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Journalistic role performance – the Hungarian case¹

Abstract: The article introduces the results of an empirical examination of journalistic role performance in Hungary. In reference to the “Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe” research project (led by Prof. Claudia Mellado from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, in Chile and Lea Hellmueller, from Texas State University, www.journalisticperformance.org), we attempt to discuss the main patterns of role performance in contemporary journalism in Hungary. The presence of six models in news production (watchdog, disseminator-interventionist, civic, loyal-facilitator, service journalism, and infotainment) is investigated by conducting a quantitative content analysis of 1,087 news items published by the national desk of four Hungarian broadsheets in 2012–2013.

Key words: journalism, role performance, quantitative content analysis, Hungary

Introduction

Over the last two decades, most studies on journalism have highlighted the pivotal role of the media in discussing politics and public affairs in Hungary. Also there has been a wide and under-reflected consensus over the statement that journalists have a tremendous effect on the quality of public discourse. Consequently, the expectations of the academic community were extremely high concerning journalistic performance in the first couple of years after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989. In the decade of the 1990s, the norm of journalistic objectivity influenced the discourse on the Hungarian media. Numerous analyses confronted the require-

¹ This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ments of fair, fact-based, nonpartisan, and disinterested journalism with the reality of the ideologically biased and heavily partisan political coverage (Argejó et al., 1994; Beck, 1998; Mádl, Szabó, 1999; Terestyéni, 1998). Being criticised for bias, some media actors actively sought ways of making political coverage neutral, but failed to offer an answer to the question of how to be objective in practice (Kotroczó, 2007; Vajda, 2007). In other words, the norms of objectivity in the journalist ethical codes have never been implemented in the day to day work of media professionals.

Later, journalists started to explain biased coverage by the need to “counterbalance” the partisan reports of the “other side” (Vásárhelyi, 2001; Varga, 2002; Juhász, 2004, Sipos, Takács, 2005). The reasoning was that the whole media landscape should be balanced and not individual journalists or media outlets. By the beginning of the 2010s, the Hungarian media had got to a situation where the declarations did not refer to the ideal of objectivity anymore; today, the most important declared aim seems to be to fight for a landscape where every citizen can find his or her media. As media fragmentation became an everyday experience of the Hungarian audience, the requirement of neutrality slowly and surely vanished from intellectual debate. Today, most Hungarian media workers explicitly deny the significance and validity of the claims of objectivity. The new journalistic credo in covering politics is the honest presentation of political and cultural predispositions.

Having detected the trajectory of the discourses on journalism and politics in Hungary, the question arises: what are the main characteristics of the journalists’ role performance in the contemporary Hungarian media sphere? The examination aims to understand the main patterns of journalistic role performances by investigating the presence of six models of professional roles in news stories published by the national desks of four Hungarian daily papers. The sampling strategy and the data collection for the quantitative content analysis replicate the study was carried out by Claudia Mellado and Claudia Lagos (2014).²

Theoretical background

Mellado and Lagos argue that journalistic roles have been mostly conceptualised as a mixture of professional ideology and journalistic culture.

² The authors are grateful to Claudia Mellado for providing the sampling strategy and the code book of the original analysis.

The authors also emphasise that the vast majority of research focuses on the self-declarations of individual journalists of his/her perceptions on journalistic roles, and less attention has been devoted to the analysis of how different ideals of those professional roles are materialised in journalistic performance (Mellado, Lagos, 2014). The study was designed by Claudia Mellado and Claudia Lagos as a promising attempt to fill this gap in the literature. Mellado and Lagos define six models of journalistic roles and each of these dimensions can be characterised by different measures of professional practice.

The different models can be summarised as follows:³

DISSEMINATOR – INTERVENTIONIST MODEL

The disseminator-interventionist dimension deals with the active-passive stance of journalists in their reporting. The passive stance emphasises the neutrality and distance between the journalist and the facts. The interventionist counterpart is more journalist-centred, which emphasises the voice of the journalists in the story, who often act as advocates for different (political) groups in society. These two ways of reporting conform to the one dimensional structure, whereby a greater level of participation by the journalist implies higher levels of interventionism, and vice versa.

WATCHDOG MODEL

The well-known watchdog journalism seeks to hold the government, business and other public institutions accountable, serving as a 'fourth estate' in the political community. Like a guard dog that barks when it notices an intruder, the 'watchdog' role involves alerting others when a problem is detected. Common subjects are the government decision-making process, illegal activity, immorality, consumer protection issues and environmental destruction. The model suggests that journalism has a responsibility to protect the public interest, demanding and ensuring the accountability of those in power (for example, cases of inefficiency, bad administration, corruption, fraud, the blocking of law projects, harassment and/or misinformation, among others). The function of questioning, criticising and even denouncing institutions and individuals that form part of the political or economic elite can be conceptualised within this model.

³ The descriptions are largely based on the wordings of the code book provided by Claudia Mellado.

LOYAL-FACILITATOR MODEL

This model can be encapsulated in two ways. In its first variant, the journalists cooperate with those in power and accept the information they provide as credible. In line with this, they support the political agenda set by the government, show loyalty to power, support and defend the government's policies, give a positive image of the established authority and those currently in power, and often they become public relations channels of government messages to the public. In its second variant, journalists shift focus from the de facto power to the nation-state unit, portraying a positive image of the country, encouraging the sense of belonging, and strengthening national prestige.

SERVICE JOURNALISM MODEL

The service journalism model combines the rights and self-interests of the audience, creating a client-professional relationship between the journalist and the public. This model of role performance focuses on providing information, knowledge and advice about goods and services that audiences can apply in their day to day lives. The journalisms that prioritise this model provide help, tips, guidance and information about the management of day-to-day life and individual problems.

INFOTAINMENT JOURNALISM MODEL

The infotainment model of journalism, also called tabloid journalism, uses different stylistics, narrative and/or visual discourses in order to entertain and thrill the public. This type of journalism addresses the public as spectator, where the audience's relaxation and emotional experiences have become the centre of attention. On the one hand, infotainment journalism concentrates on soft news, and the term infotainment is sometimes used in a derogatory fashion. Soft news can be defined as stories on less serious subjects (entertainment, sports, lifestyles, astrology, and human interest stories). On the other hand, it is a style of journalism that tends to emphasise topics such as sensational crime stories, astrology, gossip columns about the personal lives of celebrities, sports stars and politicians.

CIVIC ORIENTED MODEL

The civic model of journalism incorporates some aspects of social responsibility theory, focusing on the connection between journalism, the

citizenry and public life. Journalistic performance that uses these ideas is concerned with encouraging the public to get involved in public debate, and to participate in social, political and cultural life. In this sense, the space given to sources and actors not always considered by the media is an important aspect of this model. This model can raise awareness of profound problems, helping to inform government agents about social needs.

In their study of journalistic role performance, Mellado and Lagos provided an operationalised way of testing the above discussed six models. The authors proposed a quantitative content analysis of the sample of news items in order to comprehend which models described journalism in Chile in the best possible way.

The Study

Methods

The article is the summary of the findings of an empirical analysis which replicates the original research of Mellado and Lagos (including theoretical frameworks, research questions, and tools for operationalisation). Whilst Mellado and Lagos focus on Chile, our study is designed to investigate the Hungarian case.

Although it is not a comparative study, we wish to encourage the international academic community to consider the possible common patterns in Latin America and in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for potential comparisons of journalistic performance. Not neglecting the immense differences between both regions, attention should be paid to the fairly obvious similarities such as: the authoritarian past, the difficult transition to democracy, the peripheral status, foreign debt crisis, the Janus-faced privatisation processes, the decline in confidence in the administrative functions and institutions of democracy, the long tradition of populism and strong leadership, and so on. Focusing on the media, it must be mentioned that Chile is known as a country in which the journalism handbooks on the concepts of the professional role have been heavily influenced by the Anglo-Saxon tradition (objectivity, neutrality, fact-based journalism) and Eurocentric modernity (journalist as educator). The impact of the Anglo-Saxon tradition is confirmed by the empirical findings of Mellado and Logos, their analysis on the journalists role performance suggest that the disseminator role is the most common in the Chilean news (Mellado, Logos, 2014, p. 2103).

It is, however, also emphasised that the hegemonic academic discourse on journalism have been challenged by the everyday practises of particular journalists. Mellado and Logos highlight that before the coup d'état of 1973, the Chilean press was very much ideological, where every newspaper took a political stance in the context of a rough ideological battle as it may be considered as living tradition in Chile. New approaches for the role of media in societies have also been emerged. Community Radios, for example, are designed to give voices to rural, marginalised and often deprived populations (not to provide neutral and objective coverage on public affairs). Since the stations are operated, owned, and influenced by the communities they serve, social activists have considered community radio as an ideal medium for articulating grass roots needs and demands of certain social groups (Araya, 2014, pp. 257–268). Needless to say that the aforementioned practises somewhat contradict to the normative standards of the neutrality seeking journalism.

In this sense, there is an interesting tension between the level of collegian ethical codes and the level of practises in Chile, similar to what is often studied in the Hungarian case. The aim of this replication is to shed some light on the possible similarities in journalistic patterns in both regions and open the door to further cross-country comparisons.

Research question

This study has been driven by the following inquiries: *Which models of journalism are prevalent in Hungary in covering politics and public affairs? What is the dominant model of the journalism in the Hungarian case?*

Since there are no previous analyses testing the difference in the presence of these specific dimensions of professional roles in news content, our hypothesis can only be grounded on the general overview of the related literature. Therefore, following the stream of studies emphasising the engaged journalism as dominant way of working (Bajomi-Lázár, 2014) and the increasing tabloidisation in Hungary (Szabó, Kiss, 2012, pp. 490–493), we assume that *loyal-facilitator* and the *infotainment* models dominate journalistic role performance.

At this point of the paper, we should emphasise that our examination solely focuses on print media. The patterns of journalistic role performance of audiovisual journalism and of citizen journalism are beyond the scope of the study.

Despite the limitations, we still believe the analysis contributes to the understanding of the contemporary nature of role performance of journalism in Hungary by investigating the specific field of media which are the most traditional and somewhat challenged by other media formats. Those

challenges are important driving forces for self-reflection which might be well-manifested in the news items as the main product of the journalists.

Sampling strategy

First, we selected four Hungarian daily newspapers that are circulated across the country. The *Magyar Nemzet* (connected to the centre right) and the *Népszabadság* (left leaning and liberal) had the highest circulation as major quality papers in 2012/2013. The *Blikk* and the *Bors* have been the most popular tabloid dailies without any obvious, or openly communicated political preferences. All of examined newspapers are owned by private companies. The *Népszabadság* belongs to the portfolio of the Vienna Capital Partners, the *Blikk* is owned by the Ringier-Axel Springer and the *Bors* has been purchased by a British Virgin Island offshore company. The *Magyar Nemzet* is the only one in the sample which is not owned by foreign investors, but a Hungarian company which is a part of the economic interest of the ‘media mogul’ Lajos Simicska.⁴ Simicska is known as former close friend of PM Viktor Orban, in 2015 conflict emerged between PM Orban and Simicska which resulted in a vast change in the editorial policies of the *Magyar Nemzet*. The study however focuses on the year 2012/2013 which is prior to the split.

The following circulation numbers are based on audited data of numbers of copies distributed on an average day in 2012: *Magyar Nemzet* – 42,244 copies; *Népszabadság* – 58,867 copies; *Bors* – 75,783 copies; *Blikk* – 167,539 copies.⁵

As per the original sampling strategy, we applied the constructed week method, which provided two constructed weeks per year. We picked the copies of each newspaper that were published on the predefined days. Table 1 summarises the construction of the sample.

Table 1

Summary of sampling

Name of the daily newspaper	Number of items in the sample	Political orientation	Circulation in 2012 (sold copies)
Népszabadság	262	left leaning, liberal	58,867
Magyar Nemzet	377	centre right	42,244
Blikk	217	–	167,539
Bors	231	–	75,783
Total	1,087		

⁴ Source: ‘*Amerikaiak háppolták el a zsíros falatot*’, origo.hu, January 18, 2013.

⁵ Source: Hungarian Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2012.

The unit of analysis is single news items. We picked all the news from the national desk (excluding sport, culture, gossip, PR articles, interviews, editorials, opinion and comments). In total, 1,087 news items were sampled for the examination (N = 1,087).

Data collection

The codebook was designed to quantitatively analyse the six journalistic role performance models adopted by the print media. In total, 76 code instructions have been defined. To measure the presence of the journalistic role performance model, we used 45 indicators proposed by Claudia Mellado.⁶ The majority of the instructions were coded by dichotomous variables which were generated by the registration of the observation of the presence or absence of particular characteristics (yes/no).

Six independent coders⁷ were trained in the application of the codebook. Given the fact of the complexity of the codebook, multiple rounds of training were carried out between March 2015 and June 2015. Prior to the beginning of the coding process, nominal intercoder tests were performed to check that the coders had a similar understanding of the codebook instructions. Based on Krippendorff's alpha formula, the final intercoder reliability was .90. The coding was done manually between July and December 2015. Beside the intercoder tests, an online platform was established which served as forum for discussing items which might be difficult to code. In the case of any questions, there was a dialogue over the issue and a joint decision was made.

Findings

Descriptive statistics (cross-tabulations and frequency tables) suggest that the disseminator-interventionalist model seems to be the most appropriate concept for journalist role performance in covering politics and public affairs in Hungary. The components of the interventionalist latitude of this model have been demonstrated: explaining causes, interpreting meanings, or speculating over the possible consequences of events or facts seemed to be more present in Hungary than the dimensions of the other six models. In 17 per cent of the news stories, the opinions of the journalists can be well-traced. 23 per cent of the news stories include

⁶ <http://www.journalisticperformance.org/>.

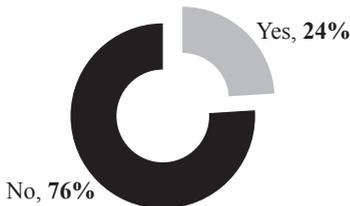
⁷ Judit Barta (PhD Student at University of Eötvös Loránd), Dorottya Lovász (BA Student at University of Eötvös Loránd), Fruzsina Németh (MA Student at Eötvös Loránd) and the authors were involved in the coding process.

some elements of journalistic interpretation. In almost one third of the articles, the author(s) demanded or proposed changes, or ways of reacting to a situation, event or act. The presence of first person usage (I, we, me, my, our), is the most common characteristic of the interventionist pole of this model, being found in almost 4 out of 10 news stories analysed (see Chart 1). From this point of view, no significant difference is found regarding the type of the media outlet. Interventionalism is detected both in broadsheet papers and tabloid dailies in Hungary.

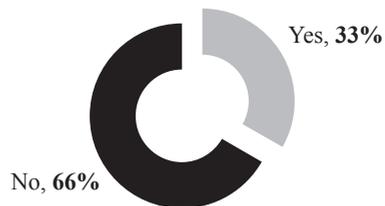
This finding tells us that, even in the supposedly fact-based news stories, journalists tend to provide meanings of political acts and events with interpretations, opinions and explanations. This resonates very well with the observations of the international literature on the framing processes of the media. Our result for journalistic intervention confirms that there is an interplay between the framing activities and the extent to which journalists take an active role and communicate subjective elements in reporting about politics (see Bartholomé et al., 2015, p. 439).

Chart 1. The presence of the indicators of disseminator – interventionists model in the Hungarian sample. N = 1087

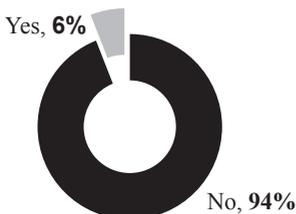
Disseminator-Interventionist: Within the news item, does the journalist/author give their opinion or judgment, stating what side (s)he is on, or what her/his position is?



Disseminator-Interventionist: Within the news item, does the journalist/author explain the causes, meaning and/or suggest possible consequences of certain facts/actions?



Disseminator-Interventionist: Does the journalist/author of the news item propose or demand changes as to how a determined action is being carried out by a group or individual?



Disseminator-Interventionist: Does the journalist/author use qualifying adjectives within the text?



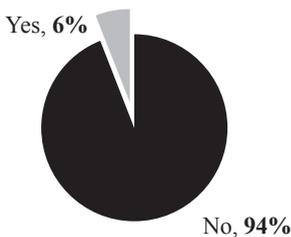
Disseminator-Interventionalist: Does the journalist use first person within the news item (I, we, me, my, our)?



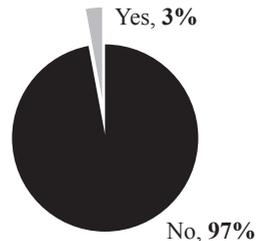
Data from the news stories of the national desks show that civic-oriented journalism and the components of the loyal-facilitator model are totally absent in the sample of this study. Less than 5 per cent of the articles contain textual elements that are coded positively in the dichotomous variables (yes/no) of the civic-oriented and loyal-facilitator models (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. The presence of the indicators of civic oriented and loyal-facilitator models in the Hungarian sample. N = 1087

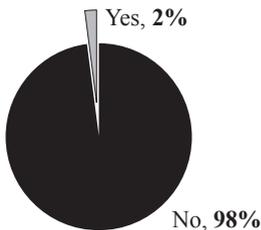
Civic oriented: Does the news item include the vision/reaction of regular or organized citizens on a topic/incident or event, showing how they perceive or are affected by different political decisions?



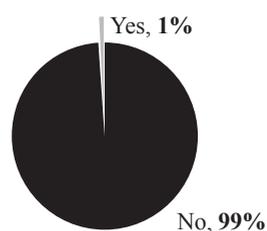
Civic oriented: Does the news item include regular or organized citizens' demands or proposals on how different political measures/decisions should be handled?



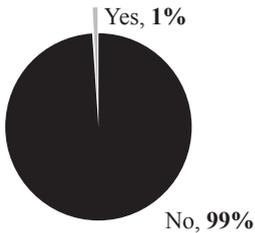
Civic oriented: Does the news item mention the impact of certain political decisions on local communities?



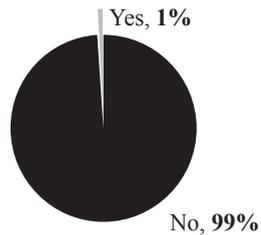
Civic oriented: Does the news item instruct people on their duties and rights as citizens (economic, social and/or political)?



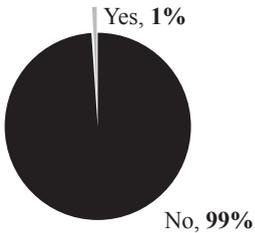
Civil oriented: Does the news item provide the citizen with background information in order to make political **decisions**?



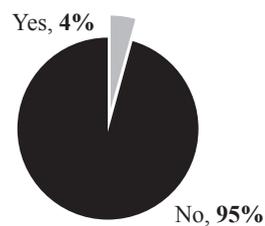
Civil oriented: Does the news item include inquiries from common people for politicians or those who are in power?



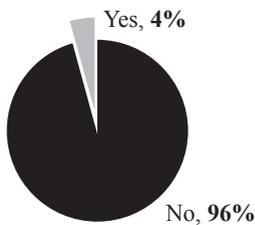
Civic oriented: Within the news item, does the journalist support the objectives of an organization or citizen movement, and/or position the organization as a positive example to follow?



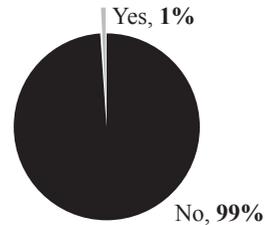
Civic oriented: Within the news item, does the journalist give information about citizen acts such as campaigns, collective actions, protests, commemorations, demonstrations and protests?



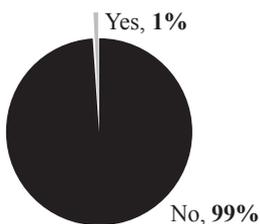
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist praise, promote or defend specific official activities or measurements of improvement carried out by the political or economic power?



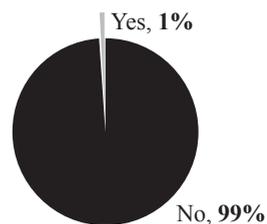
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist praise, promote or defend national or regional policies in general, or any one in particular?



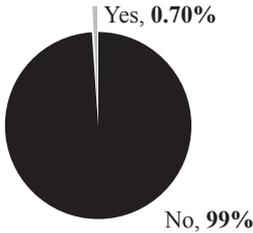
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist present a positive image of the political elite?



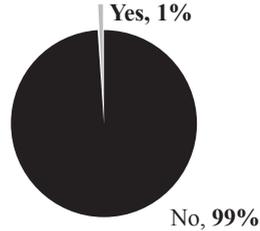
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist give a positive image of the economic leaders?



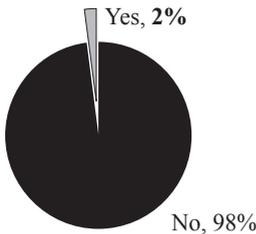
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist emphasize that his/her own country is progressing and doing better than before in any relevant dimension?



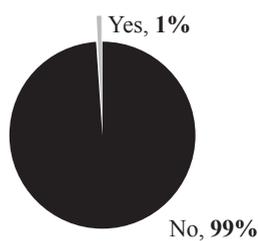
Loyal-Facilitator: Does the journalist emphasize the country's advances and triumphs in comparison to other countries in the world?



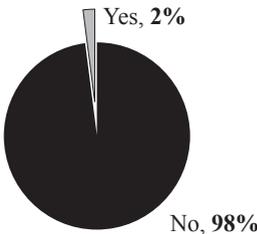
Loyal-Facilitator: Are individuals or groups who have triumphed in the country or abroad explicitly highlighted within the news item?



Loyal-Facilitator: Does the news item refer to activities organized with the objective of promoting the country's image?



Loyal-Facilitator: Does the news item include statements made by the journalist that positively value being from a specific nation?

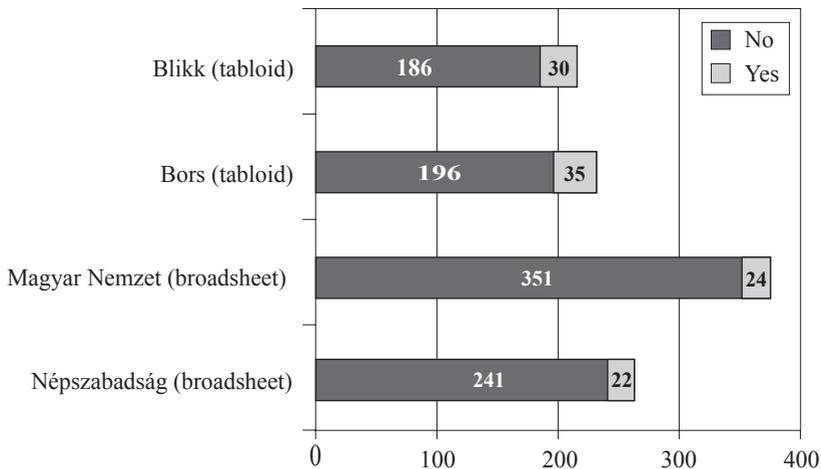


Consequently, the journalistic role which encourages ordinary people to act as citizens, to get involved in public debate, and to participate in social and political life are definitely missing in the mainstream of the media in Hungary. It is, however, a surprising result that this study provides no evidence for the cooperation between journalists and politicians to maintain the *status quo*, or obvious journalistic support for politicians.

This finding clearly contradicts the observations of previous studies on journalism in Hungary (Bajomi-Lázár, 2008; Bajomi-Lázár, Horváth, 2013; Bajomi-Lázár, 2014). Our explanation for the disagreement is methodological, on the one hand: we suspect that mainly opinion pieces such as editorials, commentaries, op-eds and so on are the tools for making political statements in daily papers, which are simply excluded from our sample. On the other hand, it might be the case that the political sympathies of the broadsheet papers can be revealed by their critical behaviour towards their adversaries (including character assassination, revealing hidden motives and wrongdoings) not by praising and approving the achievements of their preferred parties. If this is true, the indicators of the loyal-facilitator model are not able to capture and measure the level of the political engagement of journalists in Hungary.

Concerning service journalism, only one component of the model has been evaluated as a noticeable journalistic pattern. It is this that estimates the amount of news items which focus on the consequences or meaning that certain facts or events have for people’s everyday personal lives. We have registered 11 per cent of articles that demonstrate efforts by the author(s) of the piece to highlight the importance or impact of the issue covered on the daily life of the ordinary people. It is mainly the tabloid papers that show examples of focusing on everyday consequences (see Chart 3). The broad-

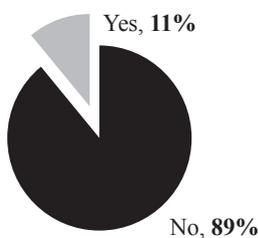
Chart 3. Indicator of the service journalism model: Does the news item focus on the consequences or meaning that certain facts or events have for people’s everyday personal life? (by newspapers). N = 1087



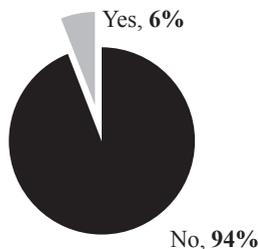
sheets seemingly do not pay attention to the perspectives of the layman. Our sample, however, provides no further evidence for the presence of service journalism (see Chart 4). Therefore, it is our assessment that the model of the service journalism is mostly absent in the coverage of political and public affairs in Hungary.

Chart 4. The presence of the indicators of service journalism model in the Hungarian sample. N=1087

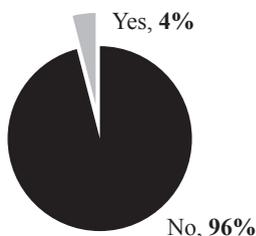
Service journalism: Does the news item focus on the consequences or meaning that certain facts or events have for people's everyday personal life?



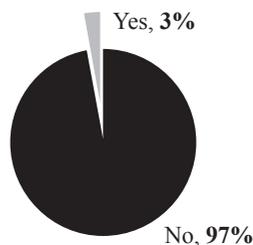
Service journalism: Does the news item give tips or practical advice to manage everyday problems that audiences have with others or their environment?



Service journalism: Does the news item provide tips or practical advice to solve personal problems that the audience could potentially face every day?



Service journalism: Does the news item inform the reader about the latest trends in products and services in the market, or helps them distinguish between products of different qualities?

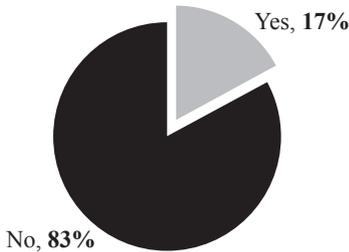


Contradictory results can be derived from the data set regarding the watchdog model. 17 per cent of the examined news items include information on judicial or administrative processes against individuals, or groups of power. Four out of ten articles in our sample contain criticism of individuals or groups of power in the form of quotes, statements and/or negative opinions. It is however true that only 9 per cent of news items include any assertions or references from the journalist, in which (s)he judges, or condemns what

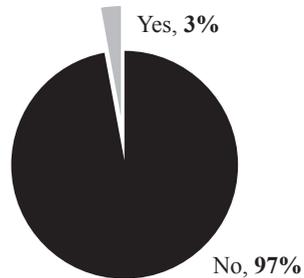
the individuals or groups in power say or do. The rest communicate criticism which is given by someone else, not by the journalist (see Chart 5).

Chart 5. The presence of the indicators of watchdog journalism model in the Hungarian sample. N=1087

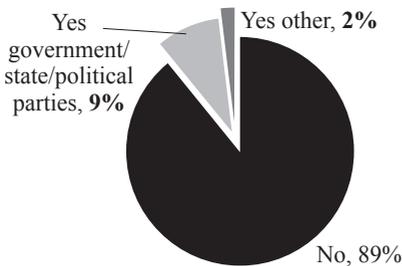
Watchdog: Information on judicial or administrative processes



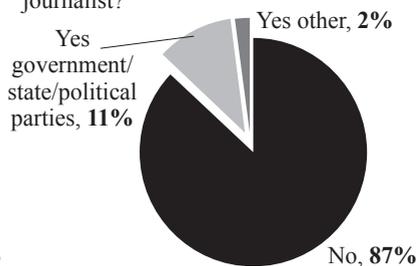
Watchdog: External investigation



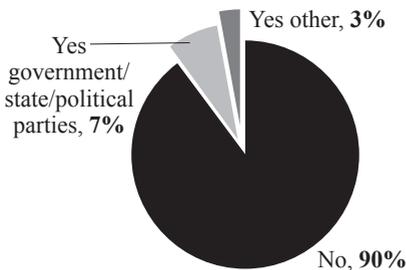
Watchdog: By means of statements and/or opinions, does the journalist question the validity or truthfulness of what those individuals or groups in power say or do?



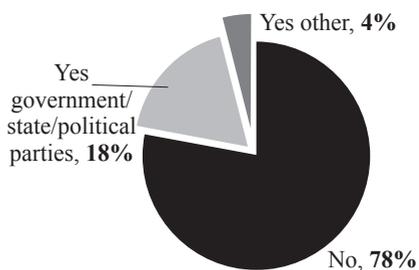
Watchdog: Does the news item include questioning of individuals or groups of power through quotes, statements and/or opinions given by someone other than the journalist?



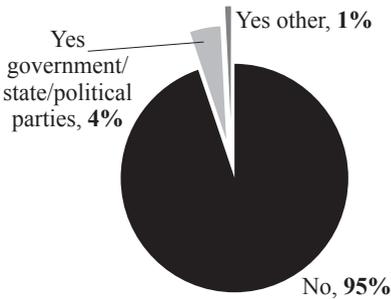
Watchdog: Does the news item include any assertion or reference from the journalist, in which (s)he judges, or condemns what the individuals or groups in power say or do?



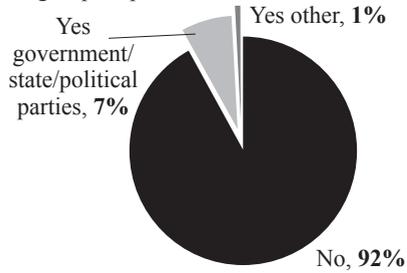
Watchdog: Does the news item include criticism of individuals or groups of power in the form of quotes, statements and/or negative opinions given by someone other than the journalist?



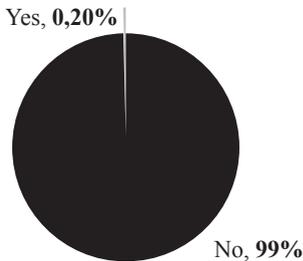
Watchdog: Does the news item include an assertion or reference from the journalist, in which he/she accuses or makes evident something hidden, not only illegal, but also irregular or inconvenient concerning individuals or groups of power?



Watchdog: Does the news item include quotes and/or testimonies from people other than the journalist, that account for, accuse or make evident something hidden, not only illegal, but also irregular or inconvenient, concerning individuals or groups of power?



Watchdog: Does the news item show proof of conflict or confrontation between the journalist and one or more of those in power?



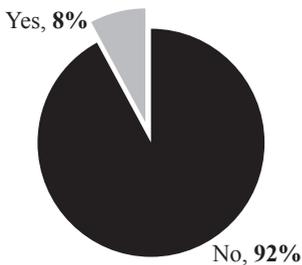
It is tempting to say that watchdog journalism is the most common pattern in the Hungarian case. Notwithstanding the fact that the media tend to promote the image that politics is full of crime, corruption and secretive illegal manoeuvres (see also Szabó, Mihályffy, Kiss, 2011), we argue that it would be very much misleading to conclude that watchdog model is prevalent in Hungary. Let us explain the reason why, by continuing with the strongest indicator of the watchdog model which reflects investigative reporting. Investigative reporting is known as a genre in which journalists are deeply involved in making evident hidden crimes or wrongdoings of those who are in power via extensive inquiries and research, beyond reliance on leaks and secondary sources of information. The analysis compellingly demonstrates that this component is somewhat

lacking in Hungary: not more than 4 per cent of the total sample provided information on investigative reporting. All in all, we suggest that the relatively high level of attention that journalists pay to judicial processes against politicians and government officials should be connected to the criminalisation of the public discourse, rather than to the watchdog activities of the media in Hungary.

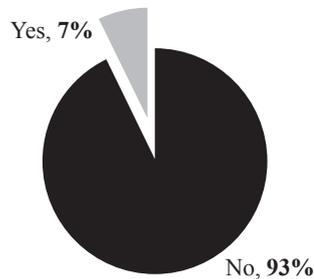
Interestingly enough, the infotainment model has not been detected as dominant as was expected. Apart from the noticeable presence of the explicit textual reference to feelings and emotions (12 per cent), we failed to demonstrate that the logic of tabloidisation would colonise the way of discussing politics in the written media (see Chart 6).

Chart 6. The presence of the indicators of infotainment journalism model in the Hungarian sample. N=1087

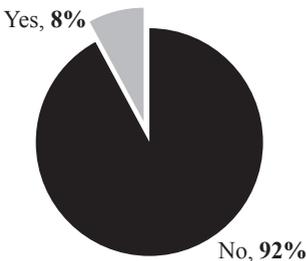
Infotainment: Does the news item centres on one or more persons and their different intellectual, physical, mental or social characteristics or personal background?



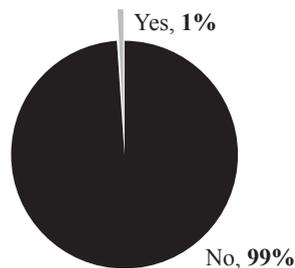
Infotainment: Does the news item focus on the private life of one or more individuals?



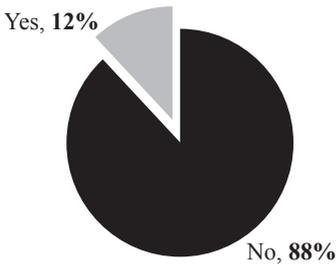
Infotainment: Does the news item include the use of style elements or descriptions in the story that highlight the unusual, spectacular or unexpected?



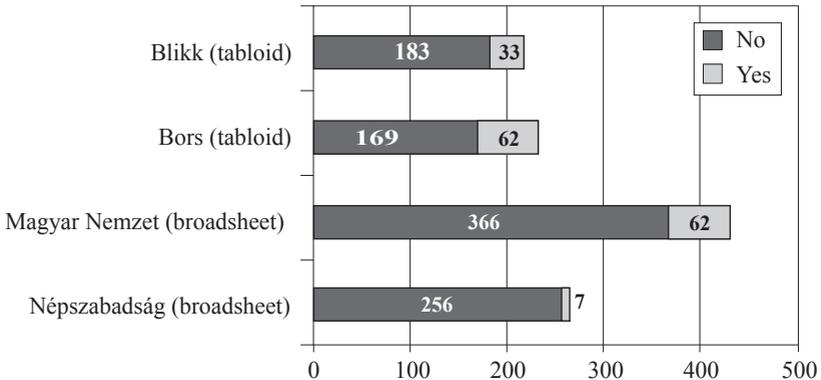
Infotainment: Does the news item focus on an event or incident framed as a scandal?



Infotainment: Does the news item make explicit references to feelings or emotions?



Does the news item make explicit references to feelings or emotions? (by newspaper)



Conclusion

The current study contributes to the literature on journalistic role performance by showing the presence and absence of the dimensions of the six models of role conception. The main conclusion of the study is that no single model can truly describe journalistic role performance in Hungary. Our data suggests that interventionalism is an important journalistic pattern in covering politics. It means that the personality of the authors of the article and the standpoints of the editorial board are rather visible in the news items of the written media. We also argue that the findings of the study are strongly connected to the frame building mechanisms in the media. Our assessment is, therefore, that the interpretative and subjective style of reporting politics is prevalent in Hungary.

There is, however, a pressing need for more systematic overviews of the complex interplay between journalists, political actors and the representatives of the corporate interest. Further empirical contributions like comparative studies, longitudinal analyses, and case studies should address the issue of journalistic role performance in Central and Eastern Europe. Also, more attention has to be paid to the practises of journalists who work in electronic media outlets (especially in television channels), online news portals and local media products.

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