer and life style changes, the audience while remaining loyal to the magazine, changes its magazine reading habits and attitude towards the content. Therefore from the perspective of the respondents the uniqueness of the content of each magazine is very important: it is what dictates the stability of reading habits. Magazine reading habits, the choice of content and its use is most of all affected not by the reader's demographic category, but rather by the convergence of his/ her interests, which in turn is determined by the social pressure as the information that magazines offer is useful and necessary in multiple social situations.

Although changes in the audience's behaviour makes the editors appreciate the importance of the research of the audience and of other types of information related to the readers' attitude, the editors feeling very strong pressure from the part of publishers focus primarily on respecting the managers' rather than the readers' interests thus in fact addressing the magazines' content mostly at publishers and advertisers rather than the readers.

## Approbation of doctoral theses

### Scientific publication on doctoral paper's themes in the quotable sources:

1. Sieviešu žurnāli Latvijā 2002.gadā: Attīstība, konkurenti, jaunienācēji, LU Raksti, Komunikācija, R:LU,2003. (Women's magazines in Latvia in 2002: development, competitors and newcomers)
2. Publikācija konferences „Uzrunājot nākotni – valstis, sabiedrības un pasauli” rakstu krājumā, raksts „Konkurēt? Ar ko? Kur? Un kā? Latvijas žurnālu tirgus struktūras analīze (2002. – 2004.) (To compete! With whom? Where? And how? The analysis of Magazine Market Structure (2002. – 2004.).
3. Publikācija konferences „Social Integration in an Expanding Europe”(21. – 22 May), Jelgava, LAA, raksts „Identitātes konstruēšana: dzimtes aspekti Latvijā izdotajos starptautiskajos žurnālos”. (Construction of Identities: Gender Issues in the Content of International Magazines Published in Latvia)
4. Publikācija „Latvijas žurnālu tirgus attīstības tendences: 1991. – 1995., raksts Latvijas Universitātes Rakstos, sērija „Komunikācija” (683). (Development Trends of Magazine Market in Latvia: 1991 – 1995.)
5. Vai Latvijā veidojas žurnālu sabiedrība?, Krājums “Inoformācijas vide Latvijā”, 2006. (Is There A Creation of Magazine Society in Latvia?)\_
6. The Problem of Doctor's Envelopes on the Agenda of Latvian Newspapers, Collection of Scientific Papers, Rīga Stradin's University, 2008
7. Patērētāju žurnālu redaktoru darbu ietekmējošie spēki, Akadēmiskā Dzīve nr.46, Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2009, 51. - 59.lpp. (The Forces Affecting Editors Work of the Consumer Magazines)

### Presentations at international conferences related to the topic of the doctoral thesis

#### Conferences

No.	Title of the presentation	conference
1.	"Latvijas žurnālu tirgus attīstības tendences 2003.g. - 2004.  Development Trends of Magazine Market in Latvia: 2003 – 2004.	62. Research Conference of the University of Latvia, February - March 2003
2.	Internationalisation in the Latvian Magazine Market in 2002 and 2003: A Review of Globalisation Processes in the Mass Media World	The 10th NIC Symposium on Intercultural Communication, 20-22 November 2003, Göteborg University, Sweden
3.	„Vai supersievietes ideāla noriets? Sievietes tēls žurnālā SANTA un IEVA (2004)  Is there a Fall of Ideal of Superwoman? The woman image in the magazines Santa and Ieva.	63. 62. Research Conference of the University of Latvia, section of communication studies, 2004

4.	<p>„Sievietes seksualitātes konstruēšana žurnālos SANTA un IEVA (2002. – 2004.)</p> <p>Construction of Women Sexuality in the content of women magazines Ieva and Santa (2002. – 2004.).</p>	63. Research Conference of the University of Latvia, section of gender studies, 2004
5.	<p>"Identitātes konstruēšana: dzimtes aspekti starptautiskajos žurnālos Cosmolitan un FHM (2002. - 2004.).</p> <p>Construction of Identities: Gender issues in the content of international magazines “Cosmopolitan” and “FHM”.</p>	International conference of Social Sciences Department of Latvia Agricultural University “Social Integration in the Enlarged Europe”, 20-21 May 2004.
6.	<p>Women’s Images in Minority and Majority Magazines in Latvia: the Case analysis of Largest Monthlies and Weeklies (2002 – 2004)</p>	11th Conference of the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication 26 - 28 November 2004 - Kristiansand, Norway
7.	<p>The Research Projects of Students – The Borderline Between Industry and University</p>	Norwegian- Latvian Academic Conference, Oslo University College ,7 and 8 April 2005
8.	<p>One magazine, two languages: cultural identity of Latvian speaking and Russian speaking women’s magazines in Latvia?</p>	12th Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication Conference , December 2-3, 2005, University of Tampere , Finland , <i>Intercultural Dialogue: Creating New Perspectives</i>
9.	<p>Kopīgs aicinājums patērēt: reklāmu un redakcijas veidotā satura salīdzinājums sieviešu žurnālos SANTA un IEVA (2002. – 2004.)”</p> <p>The Common Call to Consume: comparison of advertised and editorial content in women’s magazines SANTA and IEVA (2002. – 2004.)</p>	Conference „Consumerism in Latvia: Trends and Alternatives” November, 2005.
10.	<p>Vai Latvijā veidojas “žurnālu sabiedrība”?</p> <p>Is There A Creation of Magazine Society in Latvia?</p>	International Conference hosted by the Strategic Analysis Commission and Social and Political Studies Institute of the University of Latvia “Expansion of Borders: Identities and Communities”, Riga, 9-12 November 2005

11.	<p>Labas dzīves konstruēšana laikrakstos un žurnālos (2005)</p> <p>Construction of <i>good living</i> in the Latvian press (2005).</p>	<p>9<sup>th</sup> International Research Conference of LPA „Society and Culture. Quality of Life: Changes in Social Environment and Perception”, Liepāja, 27 - 28 April 2006</p>
12.	<p>Audiences of the Glamorous Life-Style Magazines: Consumers or Sensualists</p>	<p>Conference Consuming audiences, Tampere Business School, Department of Media Economy, Copenhagen, Denmark, September 29-30, 2006</p>
13.	<p>„Veselības konstruēšana Latvijas presē”</p> <p>Construction of the Health in Latvian Press”</p>	<p>International Research Conference of Riga Stradins University, 2007</p>
14.	<p>“ Nicinājums un apbrīna: kāpēc mēs lasām žurnālu “Privātā Dzīve”?”</p> <p>Contempt and Admiration: why we are reading magazine “Private Life”)</p>	<p>International Research Conference of Riga Stradins University, 2008</p>
15.	<p>Kas ir lielais “O” Latvijas presē (Cosmopolitan, FHM, Santa, Klubs)</p> <p>What’s means the big “O” in Latvian Press?</p>	<p>Conference hosted by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Latvia “Mother Tongue in the Public Environment”, 31 March 2008</p>
16.	<p>Latvijas jauniešu mediju lietojuma paradumi</p> <p>The Media Usage Patterns of Latvian Youth Audience</p>	<p>International Research Conference of Riga Stradins University, 2009</p>

About the author

ANDA ROŽUKALNE

EDUCATION:

2009 - Graduated RSU doctoral studies program "Sociology"

1997 - Graduated master studies of Communication and Journalism of University of Latvia

1987 – Bachelor studies in journalism of University of Latvia, Faculty of Philology, Department of Journalism.

SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

- One of the authors of the book of papers collection "Latvian Environment Information: beginning of 21st century"
- 7 research papers on media content, media effects and media audiences
- 20 presentations in the international scientific conferences

MEMBERSHIP of the professional and scientific organizations

From 2002 - member of the Baltic Media Researchers Association

From 2009 – member of the European Media Management Association

The awards

2002 and in 2004 the National Council of Radio and Television Awards 'annual TV and Radio critics'