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The Position and Influence of Agency News on Foreign News in Contemporary Slovak Television Production

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Abstract

This paper deals with theoretical concepts related to the production of media content. It focuses more critically on the selection of information for television broadcasting, its sources and also their influence on the media agenda, which builds public opinion. The research problem is formulated in the context of the Slovak media environment. The aim of the article was to identify how information about foreign society on Slovak television news is filtered and how it is affected by the offerings of agency news. The research method was quantitative content analysis. The research material consisted of 15413 foreign news contents published by the television news channel TA3 (1621 reports) and the news agencies TASR (4336 reports), ČTK (5248 reports) and Reuters (4208 reports), over the monitored period of two months, specifically in January 2019 and May 2019. The results of the research showed the use of agency news by television newsrooms to construct media reality within foreign news, as well as the significant impact of the categorization of information according to importance by news agencies. In the period under review, we noticed that television TA3 actively responded to the decline or increase in news contents preferred by the ČTK and TASR agencies.

Keywords: Gatekeeping, Message selection criteria, News agencies, Television news, Agency pre-selection.

1. Introduction

The information society in which we currently live brings many dangers for people. From an online environment with an infinite amount of information and increasingly emerging fake news or deepfakes (Greguš, 2020), through civic journalism, in which people are both recipients and creators of media content, creating individual reports according to their political, social and cultural preferences and frameworks of opinion, to the constantly important position of traditional media (especially television) in the lives of recipients and their effort to cope with the speed and timeliness of the online environment. It is in the context of the information society that media literacy and the associated ability to think critically have an irreplaceable position. According to current theorists, maintaining a critical distance from media messages is essential (Silverblatt, 2018: 71). If we know that the news media create a picture of the world, according to which recipients adjust their behaviour and attitudes (Lippmann, 1922; McCombs, 2009; Višňovský, Baláž, 2012), and even the traditional media cannot completely avoid media manipulation, since it is in their functioning that we find the roots of this phenomenon (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020: 70),

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society must look critically not only at the final form of media content, but also at the process of their production.

Research has long confirmed that the media have a significant impact on the perception of reality by its recipients. Despite the fact that, according to the French sociologist J. Lohiss, we live in an era of formlessness, for which the typical medium is the Internet and communication area is cyberspace (Gálík, 2011: 45-46), we must continue to be aware of the influence of other media. Even now, in the age of advanced computer technology and the existence of an online environment, television still retains the favour of the audience. As confirmed by several current publications (Greguš, 2017; Greguš, Mináriková, 2016; Hudíková et al., 2020; Lapčík, 2012; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020; Radošinská, 2017; Višňovský et al., 2019; Višňovský, 2013; 2015), television is still popular and its news coverage is considered by viewers to be one of the basic sources of information about the world outside our empirical experience. In addition to political topics, the news brings information from the fields of economics, social events, natural anomalies or, conversely, expected phenomena or, for example, sports.

It is well-known in the academic as well as in the journalistic community that the media has a certain agenda of topics. The American journalist and philosopher W. Lippmann (1889–1974) was the first to point this out. He researched whether the news media can be considered a bridge between the surrounding objective world and the images (thoughts) in our heads. He came up with the theory of the pseudo-environment, that is, a kind of insight into the world that exists in our mind – an insight that is often times inaccurate and does not correspond to objective reality (Lippmann, 1922). According to M. McCombs, W. Lippmann understood the pseudo-environment as a creation (among other things) by the media which influences human behaviour and it is therefore not based on reality as such (McCombs, 2009: 51). Lippmann's ideas were later followed to some extent by M. McCombs (1938 – present) and the American sociologist D. L. Shaw (1936 – present), when they researched the US presidential election in 1968. Thanks to these results, they came up with the theory of one of the media effects, namely the agenda setting. This is determined not only by the country in which the information is presented, but also by the medium itself. This co-determines the public agenda, ie the list of topics that society considers important (Višňovský, Baláž, 2012: 104-120). However, it is not based on a clear definition of what people should think, but what they should think about. However, as M. McCombs points out, the power of the media is not only in presenting "reality", because their actions can influence reality or ideas about reality in the minds of recipients (McCombs, 2009). As media organizations, in this case television companies and television newsrooms, receive a lot of information, not all of which can be published due to lack of time, technical problems or lack of material (such as visuals), the newsroom creates a specific cutout of society, thereby constructing a certain "reality".

News as a specific part of media production should strive to bring the most accurate, up-to-date, objective, attitude-free, thematically and informationally balanced information that is verified with at least two independent sources. B. Osvaldová also includes impersonality, timeliness, intelligibility and clarity among the basic features of news (Osvaldová, 2011: 19-20). Probably the most widely discussed feature of news articles is objectivity. Taking into account its primary definition – existence independent of subjective consciousness, impartiality and neutrality (Kačala et al., 2003), in our opinion it is not possible to use this term in media production with the idea of unequivocal impartiality. According to the Slovak translator, academician and former editor J. Vojtek, it is not possible to talk about the complete purity of the presented information. Therefore, he prefers to use the terms "fairness", "impartiality" and "neutrality" for the description (Vojtek, 2012: 6). It points to the process of producing news content, which covers both the selection of information from the vast amount of news available to the editors and the definition of the main idea or message that we want the recipient to decode from the news and, of course, ultimately the choice of a specific genre of media content.

Access to information and the objective purity of its sources can also be problematic in the field of the press. Newsrooms around the world constantly work with news agencies, which provide them with agency services for a fee. Although the information offered by the news agency should be verified, true, objective and specific, these are facts which have already been interpreted, which according to the Slovak publicist, communicologist and media expert S. Brečka forms a certain pre-selection of reports (Brečka, 2009a: 189). M. McCombs points out that the news media thus offer only a limited view of the environment, similar to the limited view of the world offered by narrow windows in a modern building. This metaphor is even more accurate if the glass in the windows is

less transparent and has an uneven surface. (McCombs, 2009: 52) We assume that perceptions of the outside world (beyond our empirical experience) are therefore often distorted and incomplete based on the media. These images become more real than reality itself, as pointed out by J. Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1996). They obscure the singular uniqueness of individual events, they are torn from their natural environment to the TV screen. The gatekeeping process plays an important role in this regard. The messages are selected on the basis of various criteria, which depend on both the gatekeeper himself and the newsroom routine, regarding setting up a specific medium, as well as pressure on the editors from economic groups or media owners. However, the question is what information television newsrooms choose and how information sources influence the media agenda.

2. Materials and methods

Since it is not possible to cover or present all events, situations or phenomena of the life of a society within the framework of television broadcasting, it is understandable that certain information is selected. Slovak broadcasters draw foreign news predominantly from agency services (Mikušová, 2015: 125-133), and therefore the aim of our paper is to point out the influence of the news agency on the media agenda of television broadcasters. We try to achieve the defined goal not only through reflection on and analysis of existing theoretical concepts, but also through empirical research consisting of quantitative content analysis of television news and news services used in its production. It is also necessary to specify partial goals that will help us gain more comprehensive knowledge about the current state of media practice in the Slovak Republic:

- define quantitative differences between the number of published, processed reports and the number of received, "raw" reports from media information sources – news agencies, based on a comparison of their quantity and focus;
- identify the impact of news agency prioritization on the broadcaster's media agenda.

To achieve the set goals, we chose quantitative content analysis as the research method. Based on previous experience with this method (Greguš, Mináriková, 2016; Višňovský et al., 2019), we therefore consider its application to be more than appropriate. The reliability of the results of quantitative content analysis in determining the media agenda of, for example, television broadcasters, is also confirmed by the literature. T. Trampota and M. Vojtěchovská provide a comprehensive view of this connection between the research problem and the research method. At the same time, they distinguish between research focused on the purely media agenda of a specific medium/media and research on setting the agenda (Trampota, Vojtěchovská, 2010: 102). For the needs of our research, we worked with the first variant focused on the media agenda of foreign news, i.e. news from around the world without a direct connection to what is happening in the Slovak Republic. For quantitative content analysis, we used a coding book with a priori coding (Wimmer, Dominick, 2011: 166). This means that we determine the observed categories of research on the basis of theoretical considerations, reflected in the processed literature. We used specially created record sheets based on the specified coding to record the individual findings about coding units – the coding book and record sheets can be obtained on request. We subsequently statistically evaluated the data and interpreted our findings on the basis of them. We used IBM SPSS version 23 to process the results.

We chose the broadcasting of the Slovak nationwide commercial television broadcaster TA3 as the research material over the period of two months – January 2019 and May 2019 (a total of 62 days), and the news service of the news agencies TASR, ČTK and Reuters over the same monitored period.

The time frame was determined on the basis of a three-phase selection. In the primary phase, it was a deliberate, accessible choice. We selected two groups of months from the whole year – the first group consisted of January, March, May and October, the second group of June, September and November. These are months with the same number of days, i.e. 31 days for the first group and 30 days for the second group. Within the broadcasting structure of the media, we can also call these months optimal, because during them are no major holidays (Christmas – December, Easter – April) or "parliamentary holidays" (July, August). The transmission structure is therefore not modified in any way and is optimally designed for research. In the second phase, we also used a deliberate selection, as we chose a group of months with a larger number of days for quantitative content analysis to obtain a larger number of data – i.e. January, March, May and October. Subsequently, in the last phase, we used a random selection, with which we selected

previously mentioned time period, namely the months of January 2019 and May 2019 (a total of 62 days).

We chose the commercial news television TA3 on the basis of the possibility of more comprehensive and versatile processing of news contents with regard to the monotype program service it provides to recipients. While other Slovak television broadcasters have limited time slots in which to present news from home and around the world (during the morning, briefly around noon and then at prime time), news television TA3 brings up-to-date news all day (from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. on weekdays and from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. during the weekend).

We also applied the quantitative content analysis to the news services of the news agencies TASR, ČTK and Reuters, over the same period of time. The reason is to gain a clearer idea of the construction of media reality by the chosen broadcaster, because the news service of these agencies is a fundamental source of information for them regarding foreign news. We base this not only on our journalistic experience, but also on the data of S. Mikušová (Mikušová, 2015: 131), while the cooperation of the television broadcaster with the Associated Press/APTN was not forthcoming at the time of the research and was replaced during the period by cooperation with Reuters.

Based on the objectives and theoretical background, we have established research questions and derived hypotheses from them that we want to verify with the results of research:

- RQ1: How does the offerings of news services of agencies affect the news agenda of the television newsroom?

- H1: The more news published by news agencies, the more news broadcast by television.

- RQ2: How does the prioritization of news by news services impact the publishing or not publishing of information on television?

- H2: More foreign news with priority 2 and 3 as determined by the ČTK and TASR news agencies appears in television news than foreign news with priority 4 as determined by the ČTK and TASR news agencies.

We also have to operationalise the main terms used in hypotheses:

- Priority 2, priority 3, priority 4 – this is a multi-level scale by which the agencies TASR and ČTK classify the priority of the information published by them. The lower the priority number, the more important the information. They determine the priority for each agency report separately. Reuters is primarily a source of video for the television newsroom and not a source of textual information for reports, and does not even use this scaled message prioritization. Based on this, Reuters is not a part of hypothesis no. 2.

- Coding unit – in our case it is every journalist's report, which is found in a TA3 broadcast and in the news service of the monitored news agencies, which is provided to the subscriber for a fee. The coding unit is only authorial creations that can be described as foreign news in the context of the Slovak media environment (ie they do not concern the territory of the Slovak Republic and events in it, or the primary information is not related to our territory – for example: European Union summit –this is a foreign administration, although Slovakia formally belongs to this international community). The coding unit is not information related to sports or to a broadcast or news service focused on this area.

- Within television broadcasting, the coding unit is a journalistic, author's unit created by the responsible television reporter of the foreign or economic desk, which has been included in the broadcast and published at least once. We do not consider as a coding unit notices about future broadcasting, news focused on non-foreign events, sports news, television breaks/ads, etc.

- By a coding unit within the news agencies TASR and ČTK we mean every author's unit, which is included in the foreign or economic service, meets the above conditions and its priority according to the specific agency is not 5, and therefore is not an overview or supplementary material. In the case of Reuters, these are all audiovisual materials with a text attachment (since the agency is used mainly by the editorial office to obtain audiovisual materials, we focused only on these contents), which meet the above conditions and are not in the category of Sports, Entertainment and Leisure or User-created content. In the case of news agencies, we do not consider specific materials to be a coding unit – such as notices, an overview of expected events for the following days, etc., or other units that do not meet the characteristics of an agency news.

3. Discussion

Television news in the context of the existence of the Internet has undergone several changes – its production has become more dynamic, linked to the web environment, both in terms of search

and verification of information, and struggles with the presence and immediacy of cyberspace (Greguš, 2018: 42). As British academic P. Lee-Wright points out, investigative journalism has almost completely disappeared from the television environment, and this may lead to the loss of journalists' investigative skills (Lee-Wright, 2010: 77). One explanation may be the speed of the online environment. News contents are published in a matter of seconds – without regular periodicity, while processing them into television is much more complicated and time-consuming. At the same time, the multimedia nature of content on the Internet enables a more comprehensive provision of information in its context and in the wider context, through several textual, audio, visual or audio-visual elements (Greguš, 2018: 43) and a new challenge for television news and news in general is also a phenomenon in the form of automated journalism also known as robotic journalism (Schapals, Porlezza, 2020).

Since we consider news to be an activity that searches for, selects, collects, processes and subsequently also publishes information about social reality, we can talk about journalism as a service provided to the public, according to Czech theorists M. Šmíd and L. Trunečková. This follows from the need for the audience to be informed about what is important for them within society (Šmíd, Trunečková, 2009: 15-16). Journalism is asked to be independent and to secure objectivity or impartiality in news reporting (Carlson, 2019; Huxford, Hopper, 2020; Robinson, Culver, 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017; Watanabe, 2017). However, journalists use several sources in their work, from which they draw the necessary information. We know from media practice that the most common include their own reporters, experts from specific areas of social reality (eg security analysts, seismologists, economists, sociologists, political scientists, etc.), the public (by expressing on camera, by phone, through new media, etc.), official statements of the state central or local administration, political parties and movements, state emergency and security forces, news agencies, media archive, foreign correspondents and partner media, etc. Compared to the past, however, the number of sources of information for journalists has increased significantly. M. Šmíd and L. Trunečková consider witnesses of events, qualified persons from politics, economics, culture or science, as well as documents in written, audio, visual or visual-audio form, all entities competent to provide information (speakers) to be sources of information in journalistic practice, (press agencies and competing media) and finally, of course, the Internet (Šmíd, Trunečková, 2009: 15-16).

At the same time, news agencies are among the most important sources of information for media companies (Nicholls, 2019; Rantanen, 2020) and are considered a permanent and verified provider of facts (Boyer, 2011), even though nowadays *"news agency executives are under pressure to assure their stakeholders of their independent capacity to produce trustworthy, reliable and, to a large extent, commercially viable news"* (Rantanen, Kelly, 2020). By press or news agency we mean a legal entity *"... which seeks out and processes information in order to convey its remuneration in agency news to the public."* (Legal ..., 2008) It is thus a specially established institution that provides specific types and quantities of articles for a fee to their subscribers. In addition to the media, they can also be other legal persons or individuals. According to the Slovak academic S. Hlavčáková, we can consider the agencies as strong entities that still have the role of an authoritative and reliable source of information (Hlavčáková, 2001: 16-17). It is not only textual material as in the past, but due to technological progress and digitization, audio recordings, videos, photographs, multimedia content and archival recordings are also now included. There are two news agencies operating in Slovakia – the public News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) and the private Slovak News Agency (SITA). Within the surrounding countries, we highlight the existence of the Czech News Agency (ČTK), the Austria Press Agentur (APA), the Polish Press Agency (PAP), the Hungarian Telegraphic Office (MTI) and the Ukrainian agency UNIAN. The Reuters (formerly British, now is owned by Canadian Thomson Reuters Corporation), the Associated Press (AP) in USA, the Agence France-Presse (AFP) in France, the Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA) in Germany, EFE in Spain (Surm, 2019) and the TASS in Russia are well known globally.

The use of press (specifically news) agencies as a significant source of information is also confirmed by several researches. From abroad, we can cite examples from Germany (Cazzamatta, 2020; Schulten-Jaspers, 2013), Great Britain (Lewis et al., 2008), the Netherlands (Boumans et al., 2018), Australia (Forde, Johnston, 2011) or from the United States of America (Pew ..., 2015). Most of the time, however, they point to the use of agency services in the press or online environment. In the context of Slovak journalism, the issue of journalists' information sources in the past was

addressed, for example, by academics E. Hradiská et al. In 2002, they found that journalists consider the Internet to be a basic and fundamental source of information (78.2 %), followed by the mass media (57.7 % – the most common type being the press), and news agencies (38.5 %) came in third (Hradiská et al., 2003). The same research was later carried out by S. Breček. According to its results from 2005, regular sources include journalists – personal participation in events/events/at the crime scene (80.9 %), personal contacts with experts (78.4 %), internet search (71.9 %), press conferences (59 %), news agency reports (57.1 %) and other mass media (50.5 %). The remaining sources, such as interview responses, press releases and others – were less than half the popularity among journalists (Brečka, 2009b: 151-180). It should be noted that these results focus on the journalist's sources of information comprehensively, and therefore we consider the data to be slightly skewed. Other sources are used by domestic editors, as opposed to foreign editors. The results of S. Mikušová's research from 2015 even confirm that news agencies are a fundamental and irreplaceable source of information about foreign events for all Slovak, national television broadcasters – Radio and Television of Slovakia, Markíza, Joj and TA3 (Mikušová, 2015: 125-133).

As the news agency has a continuous operation, it organizes the individual information chronologically. This differs from the media, which start news programs or segments with the most important news, and their societal relevance decreases as they approach the end of the broadcast (Greguš, Mináriková, 2016). Agencies thus use their own ways to indicate the importance of reports. For our research, it is necessary to refer to the News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) and the Czech News Agency (ČTK). They have created a multi-level scale by which they classify the priority of specific information. Priority 5 (the lowest) is indicated by notices, overview materials, daily summaries of reports or coverage plans for the next day or next several days. Standard messages and their variants are marked with priority 4 or 3, while a report marked as 3 is more significant and important. The number 2 indicates an extremely important piece of news, mostly in the form of a newsflash (Trunečková, 2009: 146). The title of such a report is also marked in red in ČTK to make it more visible within a specific service. Priority 1 is not used in agency practice. We assume that this would have to be a very unexpected and life-threatening situation for the entire planet. Although the categorization in L. Trunečková's publication focuses only on ČTK, the same principle works in the Slovak TASR. An exception, however, is priority 2, which the Slovak agency uses minimally. It also often signs the flash report with the number 3, but its title is written in capital letters and is preceded by the designation "BRIEF:" without changing the colour of the font compared to other messages. However, agencies do not have to only use scaling. For example, the international agency Reuters publishes extremely important information in red, capital letters and marked "ALERT", and it is a note, followed by a short (flash) message with a red caption, but in normal sized letters marked "(URGENT)". At first glance, these messages are not otherwise distinguished in colour or format from others.

4. Results

In the monitored period from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2019 and from 1 May 2019 to 31 May 2019, i.e. over 62 days, we analyzed a total of 15,413 news items. The television broadcaster TA3 published 1621 articles during 1,162 hours of total broadcasting time during this period. More than 3.5 times the content was released by Reuters – 4,208 videos with a text component. A total of 4,336 reports were published by the Slovak public agency TASR in the period under review. However, most articles were published by the Czech agency ČTK with a total of 5,248 items.

When comparing individual days, it is possible to see a significant decrease in the number of contents issued during the weekends by news agencies (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The reason is probably days off, which, in addition to ordinary citizens, also concern public administration officials and politicians. However, a less significant decrease in the number of articles published by TA3 television is interesting (the average number of broadcasts per day was 26.15; the average number of broadcasts per weekend is 23.19). This may be related to the permanent broadcasting structure, which is also adapted to the weekend schedule. For comparison with agency news, we also highlight the average daily amount of published agency content – for Reuters it is 67.87 audiovisual materials with a text attachment, for TASR it is 69.94 news items per day and for ČTK an average of 84.65 news items per day.

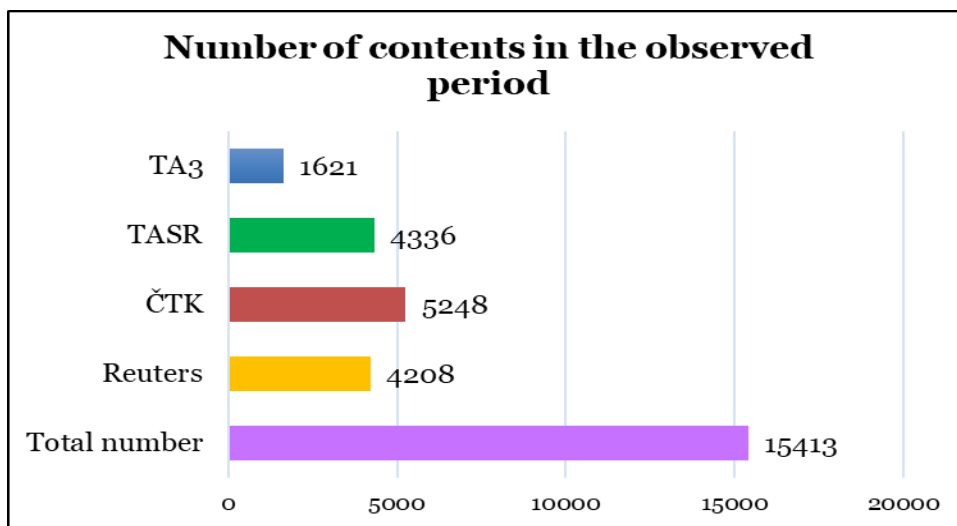


Fig. 1. Number of contents in the observed period. Source: own processing

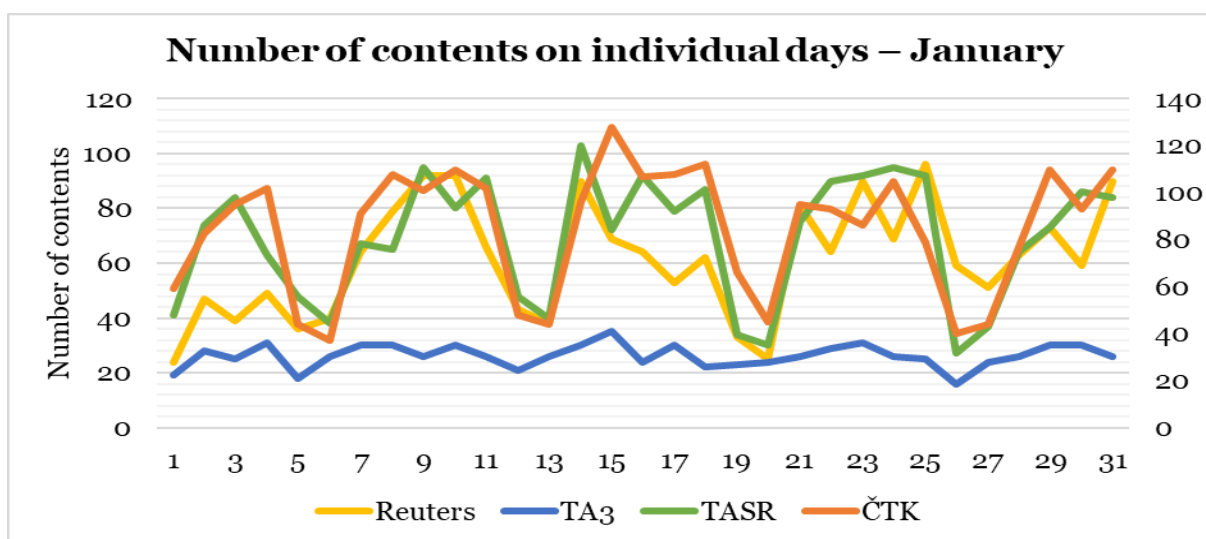


Fig. 2. Number of contents on individual days – January. Source: own processing

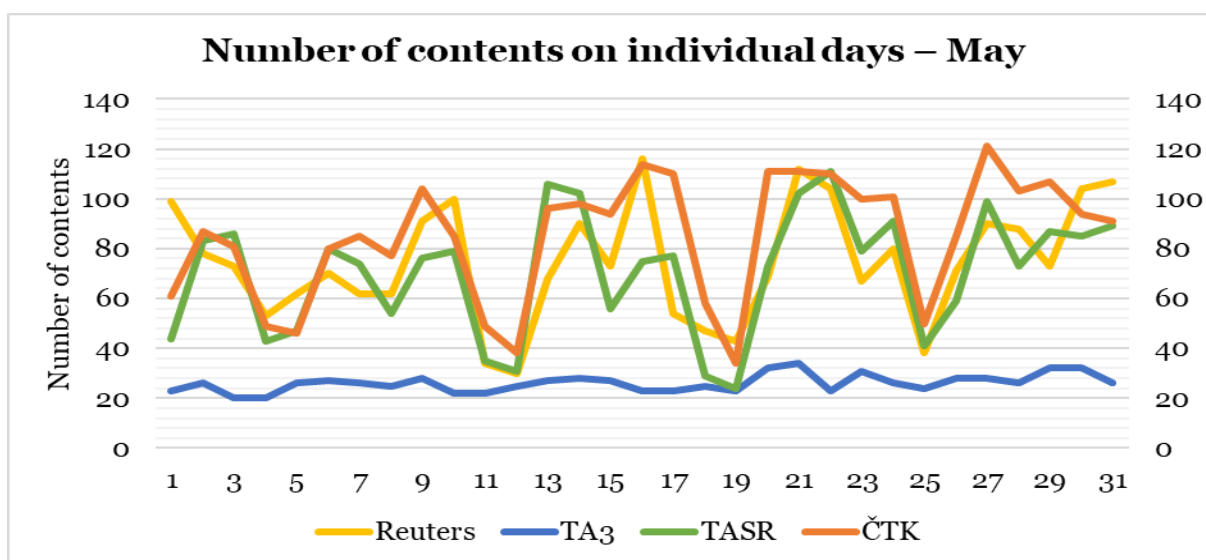


Fig. 3. Number of contents on individual days – May. Source: own processing

Within the monitored period, we also observed the occurrence of individual broadcast news with information and overlap with the news services of agencies. Out of the total number of 1,621, we did not find overlap with agencies in only 59 TA3 contents (3.64 %) – of which in 5 we identified TA3 itself as a source of information (0.31 %), in 2 cases the American news television CNN (0.12 %) and in 52 articles we could not identify the source of the information (3.21 %).

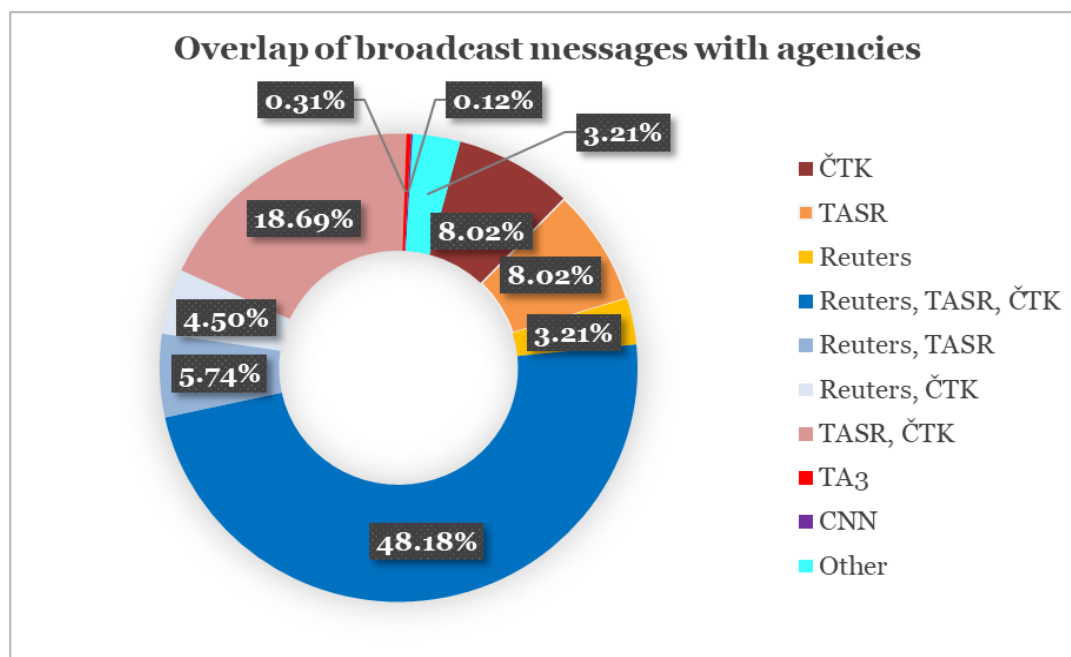


Fig. 4. Overlap of broadcast messages with agencies. Source: own processing

As we can see in [Figure 4](#), almost half of the broadcasts (781, i.e. 48.18 %) had an information overlap amongst the news services of all monitored agencies. The second most numerous group was overlap between the ČTK agency and at the same time with the TASR agency in the number of 303 contents (18.69 %). We recorded overlap between Reuters and TASR with only 93 contents (5.74 %) and between Reuters and ČTK at the same time with 73 items (4.50 %). From the information point of view, the connection of published reports with the monitored agency services was confirmed. If we focus on the entire news service of individual agencies, in all cases the ratio of used agency news in broadcasting in comparison with the total number of items issued by the agency fluctuates at around one third.

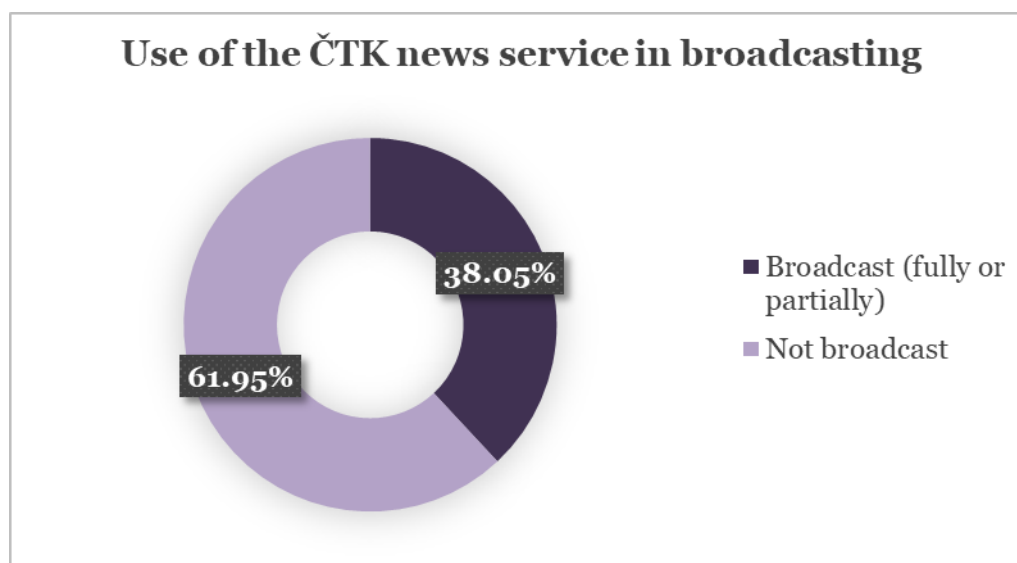


Fig. 5. Use of the ČTK news service in broadcasting. Source: own processing

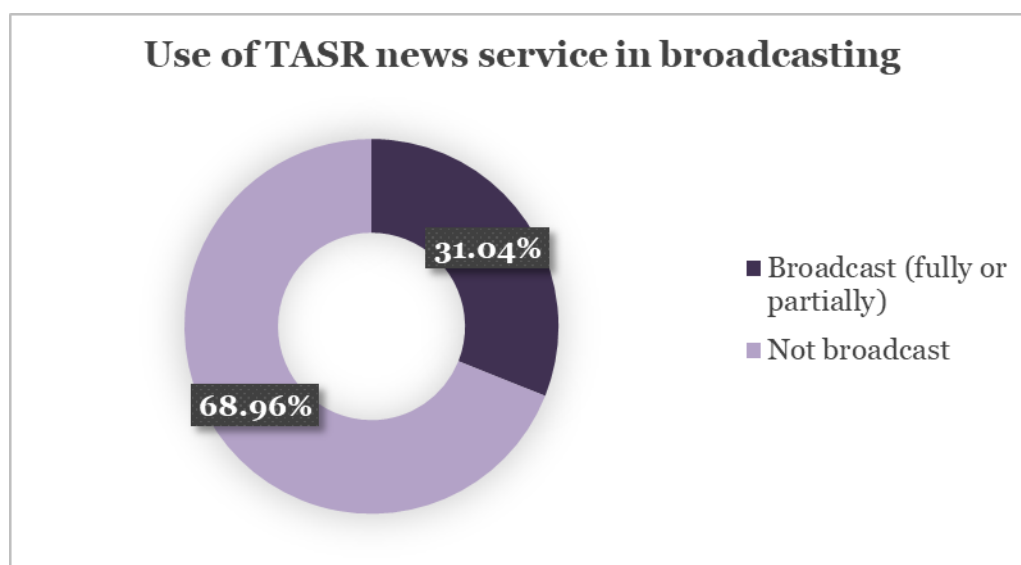


Fig. 6. Use of TASR news service in broadcasting. Source: own processing

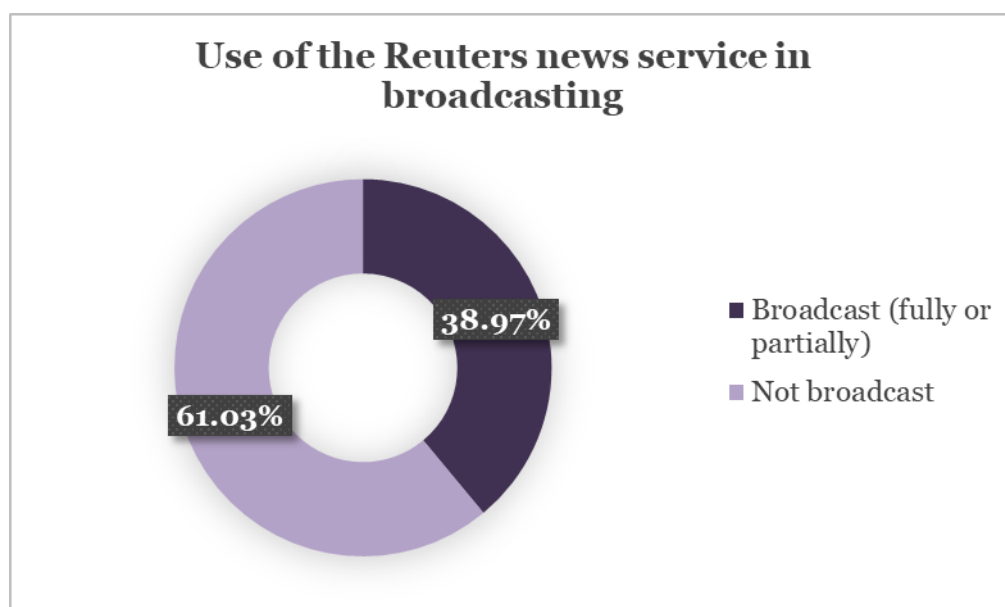


Fig. 7. Use of the Reuters news service in broadcasting. Source: own processing

Interference statistics for selected hypotheses were preceded by checking the normal distribution of data using the Shapiro-Wilk test (Field, 2009). The normality check showed that not all data met the criteria of normal distribution ($p > .05$ in the Shapiro-Wilk test), on the basis of which we decided to use both Pearson correlation coefficient and Spearman's correlation coefficient to measure the correlation.

Table 1. Normality tests for hypothesis no.1

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TA3	0.128	62	0.013	0.983	62	0.534

Reuters	0.091	62	.200*	0.979	62	0.383
TASR	0.149	62	0.002	0.942	62	0.005
ČTK	0.147	62	0.002	0.905	62	0.000
Agencies together	0.160	62	0.000	0.901	62	0.000

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: own processing; IBM SPSS version 26

Table 2. Normality tests for hypothesis no.2

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
ČTK Priority 2-3 %	0.096	62	.200*	0.957	62	0.031
TASR Priority 2-3 %	0.107	62	0.077	0.934	62	0.002
ALL Priority 2-3 %	0.117	62	0.035	0.946	62	0.008
Broadcast ČTK Priority 2-3 %	0.122	62	0.022	0.948	62	0.011
Broadcast TASR Priority 2-3 %	0.068	62	.200*	0.981	62	0.428
Broadcast ALL Priority 2-3 %	0.081	62	.200*	0.964	62	0.068

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: own processing; IBM SPSS version 26

Pearson correlation coefficient requires a normal distribution of data, but is generally considered robust to a violation of this assumption. Spearman's correlation coefficient, on the other hand, does not require a normal distribution of data, but is not as widespread in academic practice (Field, 2009). Since both correlation coefficients yielded comparable results, to simplify the text, we present the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results of the Spearman's correlation coefficient can be obtained upon request.

H1: The more news published by news agencies, the more news broadcast by television.

As expected, the number of reports between news agencies correlated significantly with each other ($r = .622$ to $.820$, $p < 0.001$). The number of news contents published on television correlates with the number of news contents published by news agencies as follows: (1) in the case of the sum of contents from individual news agencies $r = .516$, (2) number of ČTK reports $r = .584$, (3) TASR $r = .450$, (4) Reuters $r = .344$ ($p < 0.001$ applies to all correlations). Hypothesis no. 1 was confirmed. There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the number of reports published by news agencies and the number of reports broadcast on television. The strongest relationship was recorded in the case of ČTK ($r = .584$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Correlations for hypothesis no. 1

		Correlations				
		TA3	Reuters	TASR	ČTK	All news agencies
TA3	Pearson Correlation		.344**	.450**	.584**	.516**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N		62	62	62	62
Reuters	Pearson Correlation			.682**	.622**	.849**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.000
	N			62	62	62
TASR	Pearson Correlation				.820**	.929**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000	0.000
	N				62	62
ČTK	Pearson Correlation					.914**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.000
	N					62

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own processing; IBM SPSS version 26

Priority of reports according to ČTK and TASR

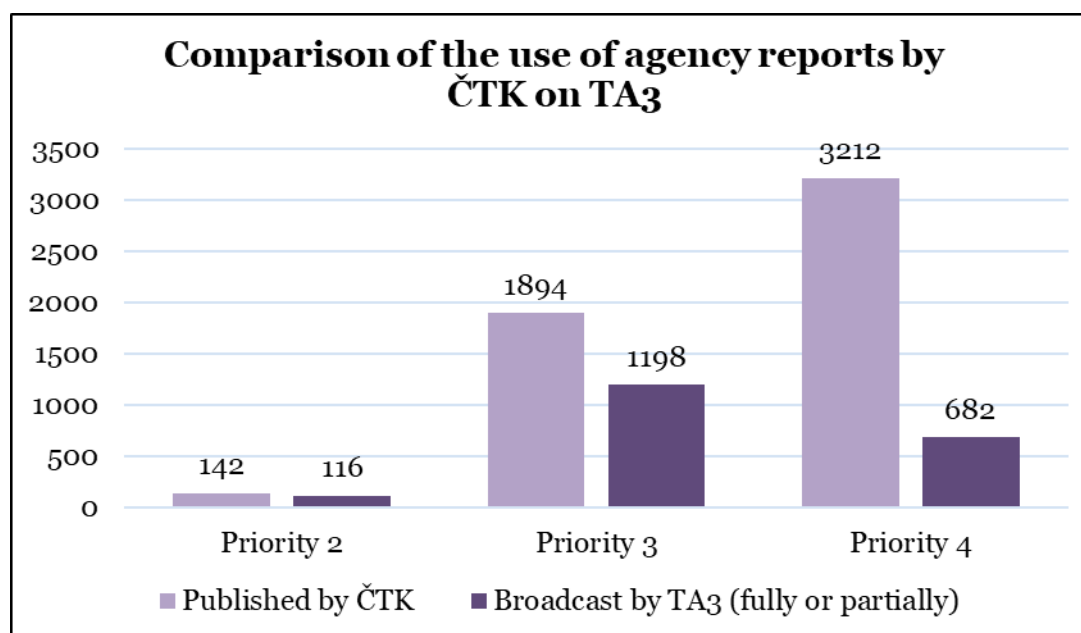


Fig. 8. Comparison of the use of agency reports by ČTK on TA3

Source: own processing

ČTK issued 5,248 reports. The vast majority of them were reports with priority 4 (3,212 news; 61.20 %), i.e. with the lowest importance among the analyzed contents. More than a third of the messages had priority 3 (1,894 reports; 36.09 %) and we recorded the highest priority 2 in 142 news contents (2.71 %). We also noticed the share of used agency reports, either completely or partially, in the broadcasting of TA3 with the total number of broadcast contents. The television newsroom included information from 116 priority 2 messages (81.69 % of their total number), 1,198 priority 3 messages (63.25 % of their total number) and 682 priority 4 messages (21.23 % of their total number).

We followed the same indicator at TASR. It issued 4,336 reports during the monitored period. The vast majority of them were reports with priority 4 (3,998 news; 92.23 %), i.e. with the lowest importance among the analyzed contents. Priority 3 was used by the agency in 333 reports (7.68 %) and the highest priority 2 was recorded in only 4 reports (0.09 %). We also noticed the share of used agency reports, either completely or partially, in the broadcasting of TA3 of the total number of broadcast contents. The television newsroom included information from all four priority 2 messages (100 % of their total number), 260 priority 3 messages (78.08 % of their total number) and 1,082 priority 4 messages (27.06 % of their total number).

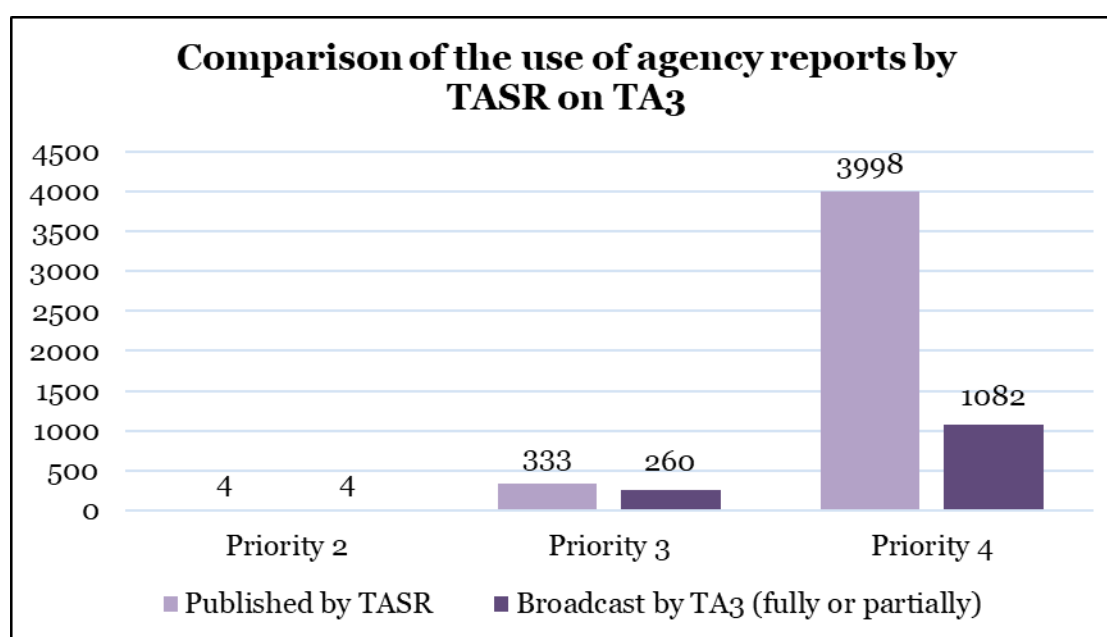


Fig. 9. Comparison of the use of agency reports by TASR on TA3
Source: own processing

H2: More foreign news with priority 2 and 3 as determined by the ČTK and TASR news agencies appears in television news than foreign news with priority 4 as determined by ČTK and TASR news agencies.

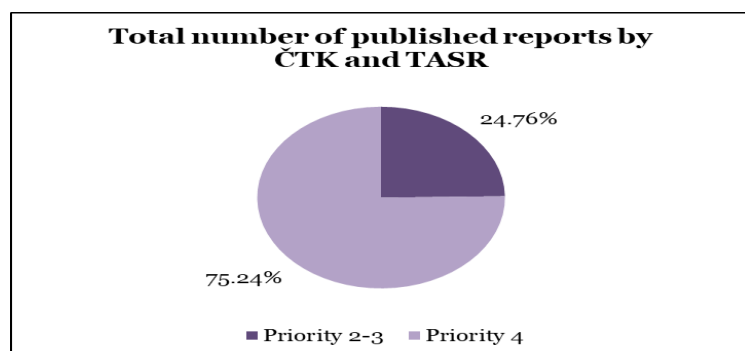


Fig. 10. Total number of published reports by ČTK and TASR
Source: own processing

Priority 2 and 3 reports accounted for 24.76 % of all agency news contents during the observed period (a total of 2,373 out of 9,583 analyzed items) provided by the ČTK and TASR. In the case of news broadcasts on television, this share increased to 47.22 % (in the case of news from ČTK it was 65.83 % and in the case of news from TASR it was 19.61 %). For a clearer idea, we also provide a graphic display below.

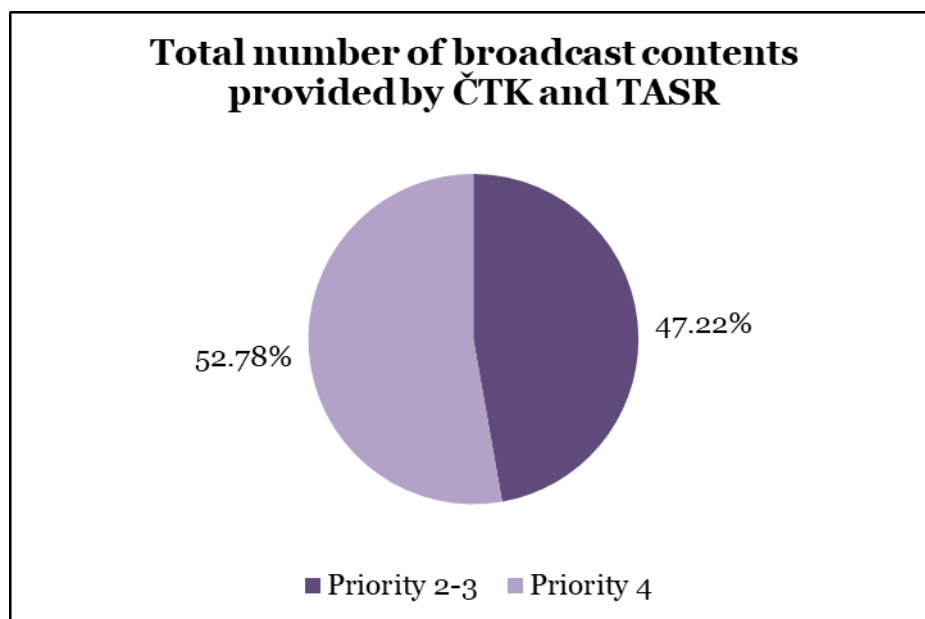


Fig. 11. Total number of broadcast contents provided by ČTK and TASR
Source: own processing

At the same time, a statistically significant correlation was confirmed between (1) the share of priority 2 and 3 news published by news agencies and (2) the share of priority 2 and 3 news broadcast on television ($r = .794$, $p < 0.001$). We calculated the share of Priority 2 and 3 news published by the news agencies separately for each day in the observed period using the formula: $\left(\frac{\text{number of contents with priority 2 or 3}}{\text{total number of agency news contents}}\right)$ and the share of Priority 2 and 3 news broadcast by television was calculated separately for each day in the observed period using the formula: $\left(\frac{\text{number of broadcast contents gained from ČTK and TASR with priority 2 or 3}}{\text{total number of broadcast news contents gained from ČTK and TASR}}\right)$.

Table 4. Correlations for hypothesis no. 2

Correlations		
		Broadcast news from ČTK – Priority 2-3
ČTK – Priority 2-3	Pearson Correlation	.818**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	62
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

	Broadcast news from TASR – Priority 2-3
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TASR – Priority 2-3	Pearson Correlation	.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	62
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

		Sum of all broadcast news – Priority 2-3
Sum of all broadcast news – Priority 2-3	Pearson Correlation	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	62
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

Source: own processing; IBM SPSS version 26

Both findings indicate that television uses the prioritization provided by news agencies as a tool to consciously guide when selecting the news it broadcasts. Hypothesis no. 2 has been confirmed. We can state that TA3 television deliberately selects news and actively responds to the reduction or increase in news prioritized by agencies – i.e. if the ČTK and TASR agencies deliver more reports with priority 2 and 3, then more such reports will also be delivered by TA3 at the expense of reports with priority 4. Confirmation of hypothesis no. 2 also expands upon the confirmation of hypothesis no. 1, which confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between the number of reports published by news agencies and the number of reports broadcast on television.

5. Conclusion

As J. Ftorek states: “*the mass media play an important role in modern mass society by co-shaping public opinion en masse. They convey the same information to a large number of people.*” According to him, they thus become an important factor in influencing the opinions of the general public (Ftorek, 2017: 105). The television broadcasts we watch have a specific position within the mass media. Their popularity is confirmed by both public opinion polls and several academic research articles and texts. News brings important information for decision-making in the position of voters, neighbours, parents or any member of a certain social group. If we know that critical thinking can be considered the ability to assess new information and examine it carefully and critically from multiple perspectives, forming judgments about its credibility and value (Grecman et al., 2000: 7), research needs to point not only to how published reports ultimately affect recipients but also how they are created. The average viewer cannot assess the credibility, objectivity, originality or justification of the information presented by the media. That is why it is important to keep society informed about the background of media production and thus improve its media literacy.

In our research, we focused on the relationship between television news and agency news. As news agencies are one of the primary sources of information for television newsrooms concerning foreign events, we were interested in whether there is a relationship between the number of published news broadcasts by TA3 and the number of "raw" news contents from agency services offered by TASR, ČTK and Reuters. The results of the research showed a positive relationship between the observed fields. This means that the more news that agencies issued in their services, the more news was broadcast on television. The number of reports published on television correlates with the number of reports published by news agencies both in the case of the total sum of reports from all agencies ($r = .516$) and for individual agencies separately (ČTK:

$r = .584$; TASR: $r = .450$; Reuters: $r = .344$, $p < 0.001$) for all correlations. News agencies can thus be considered essential sources of information for the commercial news broadcaster TA3, which adjusts the amount of contents also on the basis of their specific daily news offering. We record the strongest relationship between TA3 and the ČTK agency. We therefore assume that the Czech media institution occupies the position of the information pillar for this television channel in the process of creating news content, which is also confirmed by our media experience, as the reporters use the agency more significantly than other monitored institutions to obtain subject and textual material.

At the same time, it should be noted that through quantitative content analysis, we also focused on the information agreement between the agency content and the broadcast messages, i.e. whether or not the sources of information were the observed agencies. Out of the total number of 1,621 television articles, we did not find overlap between agencies in only 59 cases (3.64 %). For 5 items, we identified the television itself as an information source, for 2 items, the American news television CNN, and in 52 articles, we could not identify the source of information at all (3.21 %). The low percentage of television content without information agreement with researched agencies supports a statistically significant relationship between the number of published news broadcasts and the number of "raw" news items from agency services. Of course, we also recorded a statistically significant relationship in the number of reports between news agencies – there was a strong correlation ($r = .622$ to $.820$, $p < 0.001$). In the production of agency news, there are visible dips in the daily number of reports, which can always be observed during the weekend. The reason is probably the days off, which affect both ordinary citizens, as well as public sector employees and politicians, as a result of which events on the political scene are partially absent.

Since we confirmed the quantitative relationship between the agency service and published reports with the above results, which highlighted a certain intervention of the agencies in the construction of media reality by television newsroom, it is necessary to verify this connection on the basis of other parameters. M. Lapčík understands news as a multiple interpretation of facts developing in a specific context. The information must be registered and then selected from a huge number of messages. However, media workers seldom get to the scene immediately and therefore receive information through eyewitnesses and participants in the event (Lapčík, 2012: 172-173) or cooperate with news agencies, which provide them with agency services for a fee. It should be noted that the newsroom provides information on a continuous basis. This is a phenomenon typical especially for the online environment, but due to recurring news segments (Šebeš, 2016: 65-102) in the broadcasting of monotype television, such as TA3, employees do not have a clear deadline and any new information can become a message even in the next half hour. Due to the fact that there is also a competitive environment in the news, the most current becomes the "winner". But the question is how to select the right one from the amount of information. As the observed agencies deliver dozens of news daily, arranged chronologically from newest to oldest, they use prioritization to indicate the importance of individual information. Therefore, we verified the relationship between the number of foreign news with priority 2 and 3 determined by the news agencies ČTK and TASR, which was broadcast by television, and the number of foreign news broadcast with priority 4. News contents with priority 2 and 3 accounted for 24.76 % of all issued ČTK and TASR agency reports. In the case of broadcast contents, this share increased to 47.22 %. For each observed day, we calculated this share separately and then measured the relationship between the variables using statistical methods. We confirmed a statistically significant correlation between the share of priority 2 and 3 reports published by news agencies and the share of priority 2 and 3 news broadcast on television ($r = .794$, $p < 0.001$). Based on the results, we can say that TA3 uses the prioritization of news agencies, takes it into account in the gatekeeping process and consciously is guided by it when selecting the news that it broadcasts. In the period under review, we noticed that television actively responded to the decline or increase in news preferred by the agencies. If the ČTK and TASR agencies issued more content with priority 2 and 3, then TA3 also delivered more such content, at the expense of priority 4 reports.

Admittedly, we cannot claim that the prioritization of agency reports and their number are the only determinants influencing the final form of television broadcasting. Primarily, we focus only on content about foreign events, in which the supply of information via information sources is in many cases the only way to learn about the event or to actually "capture" it. Factors influencing the choice of information for the news include, of course, the subjective decisions of the gatekeeper, as well as pressure on the editors and the reporters from economic groups or media owners, which, however, we do not expect with foreign news. At the same time, however, we do not completely rule

it out and recommend focusing on both areas in the context of Slovak media production, especially by using qualitative research methods. However, the question is – how foreign news captures the importance, uniqueness and reality of individual events and what extent of objectivity is in this media production, when its form is significantly influenced by specific information sources such as the news agency.

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Note: A full list of analyzed contents and a coding book can be obtained on a request.

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