Analysis of Changes in the Journalistic Profession Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, Including Communication with Target Groups and the Use of New Technologies

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this article is to identify and describe the changes that have occurred in the journalistic profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research methods: quantitative research conducted on a sample of 316 media journalists operating in Poland, designed and carried out under scientific supervision of the author of this article with the participation of experts representing the Polish Press Agency and the Institute for Information Society Development. Results and conclusions: the pandemic has caused significant changes in the journalism industry. The most important of them concerned the building and maintenance of relations with target groups by journalists, the tools they use and their involvement in new journalistic formats. The journalists’ switch to obtaining information using online tools took place without any major problems. Cognitive value: the work is of a research nature, it contains a number of conclusions and analyses from the quantitative research carried out. They can be used in assessing the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for planning further research, especially in areas requiring extensive exploration.

KEYWORDS
COVID-19, journalists, coronavirus, media, public relations
Changes in the journalistic profession are closely related to what is happening in the economy and society. A special situation in these areas could be noticed in the first months of 2020, when the whole world was facing the COVID-19 pandemic. In a very short time it became necessary to adapt to new living conditions, characterized by numerous restrictions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the functioning of many industries, including the media and journalists. In particular, many newspapers in Poland and around the world have suffered significant losses due to falling sales. Print media was being replaced by electronic media. Some journalists have been laid off, some publishing houses have gone bankrupt (Hsu & Tracy, 2020). One of the major challenges faced by journalists was reporting on the pandemic, combating disinformation, and providing up-to-date data using proven sources. Coronavirus, for some time now a problem on a global scale, has led to an excess of available information, and consequently to the phenomenon known as infodemic. With such a large amount of content provided, it is difficult to clearly determine which information is true and which is not. This made it difficult for global audiences to find reliable sources and guidance, and thus access verified information (Cinelli et al., 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). It is worth noting that the growing demand for information during the pandemic did not meet the corresponding increase in the number of journalists. According to the Poynter Institute alone, over 33,000 journalists have been laid off or experienced negative wage changes in the United States as a direct result of the coronavirus. However, the crisis, apart from negative side effects, has brought at least one positive one: acceleration of the pace of innovation. These include the area of artificial intelligence, which had an impact on building knowledge resources in the field of COVID-19 and generating information materials on this basis. The pandemic-related disruptions have also changed the structure of the content presented. Moreover, major areas of concentration, such as sports, entertainment, and even politics, have lost importance in favor of the pandemic information (Marconi, 2020).

Bearing in mind the scope of changes that have taken place, especially in 2020, in the market, in the media, and in the journalistic profession, research was undertaken to fill the gaps in selected areas of knowledge. Among the research hypotheses formulated in the research was the one according to which the pandemic led to significant limitations in communication, which in turn resulted in permanent effects in the form of changes in relationships, tools used, and in the process of delivering content to target groups. It was also assumed that adapting to the changes that took place in society and the economy in the first half of 2020, with a particular emphasis on the media and the journalistic profession, was quick and adequate to the changes themselves.

Changes in the Journalistic Profession: Analysis of the Situation and Prospects

Nowadays, many professions undergo significant transformations. Journalism also belongs to this group, although the changes within it are not as visible as in the case of emerging professions, which are a response to the dynamic technological, social, and economic changes. Digitization, as a process that also applies to the Polish labor market, has and will have an impact on the media and journalism. It is worth noting that changes in the digital economy cause a constant increase in the demand for competences. The market will be looking for specialists in artificial intelligence, data miners, designers and producers of new intelligent machines and robots (Gumtree & DELab UW, 2017, p. 10). This trend, while not directly related to the media, shows that new technologies will increasingly affect a large proportion of the jobs, including the journalistic profession. Technological, social, and economic changes have an impact on the emergence of new professions, but also require constant personal improvement, improving
competences, and in the case of journalists, searching for alternative communication channels and reaching identified target groups.

With the growing popularity of new communication methods and channels (including Facebook, blogs), and especially since 2013, unfavorable changes in traditional media began to take on statistically significant and visible dimensions. The sheer volume of online content has put the future of traditional journalists and publishers into question. In 2013, the sales of nationwide dailies dropped to 900,000 copies (Głogowski, 2015, p. 171). Rzeczpospolita sold 20% fewer copies than in 2012, Gazeta Wyborcza — 16.1% less (Pallus, 2014). In the following years, the sales of printed press continued to decline, reaching the level of approx. 630 thousand copies in 2015 (Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek, 2017, p. 124), approx. 606 thousand copies in 2018 (Kurdupski, 2018) and exactly 561,703 copies in 2019 (Pazik, 2019). The breakthrough for the progressive downward trend in the sales of printed press was the year 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related limitations caused problems in access to press outlets and led to a reduction in the purchasing activity of the society. In March 2020, the printed press sold 471,530 copies, which was a result lower by 15.47% than in March 2019, finally reaching the level of 466 thousand copies in August 2020, which in turn was a decrease by 19.3% compared to the same period in 2019 (Bochyńska & Kowalski, 2020). At this point, it is worth drawing attention to specific press titles. On the example of the aforementioned Rzeczpospolita and Gazeta Wyborcza, one can say that the sales crisis has been ongoing for several years now, but during the pandemic it has deepened and affected other newspapers.

Table 1. Changes in the Average Circulation of the Largest Polish Paid Dailies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Newspaper</th>
<th>Average Circulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fakt. Gazeta Codzienna</td>
<td>375 690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazeta Wyborcza</td>
<td>151 792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rzeczpospolita</td>
<td>52 461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Express</td>
<td>194 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazeta Polska Codziennie</td>
<td>52 443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own study based on reports published by ZKDP.

The above data show a downward trend in the average circulation of the largest Polish paid dailies in 2019-2020. It is particularly clearly visible in the data from the period just before the pandemic, from January 2020, in April (lockdown time) and July (after lockdown) of this year. Comparing the data from the beginning of the first and third quarter of 2020, one can observe a significant decline in the circulation of such dailies as Fakt. Gazeta Codzienna (-16.23%), Gazeta Wyborcza (-12.35%) and Super Express (-9.02%). In the case of Gazeta Polska Codziennie the decrease amounted to 2%. In turn, Rzeczpospolita was the only one to record a minimal increase in circulation (+ 1.61%). It should be noted that by the time this paper was finished (October 2020), none of the dailies listed in the table had managed to revert to their pre-pandemic (January) circulation. According to the “Digital News Report 2020,” compiled by the Reuters Institute based on market analysis in 40 different countries, the demand for sales of printed newspapers during the pandemic decreased due to physical constraints (closure of some outlets or fear of
leaving the home). This accelerated the shift towards fully digital development of the printed press, associated with the growing importance of social media (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andt, & Nielsen, 2020, pp. 10-11).

More than a decade ago, Zbigniew Bauer in his book *Journalism in the Face of New Media* [Pol. “Dziennikarstwo wobec nowych mediów”] (2009) formulated the conclusion that the press “nests” in the Internet (p. 16). In 2020, it can be said that the process of “nesting” has been completed and is permanent. The traditional printed press has changed its format and adapted to the demands of digital media. Technological innovations have transformed the journalism industry and its practices (Berenson, 2018, pp. 67-68). The use of private channels to broaden the reach of the content created by a journalist is now a natural phenomenon. The media shift the power of their editorial offices towards electronic channels. The interpenetration of traditional and modern journalism has become a necessity. Traditional media, in order to survive on the market, must be present and active in the digital world, and the network itself occupies the position of a global medium. According to the data included in the IAB Polska report, 72% of Polish households had access to the Internet in 2013 (Pliszka, 2013, p. 4), and in 2019 it was already 87% (Association of Internet Industry Employers IAB Polska, 2019, p. 4).

At this point, it is worth mentioning some technological, sociological, and economic changes occurring in connection with the pandemic and having a direct or indirect impact on the journalism industry. In particular, it is worth paying attention to:

- a change in the approach to interpersonal relationships that have moved to the web and a large part of which function thanks to information technologies;
- changes in the methods of making purchases, the growing importance and development of e-commerce (Polish Economic Institute, 2020, p. 6);
- changes in the field of electronic documentation, wider use of electronic identity confirmation, greater possibilities of using electronic signatures, especially visible in the banking sector and in offices (Polish Economic Institute, 2020, p. 35);
- changes in the organization of work and transition to remote mode, without direct personal contact between employees, but also with clients;
- changes in demand for technological services, and more specifically for communication tools such as Google Meet, Zoom or Microsoft Teams (the latter application in the initial phase of introducing coronavirus-related restrictions, in just one week, recorded an increase in the number of users by 20 million—which surprised Microsoft itself, but also Google; https://spidersweb.pl/2020/04/zoom-co-to.html);
- changes in the involvement of social media in communication activities, building and maintaining relationships, as well as using them to inform about coronavirus-related events;
- changes in the approach to service delivery, especially in the media, where most of the activity has moved online; as a consequence, this led to a decline in the sales of many printed magazines—the April circulation of the British *Metro* was reduced from approx. 1.5 million to 400-500 thousand copies (Rajan, 2020), and the Polish weeklies *Wprost* and *Do Rzeczy* were published only in the electronic version in March (Bochyńska & Kowalski, 2020).

Bearing in mind the analyses carried out above, it becomes important to identify the still existing gaps in the knowledge gathered so far, especially in terms of the impact of the coronavirus on the performance of tasks and duties assigned to journalists. This paper, based on data obtained through empirical research, fills this gap and shows the key changes that have occurred in the journalistic profession, but also in relations with the editorial circles’ external groups.
Methodological Assumptions of the Research Project and Description of the Studied Sample

This paper contains a detailed analysis of the data obtained in the course of the research project, prepared and carried out in May 2020 by a team led by the author. The team of experts composed of employees of the Polish Press Agency and analysts of the Institute for Information Society Development was responsible for developing the methodology, designing tools, implementing the adopted objectives and creating the report. The research activities central to the project, aimed at obtaining empirical material, were carried out in May 2020 among 4,500 journalists whose data is in the resources of the Polish Press Agency. The result of the project were 316 surveys conducted in one of the most difficult periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the lockdown was in force in Poland and many other countries. The final number of completed questionnaires corresponds to 7% of the surveyed population, which, considering the research carried out with the quantitative method—the CAWI technique, should be considered a good result. In this case, when the economy remained closed and any research using the PAPI or other direct technique was limited or impossible, only the CATI or CAWI technique allowed to achieve the assumed response rate effects. Another important benefit resulting from the use of these techniques is their low cost (compared, for example, to research carried out with the PAPI technique). Ultimately, it was assumed that the CAWI technique would be used in the research, mainly due to the database resources and IT technologies owned by Polish Press Agency [Pol. Polska Agencja Prasowa, PAP], but also due to the system of the research partner. Information with invitations to participate in the research was sent to the members of the study population, using systems enabling contact between PAP and journalists. The poll link was finally activated by 926 people, which constitutes 20.6% of the studied population. Ultimately, 34.1% of people who opened the link to the survey completed the survey questionnaire in full. Rejecting an invitation to conduct a survey or resigning from completing it already in the process, and thus obtaining a result of 316 surveys, may be a result of the complexity of the topic, the period in which the survey was conducted, the length of the survey or the respondents’ lack of time. Nevertheless, the result should be considered high, and assuming a 95% confidence level, the estimated maximum error in the study was 5%.

The research was carried out using a quantitative research method using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique, which consists in conducting a computer-assisted interview via a website. The survey questionnaire consisted of thematic sections that concerned the work of journalists during the pandemic, the assessment of cooperation with PR specialists, the communication tools used, and the phenomenon of fake news. The structure of the questionnaire questions was mainly based on ordinal scales. Thanks to this, the conducted research analyses were based on the frequency distributions and the procedure of comparing the mean in individual independent groups.

The set of factors on the basis of which the statistical and diversification procedures were carried out is co-created by the following variables: gender, age, length of service in the industry, type of the main employment medium, range of this medium, the number of collaborating editorial offices, and the number of PR people known personally.

When analyzing the sex of the respondents, it should be emphasized that men had a slight advantage in the research sample—57.6%; women constituted 42.4% of the total sample. Taking into account the age of the respondents, the most numerous group were journalists aged over 45 (37.3%); the range of 36–45 years was indicated by 29.8% of respondents, every third respondent (32.9%) was no more than 35 years old.
When it comes to seniority in the journalism industry, the respondents’ answers were divided. Nevertheless, the most numerous group were people with experience in the industry not exceeding 10 years—35.5%. The range of 11-20 years was indicated by 31.3% of the respondents, 33.2% of the respondents have been in the industry for over 20 years.

Almost three quarters of journalists (73.7%) were working on an Internet portal at the time of the survey. Employment in the printed press was declared by almost half of the respondents (48.1%). Radio journalists accounted for more than one fifth (21.8%) of the research sample, while TV journalists accounted for one tenth (10.1%). Respondents working in Internet TV constituted 4.7%, and in Internet radio—4.1% of the total sample. Taking into account the main type of medium for which the respondents were working at the time of the survey, the largest percentage of them indicated an Internet portal—43.7%. The overrepresentation of web portals is due to several variables. On the one hand, it is the result of their availability in the databases of the Polish Press Agency, used to organize the dispatch of surveys. On the other hand, it was not an arrangement variable, but only an informational one, so it was not possible to control which journalists completed the survey. Thirdly, it should be pointed out that many journalists working simultaneously, for example in the press or radio, also indicated the Internet portal as a medium in which they simultaneously perform the tasks entrusted to them.

As for the subjects in which the participants of the research specialize in their professional expertise, the highest percentage of them indicated social issues—45.7%. Almost three out of ten respondents specialize in culture / lifestyle (32.1%), as well as general information on economics and business (30.5%). Almost one fifth of the responses were related to education and ecology—19% and 18.7% respectively.

The responses of the respondents allowed for the reconstruction of many dependencies and the development of conclusions that were presented in the analytical part of the paper. In addition to the analysis of the results of scientific research, a query was also carried out on materials falling within the thematic scope of this paper.

**Analysis of the Research Results**

The conducted research shows that the journalistic industry has managed to cope with the need to adapt to the situation caused by the pandemic. It was prepared for the changes taking place at a very fast pace and reacted accordingly. Journalists used appropriate tools, which is a result of the process that has been taking place in the media for a long time in relation to the transfer of a significant part of them to virtual space. The expansion of online versions of the magazines / newspapers, available as subscriptions, played a special role here. According to Business Insider Polska, the number of publishers willing to purchase a subscription among publishers cooperating with Piano has increased by over 200% (Pallus, 2020).

Analyzing the statements relating to the work of journalists during the pandemic, almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) stated that “The journalistic industry has adapted well to the pandemic situation.” 13% of respondents were of opposite opinion; the same number replied “hard to say.”
Most of the journalists surveyed believe that the changes caused by the pandemic has not caused any significant perturbations in the work they perform, and their adaptation to the new situation was correct.

Another issue raised during the research was the question of the availability of interviewees. The analysis carried out in this area was a consequence of the hypothesis put forward in the research process, assuming that the coronavirus pandemic has introduced significant limitations in communication, which in turn resulted in permanent effects in the form of changes in relationships, tools used and the process of media delivery of content to their target groups. More than half of the respondents indicated that during the pandemic they observe greater availability of interlocutors through remote forms of communication (65%).

Each contact with a journalist is treated as an opportunity for his / her interlocutors (Łaszyński, 2017, p. 47). The main tasks of public relations include maintaining proper and beneficial relations with the media (Gawroński, 2006, p. 59). For these reasons, PR people care about maintaining good and regular contacts with journalists. Journalists are a particularly important target group for public relations specialists in crisis situations, because they are often the transmitters of information to the environment (Tworzydło, 2019, p. 139). Access to the communication channel, which is the media, not only in difficult situations, but also in ordinary ones, is something PR specialists expect. In turn, representatives of the mass media are trying to obtain the information necessary to create publications.
During the pandemic, greater availability of interlocutors is observed through remote forms of communication

Figure 2. Assessment of Interlocutor Accessibility Through Remote Forms of Communication
Source: own study based on the results of scientific research.

The greater availability of interlocutors, noted by journalists in the first months of 2020, is certainly a result of the lockdown, the society’s quick getting used to the new reality, but also the lack of activities that had previously prevented the above-mentioned contact. For a large part of people who were suddenly forced to work remotely, online meetings became the norm, and the lack of need to move generated a lot of additional time that could be spent on uncompleted or overdue tasks. Many journalists began to conduct interviews using remote tools, and press conferences moved to virtual space, which was often problematic before the pandemic. Interviews via Skype or Zoom have even appeared on television. A poor call quality is no longer perceived as an obstacle. It became clear to all parties that one has to face a new reality, a new quality of contacts and communication between journalists and, for instance, experts, PR specialists, politicians.

Another area studied was the issue of the impact of the pandemic on the process of creating and disseminating information materials and news to the environment. It turned out that the situation forced journalists to react faster than before in creating and disseminating articles/news (this was stated by 59% of respondents).

The respondents indicated that the pandemic resulted in the necessity to make quick decisions and actions in the field of creating materials for use in the media. Certainly, this could be related to the dynamic changes that took place over several weeks in the work environment, but also in the personal lives of mass media employees, and which also had an impact on their work-life balance. However, speed in actions and decisions did not reduce the working time of journalists. Like other professions, media workers also faced restrictions in their leisure time during the pandemic and the lockdown.
The work has not only moved to houses and apartments, but also its time scope has changed. In many cases, the traditional framework of working hours has been blurred, which on the one hand made it necessary to complete tasks quickly, and on the other caused many activities to be shifted to hours in which employees had not performed their professional duties so far. This affected the feelings of respondents, most of whom (57%) said that they have worked more during the pandemic than before.

The domain of the profession, not only of a journalist, but also of many others, is work exceeding eight hours. Although representatives of the mass media did their work at home, their activities were largely concentrated, and thus their activities accelerated.

Based on a detailed analysis of the research results, an interesting picture of the journalism industry during the pandemic and the related limitations has been outlined (Figure 5). First of all, it should be noted that over two-thirds of the journalists participating in the survey (68%) admitted that the forced switch to remote forms of professional communication, imposed by the pandemic, does not negatively affect the quality of their work. This means that most of them were ready for such a challenge. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that nowadays the media is effectively operating online. 85% of the respondents declared that switching to obtaining information using online tools is not a challenge for them; only every ninth respondent indicated difficulties in this matter. The results therefore prove the industry’s readiness to move to a higher level of relationship with recipients through the Internet, online media, and social media channels.
When looking at the results obtained in the course of the research in the context of specific statements, it is also worth paying attention to the averages. The highest average was achieved by the statement about the good adjustment of the journalism industry to the changes caused by the pandemic. Equally interesting is the result on the other extreme, the average of 1.72, indicating that switching to obtaining information using online tools was not a significant challenge for journalists. This confirms the hypothesis about good adaptation to changes that took place in society and the economy in the first half of 2020. The average of 2.34 can be interpreted similarly for the statement that the pandemic’s forced switch to remote forms of communication at work did not have a significant impact on the quality of journalists’ work.

Comparing the above-mentioned statements with the profile of respondents, it can be noticed that journalists working in only one editorial office significantly more often declared that the journalistic industry has adapted well to the pandemic situation—on a scale of 1-5, the average of 3.89 compared to 3.44 among those employed in at least three editorial offices. This statement was clearly agreed with more often by the respondents aged 36–45 years—the average was 4.02 compared to 3.68 among the respondents aged up to 35.

Journalists working in editorial offices with an international reach (average 3.5 compared to 2.82 in national editorial offices), as well as those working in at least three editorial offices (3.31 compared to 2.79 among people employed in one editorial office) clearly more often declared that the volatility of legal regulations during the pandemic made their work difficult.
The journalistic industry did well in the pandemic situation.  

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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During the pandemic, I have observed greater availability of interlocutors through remote forms of communication.  

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<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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The pandemic forces a faster than before reaction in the creation and distribution of articles / news.  

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<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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I work more during the pandemic than before.  

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</table>

I feel the limitations in direct forms of contact with interlocutors.  

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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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The volatility of legal regulations during the pandemic makes my work difficult.  

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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The situation forces me to write about areas in which I did not specialize before.  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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Due to the pandemic, I started to get involved in new journalistic formats, e.g. podcasts, video materials.  

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</table>

In connection with the pandemic, I started to become more involved in running my social media (opening new communication channels / increasing activity in channels such as YouTube, videoblogs).  

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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The pandemic's forced switch to remote forms of communication at work has a negative impact on the quality of my work.  

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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Introducing myself to obtaining information using online tools is a challenge for me.  

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<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Figure 5. Responses to the Request: “Please Assess to What Extent You Agree with the Individual Statements Regarding the Work of Journalists During the Coronavirus Pandemic.” N = 316. Source: own study based on the results of scientific research.
The opinion that “The pandemic’s forced switch to remote forms of communication at work has a negative impact on the quality of my work” was clearly more often agreed with by respondents who know up to 20 PR specialists personally—average 2.47-2.54 compared to 1.93-2.06 among journalists who know more than 20 public relations specialists personally. Journalists for whom the main medium of work is the radio (average 3.67 compared to 3.03 among people working mainly in an internet portal), and journalists employed in a local / regional editorial office (3.51 compared to 2.95 in nationwide editorial offices) clearly more often admitted that they felt severely limited direct forms of contact with interlocutors.

The next statement, i.e. “Introducing myself to obtaining information using online tools is a challenge for me,” was agreed with by respondents aged over 45 clearly more often (average 1.94 compared with 1.53 among people aged up to 35) and those who know up to five PR people personally (2.02 compared to 1.33 among those who know more than 40 PR people). Women (average 3.71 compared to 3.36 for men) and journalists employed mainly in internet portal (3.77 compared to 3.16 among those employed mainly in television) clearly more often admitted that they work more during the pandemic than before.

Going further, it should be noted that journalists working mainly in television (average 3.05 compared to 2.41 among people working mainly in the radio), in local / regional editorial offices (3.00 compared to 2.28 in editorial offices internationally) and those who know up to five PR people personally (3.16 compared to 2.49 among people who know 11 to 20 PR people) clearly more often admitted that the situation forced them to describe areas in which they had not previously specialized. Journalists hired in two editorial offices (average 3.03 compared to 2.50 among employees in one editorial office) and who know more than 40 PR specialists personally (3.10 compared to 2.42-2.43 among people who know up to 10 PR people) clearly more often emphasized that due to the pandemic they started to engage in new journalistic formats, e.g. podcasts and video materials. The respondents working in two editorial offices also clearly more often declared that due to the pandemic they started to become more involved in running their social media (opening new communication channels or increasing activity in such channels as YouTube and videoblogs)—average 2.93 compared to 2.26 among people working only in one editorial office. Moreover, women (average of 3.70 vs. 3.38 among men) and journalists employed in local / regional editorial offices (3.72 vs. 3.17 in international editorial offices) clearly more often admitted that the pandemic forced them to work more than before, the reaction in the creation and transmission of articles / news.

Summary and Conclusions
The research presented in this paper shows that the journalism industry is one that has adapted well to the changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic—an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus discovered in China. This is also confirmed by other studies, such as those prepared by Nielsen. The latter indicate that the problems and challenges related to the spread of the coronavirus—restriction of consumer mobility, compulsion to work remotely, the growing importance of digital connectivity as a factor controlling our daily habits—can accelerate the use of existing and new technologies and tools (Nielsen.com, 2020).

The research conducted by the team led by the author of this paper shows that for the majority of respondents, switching to obtaining information using online tools was not a big problem or a challenge. It also means that most of the respondents were prepared for such an eventuality and coped with the new situation without much difficulty. The research also identified changes in the reaction, creating materials, but also the availability of interviewees for journalists.
At the same time, it should be noted that, as in other professions, also in the journalistic industry changes in working time and increased professional activity were noted. Many respondents indicated that they worked less before the pandemic than during the lockdown. This new, unusual experience was also associated with, for some of the respondents, specific complications and difficulties. Half of them felt the limitations of direct forms of contact with interlocutors. The transition to remote work may not have been technologically burdensome, but for many journalists it was a challenge that they had to face. The work of a significant part of the respondents was also hindered by changes in legal regulations, made on an ongoing basis as the pandemic developed.

Some of the respondents had to not only introduce changes in the way of preparing materials, but also start to describe the areas in which they had not specialized before. Every third respondent was also involved in new journalistic formats, such as podcasts or video materials. Finally, the respondents were forced to be more privately active in social media, and even to use channels they had not used before, such as YouTube or videoblogs. The changes resulting from the pandemic have brought a new quality to journalism and have certainly accelerated the transition to a higher level of online contacts. They will also result in a faster than expected transformation of the media towards the network.

It should be noted here that the hypotheses of the research project discussed at the beginning of this paper have been confirmed. It has been proven that the pandemic brought about limitations in communication, and these had lasting effects in the form of changes in the formation and maintenance of relationships, changes in the frequency of using certain tools and their types, and finally changes in the delivery of content by journalists.

The research presented in this paper was carried out in the first phase of the pandemic, so the problem has been analyzed with regard to this phase. Nevertheless, they significantly expand our knowledge about changes in the functioning of the mass media and journalists themselves. Further, in-depth research on this issue is justified, and the research project described in the paper indicates the areas of such research.

References


