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News programmes on Polish and foreign television (comparative analysis)

Decreasing press readership and growing marginalization of radio have resulted in television being the predominant source of information for majority of people. The only alternative source of news is the Internet which could possibly replace television in the future but likely it will not happen for quite some time. For the time being, news services are among the most popular programmes with highest viewer ratings on many channels¹. For this reason, there is greatest competition between TV stations in this sphere. The goal is to, obviously, gain the highest number of viewers, preferably the ones from other channels. Resulting are efforts to make news programmes as attractive as possible. This has numerous consequences and they are not all positive. Most often, it is the quality of information and the communication level suffer most. What we are dealing with are processes of convergence and growing tabloidisation of information. Convergence results in all news programmes being alike, public and commercial, while tabloidisation leads to news services being similar to what we are dealing with in tabloid press².

In June 2008, the TNS OBOP research centre, by TVP S.A.'s order, carried out a comparative content analysis of 14 consecutive news services (between June 30 and July 13) by the most popular Polish and Western TV stations³. The analysis was to answer several questions pertaining to this topic. The paper's author managed the discussed project. The collected and analysed results gave us much insight on the structure, content and journalist base of these services as well as particular news services analysed further. The size of materials collected does not allow us to discuss all in one paper, however, most imperative conclusions on the main characteristics of analysed programmes will be presented. These include programme setting/framing, thematic structure and news service structure. Three foreign public stations (English, French and German) as well as two Polish public broadcasters will be compared, that is BBC One – *BBC News*, ZDF – *Heute*, France 2 –

¹ *Źródła informacji o sprawach kraju*. TNS OBOP, October 2008 (report based research).

² For more on these tendencies see Stuart Allen, *News Culture*, New York 2004.

³ *Analiza zawartości programów informacyjnych zagranicznych i polskich stacji telewizyjnych.*, by Maciej Mrozowski. TNS OBOP, December, 2008 (report based on research). The data used in the paper was approved by Biuro Programowe TVP S.A., for which the author of the paper is thankful.

Journal, TVP1 – *Wiadomości*, TVP2 – *Panorama*, as well as one foreign commercial station, TF1 – *Le Journal*, and two Polish commercial stations – TVN – *Fakty*, Polsat – *Wydarzenia*.

Programme setting

Generally, before viewers start watching a news service, they need to turn their attention away from what they are doing and focus on the TV screen. This is what the title sequence is for but is it also much more than that. It is the programme's 'identification sign', it is symbolic, it takes the viewer into another dimension, it is the first impression that people have of the programme which starts to shape their attitudes⁴. Because of all of the above and their general multifunctionality, title sequences cannot be viewed via quantity analysis. Hence, they were analysed via simple categorization key distinguishing three variants of format (Table 1, pos. A) and types of graphic elements (Table 1, pos. B). As a result, we could rate their general character and the level of complexity which indicate whether the broadcaster was focused on attractiveness or communication, modernity or traditionalism, show vs. content aspect.

Following, viewers see the programme studio. It is like a "news home". It is here where those who prepare the news work, here they invite guests and show the final results of their work. Just like every house, a studio tells us much about its owner, generally it tells us about something about their taste and wealth. Its equipment reflect the broadcaster's affluence and means, while the design shows his taste. Since we spend a lot of time in this 'house', sometimes everyday, it is imperative how it looks. Even though we are interested in information, it is fleeting, while the studio is constant. It is the studio we remember better than the news. That is why it is so imperative to make the best impression possible, to show that the broadcaster is wealthy and modern. The analysis rates the studio on size and equipment (Table 1, pos. C), the color scheme (Table, pos. D) and the way it is presented (Table 1, pos. E).

Within the studio, the newscaster plays the main role. He or she is a leading figure, largely responsible for the success or failure of the programme. Within the last twenty years the role of a newscaster has changed dramatically. Previously, the journalists were announcers who only read the news, later they became programme hosts and now they are the stars of the

⁴ For this part of the analysis used were also analyses on title sequence, studio and newscasters included in work by A. Boyd, P. Stewart, R. Alexander, *Broadcast Journalism. Techniques of Radio and Television News*, Amsterdam–Oxford 2008.

programme whose role is to also entertain and put on a show. With change of role and status, changed also their behaviour. In the past, they sat stiffly and made minimal facial movements. Now people expect more of them. All the more often, announcers are like actors. There are many camera angles they are shown from, there is dynamic editing – all that gives them lots of room to show off. The analysis takes into consideration presenter behaviour, classifying their roles as either traditional or modern (Table 1, pos. F).

The results of analysis show (Table 1, pos. A and B) that all the researched broadcasters have a complex and characteristic title setting. They include a composition of several dynamic elements of often high complexity. The most popular visual elements, symbolizing modernity are different visualizations of virtual reality. Additionally, there are graphic elements such as images of continents, countries, the globe, icons of famous places or other abstract figures. All that is supplemented by music in the background, including original or characteristic phrases, sometimes with additional sound effects such as fanfares or drum rolls. The most complex title sequences can be found on *Fakty* (TVN), *Wiadomości* (TVP1) and *News At Ten* (BBC One), followed by *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) and *Le Journal* (TF1), while the other stations have simpler, although still rather complex title sequences.

The broadcasters also differ in terms of their studio arrangement and how it is shown (Table 1, pos. C, D, E). Most stations (five) use a closed studio of medium or large size. In most cases, it is a separate room with a large desk in the centre. In the background, there are large TV screens and monitors. The larger the studio, the more distinctive and bold the colours, making the studio more dynamic and making use of the large space. Most broadcasters prefer distinctive and matching colours, with moderately contrasting newscaster area (according to the classic rule foreground–background).

Table 1. Programme setting – title sequence, studio, newscaster

	BBC One <i>News At Ten</i>	TF1 <i>Le Journal</i>	France 2 <i>Journal</i>	ZDF <i>Heute</i>	TVP1 <i>Wiadomości</i>	TVP2 <i>Panorama</i>	TVN <i>Fakty</i>	Polsat <i>Wydarzenia</i>
A. Title sequence								
Dynamic, simple	X	X	X	X				
Dynamic, complex							X	
Virtual space	X	X			X	X	X	X
Combination of many elements	X				X		X	

B. Additional graphic elements								
Symbols, icons, graphics	X	X		X	X		X	X
Update elements				X			X	X
Original graphic elements	X		X		X	X	X	
C. Studio type								
Closed studio, medium size			X	X		X		
Closed studio, multifunctional	X							X
Open studio, part of the <i>newsroom</i>		X			X		X	
D. Studio design								
Subdued colours/matching				X				
Distinctive colours/matching			X			X	X	X
Distinctive colours/contrasting	X	X			X			
E. Studio view								
Static, complex			X	X				
Dynamic, simple	X	X				X	X	X
Dynamic, complex					X			
Simple editing		X	X	X				
Complex editing	X				X	X	X	X
Split screen, special effects	X						X	
F. News caster behaviour								
Sitting		X	X	X		X		X
Party standing	X				X		X	X
Standing, moving around					X		X	
Expressiveness, body movements, mimicry, gesticulation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

X means this element is present in the programme (in all or majority of them)

Only on three channels, *Wiadomości* (TVP), *Fakty* (TVN) and *Le Journal* (TF1), the studio is an open space, part of a bigger newsroom in the background. These types of studios are characterized by numerous monitors, desks and working journalists. They project the image of modernity.

If a studio is large and well equipped, it is generally exposed. With the exception of two stations, *Journal* (France 2) and *Heute* (ZDF), the rest are shown in a dynamic way, from several different camera angles and with various, effective takes. This is usually

accompanied by dynamic editing with special effects like split screens showing multiple images of field reports. All these elements make information programmes more like shows in which the newscaster and the presentation are more important than content itself. The news reader, sitting behind a large desk, may appear like the Lord of the presented world. All the more often, they begin the news standing up and in case of two channels, *Wiadomości* (TVP1) and *Fakty* (TVN), they move around the studio. The last two stations differ from the rest as their presenters use every opportunity to make movements. It is difficult to say whether a standing presenter is more effective than a sitting one but it definitely is a novelty. Since their movements are not staged, their only purpose would be to make the programme more dynamic (to symbolize moving closer to recipients?). Or perhaps they are to play the role of masters of ceremonies, making information programmes more like entertainment shows. All in all, the days of serious and stiff newscasters are definitely over. Now, everyone focuses on expression, using all possible non-verbal means and body movements such as mimicry, gesticulation, body movements, etc.

After analysing all elements of news programme setting (title sequence, type of studio and its equipment, graphic design, news caster behaviour), it can be said that among the examined stations the three most diverse and dynamic were news services by *Fakty* (TVN), *News at Ten* (BBC One) and *Wiadomosci* (TVP1). They were followed by *Le Journal* (TF1), *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) and *Panorama* (TVP2). The most modest were *Heute* (ZDF) and *Journal* (France 2). The last two stations follow the tradition of discipline and minimalism typical of public media. On the other hand, *Fakty* (TVN), *News At Ten* (BBC One) and *Wiadomości* (TVP1) attempt to increase their programmes' attractiveness by making them more spectacular in character.

Thematic structure of information

In comparison to foreign news services which, on average, present from 8 to 22 news stories, lasting from 60 to 140 seconds, the Polish are characterized by less segmentation – they include less different news stories (8–9) but they are longer (140–180 sec). In contrast, Polish thematic structure is more complex (Table 2, pos. A), within one report there are, on average, 1.6–1.7 topics discussed while the statistics for foreign reports are 1.1–1.3. Only *News at Ten* (BBC One) is similar in terms of complexity to Polish news.

All analysed programmes are “geographically centralized” which means that there is more focus on domestic rather than international information (Table 2, pos. B). The general

ratio of domestic to international reports is 3 : 1, with the exception of *Heute* (ZDF) which has more even proportions. In contrast, *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) and *Fakty* (TVN) are characterised by an even greater than average focus on domestic news which could mean that commercial broadcasters are less interested in reporting international events than public stations.

The subject and themes of information transmitted are the most imperative element of what is broadcasted. Due to the great variety of content, the analysis used a two level thematic classification. First, all information was divided into four categories: politics, economy, society and culture. Then, the most characteristic features such as issues, problems or types of institutions discussed, were distinguished for every category.

As results of the analysis show (Table 2, pos. C), with the exception of *Le Journal* (TF1), all other programmes exhibit typical to serious journalism thematic structure, that is politics is most commonly discussed, followed by social issues, then cultural and lastly – economic. When looking at each broadcaster separately, we can see some significant differences. Foreign programmes have a more balanced thematic structure while in Polish by far the most dominant topic of reports is politics. It is discussed almost twice as much as on foreign stations and twice as much as other issues such as social or cultural. Since politics have a probably much similar significance in all analysed countries, the thematic structure as is reflects broadcaster and journalist preferences. It shows that Polish media are more politically oriented than in the other countries.

Table 2. Thematic structure of information

	BBC One <i>News At Ten</i>	TF1 <i>Le Journal</i>	France 2 <i>Journal</i>	ZDF <i>Heute</i>	TVP 1 <i>Wiadomości</i>	TVP 2 <i>Panorama</i>	TVN <i>Fakty</i>	Polsat <i>Wydarzenia</i>
A. Number of news topics	1.7	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7
B. Domestic	67	71	65	56	65	62	75	83
International	33	29	35	45	35	38	25	17
C. Theme categories (N)	115	307	189	141	119	126	105	117
Politics	65	32	40	32	75	67	70	75
Economy	23	15	25	27	18	22	17	25
Culture	23	45	26	22	26	37	32	28
Society	56	43	38	29	38	33	51	47
D. Politics								
International relations	14	8	16	33	18	7	16	2

Foreign policy	7	5	17	20	14	23	15	19
Government and public institutions	36	53	40	17	48	52	57	62
Public order protection	35	13	35	3	22	27	28	39
Politicians, political experts	24	19	44	6	34	25	45	8
Army, armed forces	16	18	14	16	15	22	19	18
Opposition parties	10	6	12	5	13	9	24	31
EU, institutions, EU politicians	0	12	16	5	11	23	4	12
Ruling party(ies)	10	2	17	5	14	8	18	12
Terrorism	8	14	23	15	7	9	7	5
Local government and institutions	12	3	9	4	5	0	17	12
Civic society	3	12	11	5	7	8	6	1
War, armed conflict	14	1	8	1	15	4	5	5
IPN activity, inspection of personal files	0	0	1	0	9	12	10	12
NATO	0	0	6	0	12	7	2	2
National, ethnic minorities	7	0	11	3	0	0	0	0
E. Society								
Crime, accidents, catastrophes	67	48	58	51	68	43	77	44
Health, medical care	14	15	0	9	16	23	33	35
Individual problems and rights	22	9	6	3	8	9	17	21
Ecology, environment protection	6	20	15	8	3	7	6	2
Family matters	3	11	3	5	0	7	11	15
Standard of living, social benefits	9	6	9	6	9	9	3	6
Corruption, social pathologies	0	2	11	0	3	13	4	8
F. Culture								
Sport and entertainment events	60	41	48	56	60	48	49	47
Celebrities	42	1	9	0	15	16	22	19
Tourism, recreation	0	15	3	4	43	14	26	0
Church, religious organizations	25	3	3	3	8	9	16	5
Artists and works of art	11	4	9	10	11	13	10	2
Science, technology, inventions	5	9	4	8	11	4	13	17
Culture propagation	0	3	14	0	15	19	15	0
G. Economy								
Production, companies	16	26	42	17	29	39	18	17
Consumerism, standards of living	61	3	21	19	4	12	21	8

Construction, infrastructure	3	2	34	22	14	20	43	28
Trade, services, market	6	4	16	17	21	26	18	4
Finances, currency exchange rates	33	13	13	26	13	4	8	4
Work, employee rights, strikes	21	58	32	10	42	19	7	59
International corporations	0	1	34	0	4	27	3	0

With the exception of A, the other data is in percentages. Positions B and C – percentages for all news, pos. D, E, F, G – percentages within that category. N – overall number of news bits.

Polish news programmes include more information on politics than their Western counterparts. Polish journalists are mostly interested in foreign policy, activities of government institutions, governing and opposition parties' activity, particular politicians, the armed forces, the EU, NATO, local government authorities as well as the activities of IPN and the issue of disclosure of personal files. Foreign journalists, on the other hand, focus more on international relations, public order, terrorism, civic society as well as ethnic and national minorities. It means that politics in Polish news are predominantly about the struggle for power and ways of exercising it in various institutions (domestic, local government and the EU), while in foreign – about policy as a regulator of international relations and a guarantee of internal order and as a factor in solving social issues. In terms of comparison of Polish public and commercial stations, it can be said that public ones focus more on government and external policy while commercial ones – more on different parties and internal policy, or, in other words, on conflict between ruling and opposition parties.

As far as the social sphere is concerned, the majority of reports focus on crime, accidents and catastrophes (Table 2, pos. E). Polish services devote somewhat more time to these events but the differences are not significant. Our programmes, on the other hand, spend a lot more time (three times more on average) on health and medical care issues while foreign services focus more (three times more) on ecology and environmental protection. Moreover, Polish media focus more on individual problems and rights, family matters, pathologies and corruption. At the same time, Western media like discussing the standard of living and social welfare issues. In other words, Polish information programmes concentrate on medical care and social threats while Western ones – on care for comfort and the standard of people's living. It should also be noted that the differences between Polish and foreign media news reports are less significant than the differences between Polish public and commercial channels. Private broadcasters discuss social issues more frequently and broadly while public

ones emphasize the institutional and public aspects of social issues. Also commercial stations devote more time to people's individual and private issues.

As far as cultural information is concerned, in Polish news services it is discussed slightly more often and more broadly than in Western ones, although these differences are not significant (Table 2, pos. F). Dominant in this sphere are reports on sport and entertainment events. The only differences between Polish and Western broadcasts exist in the area of tourism, recreation and the promotion of culture which our services discuss four times more often. This is largely due not to culture itself but organizational and infrastructure matters related to cultural events with which there are fewer problems in more developed Western countries. It can also be said that Polish public broadcasters devote more time to culture than commercial ones which should be of no surprise as it is part of public broadcasters' mission.

The economic crisis was not yet in effect at the time of the analysis and that is why economic issues are not among the most frequently discussed media topics. In this area, media's favourite subjects are labour market issues (Table 2, pos. G). There are some also characteristic differences between Polish and Western broadcasters. In Poland, there is more information on infrastructure, construction, trade, services and the market while Western stations focus more on consumerism, standards of living, finances and exchange rates. Foreign news services like to view economy more from an individual and financial perspective while Polish ones – more from the system and macroeconomic perspective. This view is also more common on public rather than commercial stations. This, similarly to culture, has to do with public broadcasters' mission to report on serious issues, which can be viewed as less attractive to private stations.

The content analysis, however, still does not answer the question as to which similarities and differences between Polish and Western news services are a reflection of reality and which are due to journalist preferences. To put it simply, we can say that the differences in social, cultural and economic spheres are a result of surrounding reality while the differences in the political area are due to journalist preferences. It is without doubt that Poland is a country which is still developing and, hence, issues such as the infrastructure of medical care, culture and social issues are still more imperative than those of individual comfort of living discussed more in the West. However, Polish media excessive engagement in domestic politics seems to be our local obsession. Politics' influence on reality should definitely be followed but there is little of that in our media which would rather focus on everyday inter party conflict and arguments. Technically, the commercial media have an

excuse as their existence depends on audience ratings but the public media's lack of more factual information approach is inexcusable.

All in all, it should be emphasized that the number of differences between Polish and Western services does not outweigh the similarities noted. The fact that there are more similarities is because Poland is becoming increasingly more like the Western world. But not just because of that. The growing media presence of crime, accidents and catastrophes as well as sport and entertainment events, not to mention the lives of celebrities, cannot be considered traditional to public media and it surely is not part of their mission. It is in response to what is happening in commercial media and the increasingly dominating popular culture in our lives. We are witness to a commercialization and tabloidisation of public media.

Event structure

Events which are important or interesting are generally the subject of journalist reports. Whether an event is considered imperative or attention grabbing depends on the information selection criteria used by journalists. Common journalist practices are all rather alike and they include the tragic factor, drama, action and personalization of the event⁵. Due to these attributes an event becomes an interesting narrative which becomes attractive news. In other words, the communicative and attractive news criteria result in dramatic reports, that is they include the conflict element or differing interests of two sides (protagonist and antagonist), there is something to be gained and lost and it requires a resolution⁶. The analysis aimed to establish how this is carried out in practice. We set out to find out what the subject of the reports is, to what extent they are based on the drama approach, who the protagonists and antagonists are, who settles the matter and who are the victors or victims of the reports events.

The analysis results show some differences in the way events on various channels are structured (Table 3, pos. A). The simplest structures can be found on *News At Ten* (BBC One) and *Wiadomości* (TVP1) where the majority of reports regard one specific topic. *Fakty* (TVN), *Panorama* (TVP2) and *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) present somewhat more complex reports in which the subject matter of the reports are usually several connected events. On the other programmes, *Le Journal* (TF1), *Journal* (France 2) and *Heute* (ZDF), a large percentage of reports regard not particular events but broader phenomena, processes or issues.

⁵ D. McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, London 2005; M. Chyliński, S. Russ-Mohl *Dziennikarstwo*, Warszawa 2007, p. 118 and on.

⁶ A. Dunn, *Television news as narrative*, [in:] *Narrative and Media*, ed. by H. Fulton, Sydney 2005, p. 140–153.

Understanding such reports requires more from viewers. It can be said that generally Polish news services are factual, whereas Western ones are more abstract. In the first case, viewers need to focus and attentively follow the action, in the second – necessary are developed cognitive competences. The differences can be explained by viewers' various education backgrounds. In Poland, there are more recipients with elementary education and, hence, reports are presented via sequences of specific events, according to the idea of inductive reasoning (from specific to general). In the West, recipients are better educated and, therefore, reports can be more complex, according to the idea of deductive reasoning (from general to specific).⁷ However, these are just speculations.

Taking a look at the drama aspect of events reported (Table 3, pos. B, C, D, E), the situation is quite different. On all programmes, except for *Heute* (ZDF), the majority of news includes clearly defined conflict between two sides (protagonists and antagonists). On four of the channels, *Fakty* (TVN), *Journal* (France 2), *News At Ten* (BBC One), *Panorama* (TVP2), the conflict is set against a wider context which complements the events, in which arbitrators are present as well as the beneficiaries or the victims – all that giving the viewer a complex picture of the dramatic event. On the other services the solution factor remains unknown. It should be noted, though, that all programmes, regardless their complexity, have two elements clearly defined – the agent and the beneficiary or the victim. This means that although the drama effect is created by clearly defined conflict, it is generally not the construction axis of the narration. It is the relationship between the agent's activity and its effect on the subject which is the focus of the narrative. In other words, conflict increases the attractiveness of the broadcast but the overall sense is dependent on the consequences of the agent's actions.

Table 3. Event structure

	BBC One <i>News At Ten</i>	TF 1 <i>Le Journal</i>	France 2 <i>Journal</i>	ZDF <i>Heute</i>	TVP 1 <i>Wiadomości</i>	TVP 2 <i>Panorama</i>	TVN <i>Fakty</i>	Polsat <i>Wydarzenia</i>
A. News subject (N)	115	307	189	141	119	126	105	117
Factual (one event)	50	39	43	54	53	8	8	20
Complex (several events)	49	36	38	23	42	87	89	70
Phenomenon, process, problem	1	25	19	23	5	5	3	10
B. Agent:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

⁷ T. Matuszewski, *Psychologia poznania. Sposoby rozumienia siebie i świata*, Gdańsk 2001, p. 361–375.

Man, individual	58	30	39	7	38	13	60	28
Group of people	17	30	21	40	8	19	17	44
Public or political organization	19	21	13	22	15	17	17	5
Government, authorities	19	10	18	15	32	14	37	22
System procedures and mechanisms	6	0	1	10	1	14	14	0
Forces of nature, fate	1	5	6	5	2	9	6	0
C. Countering force:	69	64	74	32	64	60	80	73
Man, individual	21	6	12	1	5	1	22	2
Group of people	15	15	13	7	5	5	3	7
Public or political organization	8	21	24	8	3	2	17	17
Government, authorities	16	8	8	10	23	7	37	30
System procedures and mechanisms	31	3	9	2	23	35	40	3
Forces of nature, fate	7	10	8	4	2	4	9	7
D. Arbitrator:	57	43	70	40	45	78	73	31
People part of the event	27	15	16	4	24	14	35	4
People outside the event	1	0	10	9	0	0	1	1
Organizations, authorities part of the event	32	19	17	13	7	28	35	17
Organizations, authorities outside the event	0	6	11	5	1	1	7	3
System procedures and mechanisms	15	1	11	5	11	29	21	3
Forces of nature, fate	2	2	8	5	1	3	11	2
E. Beneficiaries/victims:	98	94	93	35	98	91	99	87
People part of the event	59	50	33	11	58	40	66	63
Other people, society	46	32	26	18	27	25	45	5
Public or political organizations	11	3	10	1	0	0	22	4
Government, authorities	17	4	17	3	9	15	52	12
System procedures or mechanisms	2	0	5	1	0	1	4	1
Forces of nature, fate	3	4	9	2	0	3	3	1

Data as a percentage of the total. N – total number of news stories.

In the majority of cases, it is people who are the protagonists, antagonists, arbitrators, beneficiaries and victims of the reported events. This is largely due to the nature of the events and the information selection criteria which consider personalization an imperative factor of

news attractiveness. Television shows people via the prism of human reactions and behaviours. It is how it was, is and will continue to be. Here, the news programmes differ from each other in who the agents are and/or who they represent. The analysis categorized the agent's activity into: individual, on behalf of a group, public or political organization or representing government and authorities. Moreover, three other factors were taken into consideration – system procedures or mechanisms, forces of nature, fate, and international organizations (EU, NATO, UN, etc), however, the last one turned out to be insignificant so in the end it was omitted.

Every station has its own unique way of creating drama in the narrative. Generally, however, it can be said that on Western stations the agents were most often individuals or groups (Table 3, pos. B) while the antagonists (Table 3, pos. C) were various political, public or other organizations. In Polish programmes, on the other hand, the agents were usually individuals or government authorities in conflict with system procedures, mechanisms or other governing authorities. As far as the arbitrators (Table 3, pos. D), in all cases there were usually public organizations, governing authorities or people taking part in the events. The predominant difference was that in Poland system procedures and mechanism played a much greater role. Regarding beneficiaries/victims (Table 3, pos. E), it was generally those who took part in the events and only sometimes other people or the society. Also, commercial stations broadcasted more events in which the government or authorities more often than individuals were the beneficiaries or victims of the conflict presented.

In other words, it can be said that Polish news services are more dominated by the state or governing authorities as well as system procedures and mechanisms. In Western services, the agents are usually individuals, groups, public or political organizations which are also the protagonists, antagonists, beneficiaries or victims of the reported events. In Polish news, public organizations or groups are less imperative and it is predominantly the conflict between the individual vs. state or governing authorities vs. system procedures and mechanisms. To put it simply, in Western programmes, the state or governing authorities are rarely the initiators of conflict and even more rarely they are the antagonists. More often they are the arbitrators with little to lose or gain. In Polish programmes, the state or governing authorities are often the cause of conflict, the antagonist or the arbitrator and often the main beneficiary or victim.

Once again, this is due to the fact that Polish news is dominated by political themes, as was mentioned earlier. This definitely influences reception and not only ideologically, by undermining trust for the state and presenting it in opposition to the individual or society. It

also influences cognitive reception, making understanding of the narrative and its sense difficult. On the one hand, broadcasters attempt to make their programmes clear by presenting reality through sequences of events and not broader issues but on the other, they are making the state, governing authorities and system procedures and mechanisms the predominant perpetrators. This way they complicate the picture to the extent that it is difficult for less educated people to comprehend. People blame reality for not being able to understand it (they think of politics as constant conflict and arguments with the state being managed badly) but not the offered broadcasts. Meanwhile, the main culprits – the journalists sit back and continue to work the same way.

News structure

News programmes target to a wide range of recipients, possessing various mental competences in situations where their attention is not always completely focused. That is why news structure should ease its reception. This happens when it is compatible with the average viewer's "interest structure". This, in turn, is a series of basic questions which the recipient would like to know answers to in order to feel "well informed". The questions, although obvious and simple, can at times be difficult to answer in a short news report. The questions are: what happened, what caused it, what could be the effect, what were the circumstances and what is the general meaning of the event (assessment, commentary)⁸. Naturally, not all these questions can always be answered but if they are somehow discussed, the report is all the more logical, cohesive and better remembered. It is not easy to include all the elements in very concise reports and sometimes they all merge. The analysis included only those reports in which the different elements were clearly visible.

Analysis of the presence of various elements in reports leads us to formulate two main conclusions (Table 4, pos. A). Firstly, less than half of the news included all five elements. The elements discussed least often were the consequences and commentary which is understandable as these are the two most difficult to have answers to. Secondly, Polish news programmes have more complete news reports than Western. The biggest differences regard the causes discussed.

The two conclusions can be interpreted various ways. Perhaps it is just a coincidence, a result of different events being analysed. Perhaps it is due to historical baggage we carry throughout our lives. Perhaps it is due to how journalists in different countries work. Western

⁸ M. Mrozowski, *Media masowe. Władza, rozrywka i biznes*, Warszawa 2001, p. 309–314.

Motives and goals of participants' activity	92	98	41	69	94	88	94	70
Confrontation of conflicting goals and reasons	37	2	30	20	21	4	72	9
Expert explanation	23	1	32	18	17	31	58	66
Outside circumstances and conditions	44	1	8	13	18	62	56	7
F. Commentator (N)	39	153	159	127	40	29	71	65
Reporter	98	97	70	84	94	98	100	97
Independent expert	4	0	6	2	7	4	2	5
Official representative	0	1	11	2	0	0	1	0
Politician, authorities' representative	0	2	13	13	0	0	1	1
G. Commentary perspective								
Ordinary people's affairs	5	16	20	2	12	4	9	8
Public issues and events	5	19	24	4	6	6	5	3
State, social system	6	9	16	6	11	4	20	22
International situation, globalism	5	3	15	4	4	4	3	5
Satire, reflection	12	2	7	3	6	6	28	20
H. Assessment as part of explanation and commentary								
Positive	6	27	20	8	0	3	20	2
Negative	23	7	20	5	5	5	42	28
Ambivalent	23	36	31	1	13	28	24	1
Neutral	49	29	28	86	82	63	14	69

Data in percentages. Pos. A, B, C, D, E, and H as a percentage of news total. Pos. F and G percentages of news bits with commentary. N – total number of news bits

The combination of several facts in more comprehensive reports requires the use of different sources of information. The analysis results support this conclusion (Table 4, pos. B). All Polish news services use a variety of sources in their reports. The most complex are reports by *Fakty* (TVN) and *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) which, on average, use three different sources. Among Western stations only *News At Ten* (BBC One) is comparable.

As far as sources of information are concerned, most imperative is their credibility. Most reliable are direct sources such as live reports from events or ones that include eye-witness commentary. If such are available, they are the main source of information. Somewhat less credible is information from “personal sources” such as statements by representative of various organizations, experts, observers or scientists. All researched broadcasters use such sources, however, Polish ones do so over twice as often as foreign. This

has its advantages and disadvantages. It is advantageous when reporters cite their sources and disadvantageous – when there is no critical analysis and commentary of what was presented, shifting, this way, reliability onto the cited source.

The more various sources used, the greater the possibility to describe the event from different angles, presenting various points of view. This way, the more complete and objective the picture. Going by that rationale, we can assume that programmes by *Le Journal* (TF1), *Journal* (France 2) and *Heute* (ZDF) are most subjective as they use the least number of sources (little over one) in their reports. This proves to be true. Analysis results show (Table 4, pos. C) that in nearly 50% of the cases (in *Heute* over half) the reports show the events from a one sided perspective. The other broadcasters present their news in a more complex, multi-sided way. The majority of such reports (85%) can be found on *Wiadomości* (TVP1) and *Fakty* (TVN). However, it would be risky to conclude that more complex and multi-perspective reports are also more objective. The analysis shows that in most cases reports showing multi-sided views do not present them in an equivalent way. This is particularly visible in case of *Heute* (ZDF) and *Fakty* (TVN). In comparison, both Polish public broadcasters average four out of ten reports depicting events from different, parallel angles. Generally, the majority of reports by all broadcasters cannot be considered objective as they do not equally treat different sides and points of view. We are speaking strictly in numbers, therefore it is impossible to conclude that reporting more from one side means that reports are less objective. It could be a reflection of asymmetric nature of events taking place or the end result of attempting to have clear and concise reports. One thing for sure, the more information, the fuller the picture, the more the viewer needs to focus his attention in order to understand what is going on. Those that are less educated may have difficulties.

More imperative than quantitative are qualitative differences between the broadcasters. These are apparent in explanations and assessment of the reported events. As far as who comments (Table 5, pos. D, E), firstly, it needs to be noted that there are a lot more people explaining rather than commenting the events. Secondly, in both cases it is most often journalists who do these tasks. Thirdly, in Polish programmes there is a greater number and variety of people other than reporters who explain the events than in Western services. Fourthly, in Western news commentators are at time politicians or other officials which never happens on Polish public stations and happens rarely on commercial ones.

The fact that there is a greater variety of people explaining reported events is natural in more complex reports which in case of Polish broadcasters often (twice as often as in the West) include reports made up of two or more events. A large number of explanations, as in

Fakty (TVN), even greater than the number of sources cited, makes the report even more complex. As a result, too many explanations can further complicate the picture instead of making the broadcast more clear. It is quite probable since those who do the explaining are often politicians or other officials who see the event from their own point of view and whose explanations do not serve to show the viewer a fuller picture but to present their own role in the event.

This is supported by analysis of explanations results (Table 4, pos. E). Explanations were divided into two groups: subjective – indicating the rights of one side and objective – presenting expert analyses and descriptions of outside circumstances and conditions. The majority of explanations on all programmes were subjective, regarding the goals and rights of only one side, therefore not including the conflict element. Reports which included conflicting statements and presented the arguments of different sides took place more rarely. Four of the news providers, *News At Ten* (BBC One), *Journal* (France 2), *Heute* (ZDF) and *Wiadomości* (TVP1), have 20–37% of all reports objective, on three, *Le Journal* (TF1), *Panorama* (TVP2) and *Wydarzenia* (Polsat), they are sporadic. *Fakty* (TVN), on the other hand, have a majority (72%) of objective reports. Although there are more objective explanations on this channel, similarly to others, they are of minor character (only *Wydarzenia* (Polsat) has somewhat of a balance between objective and subjective explanations).

In each narrative, aside from the necessary cause and effect component, it is imperative to discuss the objectives and rights of event participants. It is a decisive factor in terms of the sense of the report. This element is even more crucial in case of short journalist reports where there is no room to describe the event in detail and it is difficult to establish the causes and to foresee the effects. It is only natural that reports compensate for these limitations by asking participants, experts or observers to explain to viewers what happened and what is going on. Regarding this point, the analysed programmes only differ as far as the intensity of use of such methods and their character.

Polish programmes, due to their earlier mentioned complexity, have a larger number and more differentiated explanations than Western news services. In Poland, there is such a big number of explanations that they become the narrative. Three Western programmes, *News At Ten* (BBC One), *Heute* (ZDF) and *Le Journal* (TF1), include more or the same amount of reporter explanations as from other people while among Polish services that is the case only on *Panorama* (TVP 2). On the other programmes, other people's explanations are dominant. For example, on *Fakty* there are three times as many other people's statements as reporter ones. *Fakty* also includes a great deal of confronting explanations, twice as many as *News at*

Ten which is the most confrontational of all Western programmes. It can be said that on *Fakty* explanations are the narrative – they create the drama of the broadcast. As we know, confrontation of rights and objectives of different sides makes the news more interesting. This feature definitely differentiates *Fakty* from all other programmes.

Commentary is the final element closing the narration but since it is the most difficult and risky element, it is not always included (Table 4, pos. A). When it is present, it is generally said by journalists, the authors of the report (Table 4, pos. F). Most imperative in commentary is the perspective it should provide and the assessment it should include (Table 4, pos. G, H). Since the above are also sometimes included in explanations, the commentary often reiterates what was already said earlier, the two were combined in the analysis.

As far as commentary, among Western programmes in which it is often included (like *Journal* (France 2) and *Le Journal* (TF1)), predominant is the individual or social perspective, that is events are interpreted in the context of ordinary people or in the context of broader social issues. Meanwhile, on Polish programmes which generally do include commentary, like *Fakty* (TVN) or *Wydarzenia* (Polsat), dominant are two different perspectives – the social system one and a reflective/satiric one. This corresponds to the earlier mentioned focus of Western broadcasts on society as a whole and the quality of people's lives and of Polish – on politics and macroeconomic issues. The reflective/satiric perspective which is particularly popular with commercial stations, shows their different view of reality. This is evident if you compare the commentary's perspective with assessment and explanations. Public broadcasters generally have a neutral or ambivalent attitude, that is they avoid strictly negative or positive assessments. That is the case regarding 90% of Polish public reports, whereas commercial stations have more negative assessments, with the largest number found on *Fakty* (TVN).

In conclusion regarding news structure, it can be said that Western news services are rather alike, while comparing Polish and Western services there are more differences than similarities. The main differences regard the way Polish news reports are structured on public versus commercial channels. Western services are simpler, with more cohesive narration and moderate assessment. Polish ones, on the other hand, are more complex, use a variety of sources and explanations. Public stations more often refrain from commentary and assessment while commercial ones focus on the drama effect, confronting statements and distinctive commentary and assessment.

Conclusion

The analysis encompasses fourteen different news services by four foreign and four domestic broadcasters. They include the main British, French and German public channels (BBC One, France 2, ZDF) and one commercial one (French TF 1) as well as two Polish public broadcasters (TVP 1 and TVP 2) and two commercial stations (TVN and Polsat). All of the analysed programmes are among the most popular and with highest audience ratings in their countries. In Poland, they are a basic source of information for the majority of people. The goal of the analysis was to pin point the main similarities and differences as far as the programmes' setting, thematic structure, news construction and various other elements of journalist workshop. The last area of the analysis was not discussed in this paper as it does not directly deal with content.

All analysed news services have more similarities than differences between them. This is due to the genre specificity and serious journalism standards. As for as public broadcasters, it is also due to their legal obligations (public mission), and in case of commercial ones – due to competition on the market. The article focused on the differences between the programmes and attempted to delineate the general tendencies behind the disparities. More specifically, it analysed the complexity of various services, the way they construct their view of the world presented and the influence of these two factors on the communicativeness (cognitive value) and attractiveness (emotional appeal) of the broadcasts.

One of the most significant differences between the various news services was in the area of broadcast complexity, on all three levels of the analysis – regarding the programme setting (title sequences, studio, newscaster), thematic structure of information, and news construction. We can divide the broadcasters into three groups, according to the level of complexity. Among the programmes of low complexity there are: *Heute* (ZDF), *Le Journal* (TF1) and *Journal* (France 2), medium complexity – *Panorama* (TVP2) and *Wydarzenia* (Polsat), and high complexity: *News At Ten* (BBC One), *Wiadomości* (TVP1) and *Fakty* (TVN). The first group of programmes follow the classic formula of a public news service with a focus on communicativeness rather than attractiveness. They have a more modest setting, a well balanced thematic structure, less focus on drama effect and more on the cognitive value of the programme (presentation of issue, commentary) with a simple and cohesive structure of the news. They remain resistant to the tabloidisation of content and form trend so popular in media. On the opposite end of the spectrum are programmes of highest complexity (TVN, BBC One, TVP1). They focus on the attractiveness of setting, content and form in the broadcast with newscaster performances on the dynamics of political and public life, described in a complex way, with an emphasis on conflict and drama. These channels,

especially TVN, include many elements of the *infotainment* formula which combines information with entertainment. The remaining broadcasters (TVP2, Polsat) are somewhere in the middle, although somewhat closer to the modern performance structure.

There were also three significant differences between Polish and Western programmes. Firstly – Polish news services over focus on politics, often without connection to social reality (struggle for power, conflict and arguing instead of as a regulator of public life). Secondly – Polish programmes are more complex, depicting various events connected to multifaceted cause and effect relationships, including the future (making reality an incomprehensible structure of relations based on conflict). Thirdly – the role of the journalist is limited to that of the narrator describing reality, presenting various points of view and explanations, instead of being an interpreter who gets to the bottom line and comments the events from his own perspective (reporters build on the statements of others in order to present an objective picture of events, with final commentary being a narrative closing rather than interpretation of event's meaning).

The indicated tendencies, present more or less on different programmes, are still, however, visible. We should be aware of them as they significantly influence the way we view and understand the world, as presented by our broadcasters. It is characterized by a high level of conflict, with hungry for power politicians looking after their own interests rather than the public good being the main actors or agents. This way of presenting politics may be attractive but it does not help people understand reality and it does not help shape civic attitudes. Recipients understand little of what goes on in the government and they grow increasingly mistrustful and suspicious. The result is that a majority of people have a critical attitude to the state, democracy and politics. This does not mean that we should blame the media for the people's aversion to politicians and politics but we should not also underestimate the influence of news services on public opinion. After all, the majority of opinions that people have about politicians and politics are taken right out of news programmes. It seems that Western journalists are more aware of this fact than Polish ones.