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Częstochowa journalist circles between 1989–2007

Introduction

The goal of this article is to analyse the journalist circle of the Częstochowa area. The reason why this area was chosen is because the author of the article has lived and worked there as a journalist for 14 years, for seven of which she was the chief editor of a local daily. It can be said that Częstochowa is a typical voivodeship city, although it has lost that status in 1999 due to an administrative reform in the country. The trends that take place there are of wider scope and can be true for the other 32 Polish towns which used to be voivodeship capitals but are now municipalities.

This article analyses survey results carried out by the author as well as some academic works and articles from the press.

Environment profile

Due to the fact that there are no clearly defined criteria for becoming a journalist and a lack of a professional union, it is difficult to establish how large this group of interest is¹. It can be said that in the 1990s there was a large increase in the number of working journalists while after 2000 – this number has significantly decreased. At the same time, increased the number of people part of the “industry” such as researchers, computer scientists, sound and image operators, advertising and classified ads staff.

The situation is similar regarding the assessment of local media journalist numbers. One researcher estimated that for local press in the late 1990s worked approximately 6000–7000 people, of which only 30% worked in editorial offices². This is due to the fact that most local publishers did not hire people on a full time basis and a lot of journalists (working for parish, non-government, social, youth or school newspapers) simply worked as volunteers. Also, often people hired on a full time basis elsewhere did journalistic work as part of their daily duties, ie. people working for local governments, industry or from academic circles. It

¹ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 2000, nr 3/4, p. 43.

² M. Gierula, *Polska prasa lokalna 1989–2000. Typologia i społeczne funkcjonowanie*, Katowice 2005, p. 167.

meant that for many people doing journalistic work did not mean that they were journalists by profession³.

For the purposes of this research, taken into consideration were only professional journalists or those who, “work on the creation, editing or preparing of press materials, are hired by an editorial office or are authorized to do such work by and for an editorial office”⁴. This means that journalists had to have some kind of contract for preparing or editing press materials. Taking all that into consideration, it can be estimated that in 1989 for Częstochowa media worked only about 50 journalists.

The largest local newspapers were: local “Gazeta Częstochowska”, national “Niedziela” published by Częstochowa Metropolitan Curia and version of “Zycie Warszawy”. Silesian and regional public electronic media had only 1–2 correspondents in Częstochowa. Together with the development of local media, also grew the number of journalists and other people working for them (2.5 times), numbering, in the mid 1990s, between 90–120 people.

All in all, between 1989 and 2007 the Częstochowa media employed 202 journalists. This included all the people whose names appeared as members of staff in electronic and print media⁵. In the majority of cases, these people did journalistic work on a regular and systematic basis and the compensation they received for it was their only or a predominant source of income. In this group included were also volunteer journalists (for school or parish) as well as those who engaged in journalistic work as part of their regular work duties (local government, academic, industry, union or parish work).

In this 202 people group, the majority was hired after 1989. Only one out of five Częstochowa journalists has worked for media in communist Poland⁶.

Table 1. Journalists employed in Częstochowa media between 1989–2007⁷

Year	Total number of employed	Newly employed	Newly employed in %	Leaving work	Leaving in %	Growth dynamics in %
1989	45	6	13.3	3	6.7	6.6
1990	52	10	19.2	2	3.8	15.4

³ According to definition, “profession” is a series of activities requiring specific knowledge and skill, done by an individual full or part time, for compensation and delineating position in social structure. Cf. J. Szczepański, *Czynniki kształtujące zawód i strukturę zawodową*, [in:] *Socjologia zawodów*, Warszawa 1965, p. 15.

⁴ Art. 7, act. 2, pt. 5, January 26, 1984. Press law, DzU z 1984 r., nr 5, pos. 24 with later changes.

⁵ Częstochowa media list all their full time employee names with the exception of local “Gazeta Wyborcza”. This data was compared to that given by editorial offices.

⁶ All Polish media replaced old staff with new. Cf. P. Mocek, *Dziennikarze po komunizmie. Elita mediów w świetle badań społecznych*, Warszawa 2006, p. 100 and on.

⁷ All data in tables obtained by author’s own calculations.

1991	90	40	44.4	1	1.6	43.3
1992	111	25	22.5	5	4.5	18.0
1993	120	14	11.6	3	2.5	10.8
1994	121	4	3.3	1	0.8	2.5
1995	126	6	4.8	13	10.3	-5.5
1996	123	10	8.1	14	11.4	-3.3
1997	115	6	5.2	3	2.6	2.6
1998	117	5	4.3	9	7.7	-3.4
1999	113	5	4.4	5	4.4	0
2000	123	15	12.1	12	9.7	2.4
2001	112	1	0.9	6	5.4	-4.5
2002	107	1	0.9	9	8.4	-7.5
2003	105	7	6.7	8	7.6	-0.9
2004	97	0	0	12	12.4	-12.4
2005	91	6	6.6	10	11.0	-4.4
2006	82	1	1.2	15	18.3	-17.1
2007	68	1	1.4	-	-	-

According to data from Table 1, it is clearly visible that the greatest growth dynamic took place in between 1990–1993. This was due to the launching of a new daily “Dziennik Częstochowski 24 Godziny”, the establishment of “Gazeta Wyborcza’s” local office, the re-launching of “Gazeta Częstochowska” and the development of local radio. Since the mid 1990s, however, the number of employed journalists has been decreasing. The largest number of people lost their jobs between 1995–1996 when “Dziennik Częstochowski 24 Godziny”, “Tygodnik Częstochowski” and “Tu i Teraz” ceased to exist. In 2000, “Zycie Częstochowy” employed some new people when its old staff was being replaced after the daily changed its publisher. After 2000, the number of employed journalists has continued to gradually decrease. This is due to the fact that Częstochowa has lost its voivodeship capital status which is tied to limiting the number of journalists employed in regional offices. Other reasons were the closing of radio RMF FM’s local office and the closing of the Częstochowa branch of “Trybuna Śląska” after it was taken over by “Dziennik Zachodni”. New press initiatives between 2003 and 2005 have created some new work places but not as many as were lost due to networking local radio stations, consolidation processes in print media and savings programmes in Częstochowa’s office of “Gazeta Wyborcza” and “Dziennik Zachodni”. Within the last seven years, 60 journalists have lost their jobs while 17 new ones were hired. As a result, the number of journalists working in Częstochowa between 2006–2007 was lower than that in 1991.

Among the 202 journalists employed between 1989–2007, 28.7% were women. This percentage placed Częstochowa slightly below the national average. According to research on local press carried out at the School of Journalism at UŚ in the mid 1980s and in 1998, wom-

en make up about 30% of all journalists⁸. For 2000, according to Zbigniew Bajka, the percentage increased to 35%, although he stated that his research sample was not entirely representative⁹.

The average age for Częstochowa journalists was nearly 40. The largest group of employees consisted of people between 30–49 (68.5%). Young journalists, below 30, made up 15%, while those over 50 – 16.5%. The increasing average age was due to the fact that this profession was becoming more stable¹⁰. It could also mean that it was becoming more difficult to enter this profession, which is not something unusual as this process was earlier observed, in 1956, by Stefania Dzięcielska doing similar research on journalist environment¹¹.

Nearly 50% of journalists have worked in their profession for over 10 years. Those with less experience, up to 5 years, made up 29% of total and those in between 5–10 years – 24%. One out of three journalists (35%) had between 11–20 years of work experience and 12% – over 20 years.

Due to the unstable local media market, a large majority of journalists have changed employers several times during their work career. Generally, this is characteristic of this profession in Poland and it takes place intra- and inter-media. This was illustrated in the profession's monthly "Press" which conducted a personal questionnaire for journalists to fill out.

Among Częstochowa journalists, the majority work for the printed press. This is also true for 90% of journalists in Poland. Nearly 70% are solely print journalists, 7% – radio, 2% – TV and 20% – multimedia.

In order to perform a more in-depth socio-demographic analysis of this professional environment, a detailed survey of the sample needed to be carried out. Out of the 202 journalists employed between 1989–2007, 170 were sampled as 11 had died and 21 others could not be located due to change of address¹². In early 2008, they were sent questionnaires of which 54 were sent back filled out, or 32% of total. Out of 54 completed surveys, 48 qualified (28%). This sample can be considered representative as the surveyed profile did not signifi-

⁸ M. Gierula, *Polska prasa...*, p. 168.

⁹ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze...*, p. 47–48.

¹⁰ The change of staff which took place after 1989 have resulted in much younger staff employed. According to research from early 1990s, the average age of journalists decreased significantly. In 1994, in Poznan, the average age was 26–28. Cf. J. Załubski, *Prasa w Poznaniu – dziesięć lat później*, [in:] *Środki masowej informacji w Polsce po likwidacji instytucji cenzury (1990–2000)*, ed. by J. Adamowski, Warszawa 2000, p. 209. In 1998, according to M. Gierula and M. Jachimowski's research, one third of journalists were under 30. M. Gierula, *Polska prasa...*, p. 168.

¹¹ Cf. P. Dzięcielska, *Sytuacja społeczna dziennikarzy polskich*, Wrocław 1962.

¹² Additional sources of personal data include portals such as "Nasza Klasa" and "GoldenLine", as well as secondary schools internet sites, and *Kto jest kim w Częstochowie 1998*, ed. by M. Rawinis, Częstochowa 1998, local press and obituaries.

cantly differ from the entire population (cf. Table 2). It can be said that there is a slight over-representation of women as well as journalists professionally active in 2007.

Table 2. Comparison of sample researched group and the entire Częstochowa journalist population (in %)

	Journalist population	Research group
Women	28.7	37.5
Age lower than 30	15.0	14.6
Age between 30–49	68.5	68.7
Age over 50	16.5	16.7
Professionally active in 2007	35.0	50.0
Working for press agencies (including those working solely for press)	90.0 (68.3)	91.6 (64.5)

Education and competences

Częstochowa journalists' level of education is higher than the national average; 87.5% have a high level of education and 12.5% have secondary level education. Research of journalist education in other regions of the country indicated an average of about 50% of journalists with a higher education¹³. The differences can be explained by different scope and time period of the research carried out¹⁴. In the early 1990s, many people began writing and working for media to gain extra income, without specific journalist qualifications. This is rather common among media people who also often work in other professions. The same is true in this case; over half of surveyed journalists worked elsewhere while for 44% this was their first profession.

It can be said that this profession is open, that is technically there is no requirement to have specific journalist qualifications in order to work for the media. As a result, only one out of three people in this industry has a degree in journalism. If we compare these results to those from earlier research, we can say that there is growing professionalization in this field¹⁵. On the other hand, having a degree in journalism does not guarantee that one will make a

¹³ Cf. E. Jurga, *Prasa lokalna Ziemi Leszczyńskiej*, [in:] *Środki masowej...*, p. 224; M. Gierula, *Polska prasa...*, p. 196.

¹⁴ With time, the education level of journalists increased. Research from 2007 on the Rybnicko-Wodzisławski region indicated 80% of staff with a higher education. K. Brzoza, *Dziennikarze prasy lokalnej ziemi rybnicko-wodzisławskiej*, [in:] *Prasa lokalna Dolnego Śląska*, Wrocław 2007, p. 218. The average level of education is influenced by the type of research. If it includes people working for parish press or civil servants working for local government press, the average will be lower.

¹⁵ According to M. Gierula 1998 research, only 3.4% had journalist education and in large cities – only 1.5%. M. Gierula, *Polska prasa...*, p. 170.

good journalist. What is valued more by chief editors are innate abilities, talent, self-education and experience¹⁶.

According to surveyed journalists, factors most imperative in this profession are: personal talent, psychological/physical predispositions and experience. The most helpful are considered to be:

- reporter efficiency, ability to obtain information from various sources – 92%;
- ability to write in an interesting way, create attention grabbing headlines – 69%;
- knowledge and intuition in meeting readers' interests, creativity in material selection – 58%.

Respondents also indicated key personality characteristics such as: perceptiveness, scrupulousness, interpersonal skills, honesty, courage, intelligence. These were considered more important than knowledge, both general and industry (including grammar, spelling and punctuation) as well as:

- knowledge of press and copyright laws, journalist ethics code – 25%;
- technical skills (computer, photo-editing, planning and editing columns, recording and editing materials) – 23%;
- knowledge of foreign languages and foreign press – 15 %;
- knowledge of media industry, editorial office work, distribution, advertising – 15%.

Regarding the last point, the little focus on knowledge of the industry can be tied to local media often being part of regional media and, thus, having no autonomy and therefore no influence on what goes on in the editorial office, in distribution or advertising. On the other hand, this system has enabled local journalists to obtain experience from people working on a regional or national level. 65% of Częstochowa journalists were interested in acquiring practical training beyond the local level.

While it may be difficult to assess local journalist competences, it may be easier to assess their incompetence based on the number of disclaimers and press law suits. The need to apply art. 31 of press law in order to correct false or inaccurate information is a consequence of infringing the rule of due care and accuracy when collecting and transmitting press materials. It is especially imperative to check whether such information is in accordance with the

¹⁶ W. Pisarek, *Kwalifikacje dziennikarzy w opinii redaktorów naczelnych*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 1995, nr 1/2, p. 157.

truth. Generally speaking, it was measured how many times journalists broke the journalistic ethics code or violated the rules of social co-existence.

Within the researched period, there were many examples of lack of diligence and accuracy in local media. This was mostly due to journalist lack of knowledge, experience and time. In 2000, the Częstochowa section of “Gazeta Wyborcza” included a list of their own mistakes and cited the disclaimer about the Owusu family, *Trzy kolory – człowiek*. It can be said that the texts’ author got all the facts wrong, “Mr. Owusu’s name is Paddy, not Paty. Paddy played basketball, not volleyball. He does not have nine siblings but just one sister. It is his father who has got many siblings. Paddy’s sister, Agnes, does not have a child. And the black girl in the text is her and not her child”.¹⁷

Errors regarding facts, dates, spelling of names, etc. happen more frequently to young and inexperienced teams of journalists. These are not as grave as publications which infringe the law. One of such was the April Fools’ text, *Kto kocha kino Wolnosc*, by “Dziennik Częstochowski 24 Godziny” whose authors were convicted for calling on people to break the law. Announcements on the case in the press resulted in another lawsuit, this time for libel of the judge adjudicating the case. One of the journalists commenting on the verdict stated that the head judge, “before 1989 did not hide her connections with SB, especially with its chief.”¹⁸. The journalist was convicted in this case as well.

Another libel case was the famous contention between Janusz Płowecki, the chief editor of “Zycie Częstochowy” and Marian Rawinis, the head of “Dziennik Częstochowski 24 Godziny”. In a text entitled *Szczekaj piesku*, Rawinis accused Płowecki of being an opportunist with regard to the old regime and the new. He stated that Płowecki, “has mastered the art of mimicry” and “has swiveled his way from being hated among the opposition to a brave defender of our *common country*”¹⁹. Płowecki sued Rawinis for attempting to deprive him of social trust so imperative in this profession.

All in all, a dozen or so Częstochowa journalists ended up in court as a result of their writing. Most often they were accused of infringing someone’s good name by attributing them false character traits, subjectively assessing their actions or manipulation of facts.

It is the Częstochowa media content which best illustrates journalistic competences. What can be seen is a standardization of content, increasingly the same type of articles and

¹⁷ *Sprostujmy to jeszcze raz*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 10.02.1998 (local version).

¹⁸ Said by Jarosław Kapsa, “Gazeta Częstochowska” journalist, opposition activist and parliament deputy from KO.

¹⁹ *Szczekaj piesku...*, “Dziennik Częstochowski 24 Godziny”, 8–10.02.1991.

dominance of “waiter journalism”²⁰. This can partly be explained by the demand imposed by editorial offices which promote this kind of writing by paying for it²¹ as well as changing techniques of obtaining information. Direct conversation and searching for information at the source has been replaced by “phone journalism” and surfing the Internet for news. All the more so, information or inspiration is provided by press spokespeople and public relations specialists. If we analyse texts from local press, we can often come to the conclusion that they were created on the “copy and paste” basis.

Another common practice is that of using information from other media, without citing its source. This phenomenon, known as plagiarism, is these days called copying as it includes creative processing of the original. This practice was particularly popular among Częstochowa electronic media although there were also examples of information popularized by the Internet which have found its way to other media.

Local journalist competences can also be evaluated based on their abilities to target recipient tastes, needs or interests as well as general empathy. In reality, often what was presented by the media did not fit social reality. A proof of this can be the discussion on the Częstochowa forum, gazeta.pl, after the local “Gazeta Wyborcza” supplement was edited by Muniek Staszczuk, the lead singer of T. Love. We could read on the forum that, “Muniek’s edition was great. And this is sad news for you! Honestly, for the last 2 years the local supplement in unreadable. It has become an urban/police chronicle and an information bulletin for Częstochowa pilgrimages. It is evident that it is edited by someone not from Częstochowa [!], you just cannot feel the local climate. Short texts, news bits and nothing more! [...] It doesn’t have to be a collection of short stories about Częstochowa but it should be more interesting and closer to the people. This special edition [...] really makes people think and shows that it is possible to write about the city in a more exciting way, to discuss issues which are of interest to local people”. Journalists were also advised to, “walk around the city, talk to people, find something appealing, investigate something, expose a scandal, write about what is on people’s minds... Instead of sitting in their offices and calling press spokespeople. [...] Newspapers are to play a different role than other media and not copy the same information. They should inform but also observe, comment and present issues from different view

²⁰ Kazimierz Sowa coined this phrase, used to describe journalists who only collect and process information without any personal input, opinion or commentary. Cf. Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze...*, p. 59. For more on reduction of journalist functions down to mere collection of facts and loss of creativity see T. Kononiuk, *Zawodowstwo w dziennikarstwie – wyzwania XXI wieku*, „Studia Medioznawcze” 2001, nr 3, p. 17–18.

²¹ L. Pokrzycka, *Zagrożenia dla lokalnego dziennikarstwa na przykładzie Lubelszczyzny*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 2008, nr 1/2, p. 160.

points”²². The above comments were written in a rather professional way which can indicate that they were written by people well aware of local journalist reality as they precisely pointed out all of its shortcomings.

Career model

Local journalist competences can be directly verified just as the effects of their work which can immediately be assessed, often critically. The question is what were the journalists’ motives in choosing this profession and what is the general career path. According to criteria applied by Zbigniew Bajka²³, Częstochowa journalists, similarly to their colleagues nationwide, chose this profession because of their curiosity of the world and people, the profession’s educational value and the chance to see the results of their work in real life. It should also be noted that local journalists, more often than those surveyed by Bajka in 2000, see in their work a mission to serve people and to better the world. One out of three values the opportunity to criticise and fight unlawfulness and one in four – the possibility of helping others in their problems and to educate society²⁴. As data in Table 3 shows, more “selfish” motives (numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 10) were indicated by 32% of those surveyed while “altruistic” ones (numbers 4, 6, 7, 8, 9) were chosen by 23%.

Table 3. Motives for choosing journalism as a career path

Lp.	Motives for choosing journalism as a career path	Answers (in %)
1	opportunity to get to know interesting people, places, and issues	50.0
2	a real profession with visible results	39.6
3	a profession with continuous education	37.5
4	opportunity to criticize, fight unlawfulness, injustice	33.3
5	opportunity to be up to date with what is going on in the world, one’s country, city	25.0
6	opportunity to tell about interesting phenomena, people	23.0
7	opportunity to help with concrete issues	23.0
8	opportunity to influence people’s opinions, attitudes, consciousness	19.0
9	opportunity to express one’s opinions, share knowledge	19.0
10	profession’s prestige	8.3
11	lack of other work	4.2

²² *Jak Muniak Staszczuk zredagował „Gazetę”, forum Częstochowa, 13.09.2006; www.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=55&w=48515640&v=28s=0 [2.06.2009].*

²³ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze...*, p. 52.

²⁴ In national research, opportunity to criticize and fight unlawfulness was chosen by 23%, opportunity to help others – 21%. Cf. *ibidem*.

Regardless of expectations as far as this profession, everyday journalist reality is very difficult. Despite the fact that 64.6% of those surveyed were employed full time, one third did not have a stable employment situation and worked on a per-article basis or did freelance work. Lack of guarantee of employment definitely influenced the journalists' assessment of their professional perspectives. None of those surveyed regarded their work and wages as secure. Although the majority (62.5%) did not think that they were going to lose their jobs, only one third of the "optimist" group worked full time. One fourth was of the opinion that they could lose their jobs in the future. For most of them that meant not working for an editorial office. One out of eight thought about changing their place of work, not seeing any perspectives in this field. In comparison to the national average, local journalists were much less sure of their job security²⁵. This is probably due to the fact that local media are undergoing numerous transformations resulting in consolidation and lowering the number of hired journalists as well as little prospects for working for public media.

Table 4. Profession's perspectives according to Częstochowa journalists (in %)

Professional perspectives	Total active journalists	Employed full time	Freelance and per-article basis
Secure about their work and wages, not worried about the future	0	0	0
Nothing is for certain but I don't think about losing work	62.5	66.6	33.3
I worry about losing work	25.0	66.6	33.3
I see no future, I am considering other career options	12.5	66.6	33.3

The fact that people are leaving this profession shows the lack of stability in this field. Only one out of five journalists decided to move on when they were offered something more interesting. Over 60% indicated the liquidation of a newspaper (radio, TV station) as the reason for trying to find another type of work. One out of three decided to pursue other options due to low pay.

Table 5. Reasons for Częstochowa journalists pursuing other career options

Reason for pursuing other career options	Answers (in %)
Employment termination or company liquidation	41.6
Conflict with the editor, publisher or team	20.8

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 54.

Low pay	33.3
More interesting job offer	20.8
Being burned out, dissatisfied with the profession	12.5
Others, including retirement	8.3

The pay rate was definitely a key factor for Częstochowa journalists. It largely determined whether or not they stayed in the profession but also influenced job satisfaction, its attractiveness and, eventually, the quality of their work. Taking into consideration the fact that two thirds of journalists spend over eight hours a day working and more than half of them – 10 or more, it is no wonder that a large majority (80%) could not do any other additional work and what they earned in media was their only source of income. What is more, only 6% of surveyed journalists were satisfied with their earnings. The majority (58.3%) considered journalist wages average and one third (35.4%) – low. Interestingly, more women were critical of their wages than men. Over half of them (55.5%) were of the opinion that their earnings were low while only 23.3% of men thought the same. If we assume that both sexes spent about the same amount of time working, we can conclude that men were paid more than women.

Table 6. Time devoted to work and financial status assessment (in %)

	Time devoted to work		Financial status assessment		
	Up to 8 hrs	8 hrs and more	low	average	high
Women	39.0	61.0	55.5	28.9	5.6
Men	33.3	66.7	23.3	70.0	6.7
Total	35.4	64.6	35.4	58.3	6.3

It can be said that time devoted to work (average of 9 hours) as well as required availability have had an influence on the journalists' personal lives, especially women's. One third of them were single and did not have children. In comparison, only 13.3% of men were single and 23.3% had no children. If we take into consideration the average age of Częstochowa journalists (women – 39, men – 42) and the fact that many of them have not set up families, we can conclude that this is due to the profession's specificity and its work overload. As far as men and women, their positions at work also differed significantly. Only one third of women were in managerial positions at work and half of men. Most likely, that is another reason why women rated their financial status lower.

Table 7. Journalists' marital and financial status

Marital and financial status	Total	Women	Men
Married (in %)	80	66.7	86.7
Single (in %)	20	33.3	13.3
With children (in %)	73	66.7	76.7
No children (w %)	27	33.7	23.3
Average age	40	39	42
Managerial position (in %)	42	33.3	46.6

Summing up, it can be said that the average journalist's career path followed a similar pattern. After obtaining an arts degree, he begins working in a profession different than journalism. However, his innate talents, interest in the world and people, tendency to be well informed and a sense of mission lead him to take up work in media at around the age of 28. Within ten years he changes work at least once. He has good chances for being promoted to a managerial position. He works on average 9 hours a day and journalism is his only source of income which he perceives as average. He is employed full time but is not entirely secure in his position. If he leaves work, it is due to liquidation, redundancy or conflict. After a career in journalism there are different options including work as press spokesperson, civil servant, teacher. In his new profession useful are skills obtained in journalism such as writing, editing, collection and processing of information as well as advertising, promotion and public relations issues. Generally, he does not think about returning to this profession.

Between mission, trade and market

Journalist's work for his local community largely depends on how he views his work and to what degree he is able to perform it. A large majority of surveyed journalists (90%) indicated that media are to transmit information objectively and without bias. Only one out of five journalists (23%) thinks that media should fight for just causes and do more than just present facts but also comment and assess while 8% are of the opinion that media should predominantly entertain and be handy.

When journalists were asked what role they play most often, they answered, after Walerly Pisarek²⁶, the role of an artisan or a professional who is objective and responsible for his word. Unfortunately, the artisan journalist is only one step away from waiter journalist who only collects and delivers information without comment, analysis or assessment. In local media there are many good reporters but there is a great lack of commentators and publicists. Is this due to journalists' inadequate knowledge or lack of experience?

²⁶ Distinguished are journalist fighters, artisans and DJs. From: Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze...*, p. 58.

Another question in the survey regarded role models in the field. A large majority (73%) answered that they do have someone who they consider a “master in the industry”. This can indicate that local journalists have less confidence in their skills²⁷. What is interesting, the mentioned “masters” were those journalists who most influence public opinion, not just reporters/observers but creators of reality. Most often mentioned were: Monika Olejnik (14%), Tomasz Lis and Jacek Żakowski (11%), Stefan Bratkowski (9%), Tomasz Sekielski, Andrzej Morozowski, Bogdan Rymanowski, Piotr Najsztub, Janina Paradowska (6%) as well as Tadeusz Sznuć, Piotr Kaczkowski, Kuba Strzyczkowski and Justyna Pochanke. Among the deceased listed were: Ryszard Kapuściński, Stefan Kisielewski and Melchior Wańkowicz.

A lot less often mentioned were local outstanding journalists. Among those listed were: Marian Rawinis, Janusz Strzelczyk and Marek Mamoń who were valued for their professionalism and non-conformism regarding media limitations on freedom of speech.

Research results indicate that local journalists are not entirely independent. They cannot always speak their mind and opinions freely or present all the available facts. Nine out of ten surveyed journalists stated that their freedom of speech was limited. Most common reasons given were internal factors (programme line) and direct superior (chief editor, publisher) pressure.

Many journalists also mentioned external factors such as politician, advertiser or informer pressure. It should be noted that it is often difficult to establish who the pressure is really coming from. One journalist explained it this way, “Initially, I could not understand my newspaper’s *programme line*. Why in my game reports couldn’t I criticize some AZS players and why did the chief editor always look over the corrections in texts about *Rakow*? Then I found out that these teams were sponsored by our advertisers, oversensitive and touchy, who put on the pressure. So my texts talked about how well the players played and that it is more important how they played than whether they won. Eventually, I understood that such compromises are inevitable in order for my paper to exist and be stable financially, that it also determines my work and wages. This way we are working and happy and so are our friends, the advertisers or sponsors”²⁸.

The fact that a large majority of journalists chose self-censorship as the reason for limiting their journalist independence indicates that they are increasingly conscious of existing media market mechanisms and their economic dependence on advertising.

²⁷ In national research only less than 30% indicated people who they look up to while 70% said that there are no masters in the field. Ibidem, p. 56.

²⁸ Cited from survey, owned by author.

Table 8. Limitations of journalist freedoms and freedom of speech

	Answers (in %)
There are existing limitations, you cannot write or say everything that you think	91.7
No limitations, I say and write what I think	8.3
Reasons	
- self-censorship	38.6
- programme	50.0
- internal pressures	38.6
- external pressures	27.3
- others (mentioned were lack of knowledge, recipient level)	2.3

The increasing influence of advertisers on local media is one of the most imperative threats to this profession and its objectivity. This is due to the difficult situation the local media are in and their economic dependence on the local advertising market. This particularly regards smaller publishers but also regional and national ones. The latter two do not deal with socio-cultural nuances of the micro-communities and treat them as advertising consumers. It should also be noted that local governments are the predominant advertisers in local media which means that we are dealing with not just economic but also political influence.

If we take a look at local media budget, we see that the main source of income comes from advertising. Profits from sales are constantly decreasing to the point of zero sum. This is the case regarding “Gazeta Częstochowska”, “7 Dni” and “Życie Częstochowskie” which could technically exist without readers. It is no wonder then that the above newspapers care more about their sponsor rather than reader interests.

According to journalists, the biggest threat to the profession and current problem in local media is lack of competence and professionalism. This interesting criticism is due to the common opinion that the local journalist circle is dominated by opportunists with no respect for ethical norms.

Disappearing of ethical norms is considered to be the third threat to local journalism. Pauperization of the journalistic profession in local media was not considered a major threat perhaps due to general awareness of this weakness. It leads to a negative selection of candidates but according to local journalists, weak journalism is rather a result of this profession’s openness and lack of specialist education to enter the field.

Local journalists are aware of the fragmentation taking place in the industry but they do not believe that a trade union would aid in obtaining better pay, job security or work conditions. They see no connection between belonging to a union and the quality of their work, especially in local media. In 2007, only one out of ten Częstochowa journalists belonged to any existing journalist associations.

Interestingly, local journalists do not consider the consolidation of local media a threat despite the fact that many have personally experienced its consequences, due to merging of newspapers and making people redundant. They see little wrong with the decreasing number of offered local newspapers.

Table 9. Threats to local journalism and local media (in %)

Threat	Threat level			
	high	medium	low	none
Lack of professionalism due to the profession's openness, lack of required educational norms	56.25	20.8	16.7	6.25
Dependence on recipients and advertisers, no more "social controller" function	43.75	37.5	12.50	6.25
Disappearing of ethical norms	37.50	45.8	12.50	4.20
Pauperization	25.00	52.0	16.75	6.25
Fragmentation, lack of trade union or work protection	16.70	31.2	45.80	8.30
Media consolidation, minimizing work places and decreasing variety of offer	12.50	22.9	45.80	18.80

The question remains as to where does local journalism fit in between mission, trade and market. Best to explain seem to be Ryszard Kapuściński's words, "True journalism is a calling. [...] Mission is something that we do not for ourselves. Not in order to buy a car or build a house. We do it for others. [...] there is a limited number of people who possess this "grace" or gift to do something outside their local life"²⁹.

²⁹ *Zawód dziennikarz*. Interview with Ryszard Kapuściński by Katarzyna Janowska and Piotr Mucharski, "Kontrapunkt" 2001, nr 5/6.