

INFLUENCERS AND MEDIA: INFLUENCER-GENERATED CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AS A JOURNALISTIC SOURCE³

Abstract. *The growing popularity of social media platforms, especially YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, has enabled online influencers to appear in addition to previously known celebrities, representing a new global phenomenon and new role models for young people. Biran and his associates in the paper “Detecting influencers in written online conversations” state that influencers are the participants in online communication who have credibility in the group, who persevere in order to convince others and who introduce ideas that others accept or support (Biran et al., 2012: 38-39). Research on journalistic sources, especially research on content created by influencers on social media services, is a significant contribution to research in the field of media pluralism. Research on social network platforms as a source of information in Serbian literature is rare, which contributes to the significance of this research. The purposes of the research are to determine whether the content created and published by influencers on social network platforms in Serbia is a source of information for online editions of Serbian daily newspapers, the type of content in question, as well as whether the media gain new audiences that follow influencers. Qualitative-quantitative content analysis and web surveys were used for the research. Based on the qualitative-quantitative analysis of domestic daily newspapers (Danas, Politika, Večernje novosti, Blic, Kurir, Alo, Telegraf, Informer), we can conclude that the media use the profile content that influencers publish on social network sites as a source for texts which are soft news. According to the web survey in which 175 respondents participated, we can conclude that texts about influencers in the media are followed by 38 respondents and that the media are gaining new audiences who follow influencers on social network sites.*

Key words: *influencers, journalism, the media, social media platforms, journalistic source*

1. Introduction

In the traditional media, certain public figures and people of importance have been exposed in the media throughout history. Each time had its representatives, opinion leaders and role models to the younger generations, from Marlon Brando and James Dean, through Madonna, Cher, Freddie Mercury, Selena and Britney Spears, all

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the way to Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and the Kardashian family. The growing popularity of social media, especially YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, has enabled influencers to appear in addition to these well-known names, representing a new global phenomenon and new role models for young people. Many of the influencers show a big part of their lives to the public, so they are the focus of interest and the subject of media coverage. In the past, public figures exerted their influence through masterful speeches and unrepeatable actions and they are remembered in history as activists, speakers and fighters. Instead of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Emmeline Pankhurst, Rosa Parks, Clara Zetkin, Seretse Khama and Steve Jobs, today there are Jeffrey Starr, Zach King, Nikkie Tutorials, Camilla Coelho and Mariano di Vaio, who gained worldwide popularity, and also Zorannah, Baka Prase, Stuberi, Bojana and Dunja in Serbia.

Influencers attract the attention of the public and the media. In the middle of the last century, such public attention was to mark the system that favored the stars – the “olympians” (as Edgar Morin called them in his work “The spirit of Time”) (1979: 127). These were primarily film stars, famous artists, heads of state, researchers and playboys (Moren, 1979: 127-132). In the second decade of the 21st century, thanks to the social media platforms, ordinary people are rapidly emerging from anonymity and gaining fame. By downloading content from the pages of influencers on social media, the media additionally enable the spread of their influence. Contents posted by influencers are becoming new journalistic sources.

The world’s media use social media platforms as a source of information. In literature we have a case of “covering” (constant journalistic monitoring) the profile of influencer Vani Hari, a food blogger known as the Food Babe, who is followed by reputable media such as the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and included by *CNN* its nutrition experts (Khamis et al., 2017, Recent cases of self-branding & the rise of Social Media Influencers, para. 6).

This paper will examine the relationship between influencers on social network sites and journalism, that is, it will investigate the extent to which contents published by influencers on social media appear as journalistic sources. The paper will present a theoretical approach to this topic, conceptualize basic concepts and present the results of empirical research.

2. Changes in journalism in the digital age

The changes that took place with the emergence and expansion of the Internet were most visible in the field of communications. Thus, the emergence of the Internet has led to the transformation of traditional media and media business models, changes in professional journalistic practices, the emergence of a new form of journalism – online journalism and multimedia approach to the processing of journalistic work. “The Internet provides the ability to ‘connect’ all traditional media - text, images, sounds, videos and it also represents much more than that, which certainly gives it an advantage over other forms of briefing” (Radovanović & Šarenac, 2012: 258).

It is much easier and faster to publish information online than in traditional media, especially in the press. Thanks to the development of the Internet, it is much easier today to find a topic for a story, information, documents and sources. As is the case with every new media, the appearance of electronic newspapers was greeted with the fear that some of the traditional media would be shut down. "When the Internet began to dizzyingly captivate users and distract the audience, many thought it would be enough to offer online editions of their media content and thus ensure survival" (Pavlović and Vulić, 2014: 157). Inevitably, traditional media is beginning to move to the Web. "At the end of the last century, most of the leading American newspapers and magazines launched their electronic editions, and back in 1996, over four hundred television stations and one thousand two hundred radio stations had their web presentations" (Bjelica i Jevtović, 2006: 204). Many of these media took part of their audience to the portals. The first examples of online editions of newspapers were an electronic copy of a printed issue, and only later did they get their current look. "Digital media thus appear as a supplement to the traditional ones, as news sources, all with the aim of forming a mass audience and advertisements around the news and brand, on as many platforms as possible" (Jevtović et al., 2014: 351).

News can be published in online media at the time of its occurrence, they can be updated at very short intervals and include the possibility of multimedia presentation; they can also be connected to other sources through links and offer the possibility of user reaction. There is also a possibility of archiving the content of both online texts and collections of printed publications. People can get access to information on the Internet at any time. "The Internet is changing journalism by harming its core values: lowering professional standards, strengthening outside influence and emphasizing speed" (Jevtović et al., 2014: 352). Authors Jevtović, Petrović and Aracki in "Genres in new journalism" ("Žanrovi u savremenom novinarstvu") state the shortcomings of online journalism that journalists notice, such as: less truthfulness in reporting because speed is more important than accuracy, reducing the number of journalists and weakening the influence of journalists (Jevtović et al., 2014: 352). The participation of ordinary citizens in the production of user content on the Internet is increasing, which leads to the emergence of a new form of journalism – citizen journalism⁴.

During the 1990s, individuals started to write weblogs or blogs, marking the beginning of an online citizen journalism (Vidaković, 2018: 306). At the same time, information and communication technologies are rapidly developing, such as tools for easier access and use of the Internet, and computers become more and more accessible to a large number of people. With the advent of mobile phones, network access has been enabled from anywhere at any time. "The Internet was a nursery of social interaction, which is why online communities are called social network communities, and the media through which associations are made are called social media ... Social media include various forms of interaction, from Internet forums,

⁴ Citizen journalism is a concept of the modern age that implies the active participation of citizens in collecting, creating, analyzing and disseminating information" (Bogdanović, 2013: 71).

blogs, wikis, to network services for sharing pictures, videos and audio recordings” (Vidaković, 2018: 307). Through social media, which is evolving much faster than traditional media, users can create new content themselves and expand the existing ones. According to Vidaković, based on a research conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the number of people who get information through social media has been increasing since 2013 (Vidaković, 2018: 307).

2.1. Social network platforms and journalism

“The development of online social networks has had a great impact on journalism. The most important areas at which this happened are: sources of information, because social networks have become an important source of information for the media” (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2019: 179), then in the field of promoting media content and interacting with the public, especially through the development of participatory journalism. According to Mihajlov Prokopović, traditional media in Serbia are adapting to the online environment, but there is no research to determine the extent to which social network sites are used as journalistic sources in news programs (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2019: 179). In the research conducted by this author, the data showed that social network platforms are used as sources in the news program of radio stations in Serbia, although such cases are rare (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2019: 187). When it comes to influential world media such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, research conducted by Von Nordheim and co-workers has shown that in recent years Twitter and Facebook are on the rise as sources of information (Von Nordheim et al., 2018: 807).

Mihajlov Prokopović cites earlier research which showed that traditional media frequently use those social network platforms where their journalists have their own private profiles (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2018: 1088). The most frequently used social network platforms among journalists and media are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Social media are mainly used to share their content, communicate with the audience and attract new audiences. Politicians share information on their social media profiles that the media use as a source. The example that Mihajlov Prokopović cites is the resignation of Sasa Janković, the former president of the Movement of Free Citizens, which he published on his Twitter profile and which was transmitted by the media. The increase in the use of social network sites, primarily Twitter when it comes to politicians’ posts, occurred in 2016 during the US presidential election (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2019: 179).

The possibility of using social network sites as a journalistic source and the desire to publish information as soon as possible and to be the first to do it, have led to the fact that sometimes, depending on the type of media that broadcasts it, information is not checked and truthfulness is suppressed. Any information published on social network platforms that the media want to use must be verified, as well as the name of the source from which the information was taken. “Information verification in search of truth as the first principle of journalism had little to do with the audiences until the emergence of social media. The methods used by journalists to determine

what information was true derived from a professional culture that highly valued the integrity of journalists and the credibility of the media. With the more dominant role of the audiences and social media, more and more transparency is being noticed” (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2018: 1087). With the growing role of the public, as well as the growing importance of social media platforms in journalism, there is talk of transparency regarding the openness of the journalist and his product to assess the audience (Bossio, 2017: 34; according to Mihajlov Prokopović, 2018: 1087).

Political campaigns and elections have contributed to the increase in the use of social media, especially Twitter, as a journalistic source. “There are two levels in which the relationship between journalism and social networks should be observed: at one level media as an organization has its own profile on the social network, and the other one journalists who have their own profiles on social media and consequences of that practice. Profiles of journalists on social networks can provide additional insights and explanations when it comes to editorial practice or editorial policies of the media” (Bossio, 2017: 67–70; according to Mihajlov Prokopović, 2019: 182).

2.2. Influencers and journalism

The growth of social media platforms has led to the fact that in the second decade of the 21st century they have become an important and inevitable source of journalistic reporting. Many important events were first reported by ordinary citizens, users of social media, on their social media profiles, and then the news was taken over by major media and news agencies. Such was the case with many events and catastrophes in the world, such as the plane crash into the Hudson River in 2009, the Iranian elections of the same year, the murder of Osama Bin Laden and the earthquake in Japan in 2011. During Hurricane Sandy in 2012, ten photographs of users were posted on Instagram within seconds of destruction, while the number of total photographs posted was about half a million. After the bomb explosion at the Boston Marathon in 2013, hundreds of tweets with expressions of sympathy and condolences were published on Twitter. Even the arrest of one of the suspects for this terrorist action was first published on the official profile of the Boston police on one of the social media platforms (Schiffes et al., 2014: 406). In addition to such catastrophes, events and news about them, social media sites have become a source when it comes to public figures and celebrities who publish information about their plans, attitudes and the like on their profiles. Expert individuals frequently represent competent sources of new information for the media to publish using their profiles on social media. Therefore, during the epidemic caused by COVID-19 in Serbia in the spring of 2020, the Facebook profile of epidemiologist Predrag Kon, a member of the Republic Crisis Staff for the suppression of the COVID-19 epidemic, was often used as a source of information for the media. On the other hand, celebrities use social media to reach their followers and publish content that they expect to be published by the media (Schiffes et al., 2014: 407).

According to *Mediakix*, the site of the American influencer marketing agency *Mediakix*, there are six most popular types of influencers: icons, adventurers,

teachers, gurus, creatives and entertainers (“The 6 most popular types of Instagram influencers”). The areas in which they operate are different: from lifestyle to practical advice and education and most of them are in the field of fashion, beauty, fitness and lifestyle.

Since 2010, the predominant reporting of the world’s major media on celebrities has focused on this new type of celebrities – influencers. Ercegovac states that this term started to be used with the growing popularity of blogs and Twitter, and that “English defines an influencer as someone who has the power to influence many other people through social network sites or traditional media” (Ercegovac, 2017: 253). Online influencers are people who influence the attitudes of other people because of their popularity, knowledge and position they have on social media platforms where they are very active. “That is why it very often happens in public debates that a person’s influence on the Internet is wrongly measured exclusively by the number of those who follow that person on social network sites. In fact, this fact should be defined primarily as popularity, which does not necessarily mean influence, but it is certainly an important characteristic of every influencer” (Ercegovac, 2017: 253).

The media report on the success and fame of Internet influencers, as well as the scandals in which they are included. For example, the weekly *Time* named Australian YouTuber Troy Sivan the most influential teenager in 2014, while in the same year tabloids wrote that one of the most popular British YouTubers Zoe Sugg, known as Zoella, after her first book *Girl Online* sold more than 78,000 copies a week, had a *ghostwriter* who helped her to write the book (Abidin, 2018: 1).

3. Research methodology

3.1. The subject of research

The subject of research in this paper is the relationship between influencers on social media platforms and journalism. In particular, it investigates whether the content created by influencers on social media platforms becomes a source of journalistic reporting, as well as what kind of content it is and who constitutes the audience when it comes to media content.

3.2. The significance of research

Media pluralism as one of the features of a democratic media space is very important because it provides various opinions and alternatives. Research on journalistic sources, especially such as content that creates influencers on social media, is a significant contribution to research in the field of media pluralism. Research on social media platforms as a source of information in Serbia is rare, which contributes to the significance of this research.

3.3. The aims of the research

The aim of the research is to determine whether the content created and published by influencers on social network platforms in Serbia is a source of information for online editions of domestic daily newspapers. The aim of the research is also to determine the type of content in question, as well as whether the media, by publishing the content posted by influencers, gain a new audience.

3.4. Hypotheses

Hypotheses to be tested:

- 1) Online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia use content created and published by influencers on social media platforms as a source of information.
- 2) This content is frequently entertainment (soft news).
- 3) Online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia, by publishing content created by influencers, gain a new audience that trusts influencers.

3.5. Method, techniques and data processing

The paper will use quantitative-qualitative analysis of the content of online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia and web surveys. The first and second hypotheses will be tested by the method of quantitative-qualitative analysis of the content of online editions of domestic daily newspapers (*Politika, Danas, Blic, Večernje novosti, Kurir, Alo, Informer and Telegraf*) in order to investigate whether there are contents that indicate influencers from social media platforms as journalistic sources and the type of content in question. Qualitative-quantitative analysis of the content of the online edition of domestic daily newspapers was performed in the period from July 1 to July 31, 2020.

The survey technique will be used to investigate whether users follow influencers on social media, as well as whether they read content in online editions of daily newspapers that indicate that profiles of influencers on social media are sources of information, which will test the third hypothesis. A special questionnaire was created for the needs of the research. The web survey was conducted in the period from July 19 to July 27, 2020, and 175 respondents participated.

4. Online influencers - new sources of information

Based on a qualitative-quantitative analysis of the content of the online edition of domestic daily newspapers (*Danas, Politika, Večernje novosti, Blic, Kurir, Alo, Informer and Telegraf*) from July 1 to July 31, 2020, it was determined that the total number of articles on these web portals for a given period was 59077. The greatest number of texts was published by *Kurir* – 13697, followed by: *Blic* – 9982, *Telegraf* – 8895, *Informer* – 7785, *Alo* – 7206, *Večernje novosti* – 6975 and *Danas* – 2443 texts. The lowest number of texts was published by *Politika* – 2094.

In the given period of research, the number of texts in which the profile content on social media of public figures was the source was 6327. Texts in which the source of publication comes from the profiles of public figures on social media make up 10.7 percent of the total number of published texts on all portals. The largest number of texts in which the source of publication was related to public figures and their social media sites was published by *Kurir* in the total number of 1605 texts (2.7%). In July, *Informer* published 1173 texts (15.6%). *Alo* published 1126 texts (15.6%) in which the source was known. During the research period, the *Telegraf* had 1047 texts (11.7%) in which the source was content from social network platforms of public figures. In July, *Blic* published 1015 texts (10.1%) and *Večernje novosti* published a total of 226 articles (3.2%) on its portal. In July, *Danas* published 90 texts (3.6%) with celebrities as sources. In the given period, *Politika* used the lowest number of posts from social media of famous people, to be exact in 45 texts (2.1%).

When we talk about influencers, there are two categories of influencers that we use for methodological reasons: 1) influencers – public figures who would have an impact without activities on social media and 2) influencers – previously anonymous people who gained popularity due to their activities on social media. The media are expected to use posts from social media of public figures as a journalistic source more than the content published by contemporary influencers, previously anonymous people. When it comes to posts from social media platforms, influencers who became popular owing to social media appeared on the portals of domestic daily newspapers in 91 texts as sources of information in the period from July 1 to July 31, 2020. In the total number of all published texts in the online editions of domestic daily newspapers in July, the number of articles in which these influencers were featured on social media is 0.1%. The largest number of articles was published by *Telegraf* – 28 (0.2%), followed by: *Blic* – 20 (0.2%), *Alo* – 19 (0.25%), *Kurir* – 15 (0.1%) and *Informer* nine (0.1%). *Večernje novosti*, *Danas* and *Politika* didn't have any texts in the research period using the profiles of influencers who became popular due to social media.

Based on the obtained results, we can conclude that tabloids and semi-tabloids frequently (*Telegraf*, *Informer*, *Kurir*, *Alo*, *Večernje novosti* and *Blic*)⁵ use posts from social media created by influencers (previously unknown people and/or public figures) as a journalistic source, unlike broadsheet media (*Danas* and *Politika*) who use official announcements, agency services and competent interlocutors as sources without the mediation of social media platforms. When serious media use profiles of public figures on social media as a source of information, serious topics prevail, while in the case of tabloids and semi-tabloids, entertainment content predominates. The results are shown in *Table 1*.

⁵ One of the classifications put *Blic* and *Večernje novosti* into semi-tabloids (Milojević and Krstić, 2016: 284).

Table 1: The number of texts in which influencers are the sources in online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia

Online edition of the daily newspaper	Period	Total number of texts	Number of texts in which influencers are the sources (gained fame thanks to SM)	Percentage of texts in which influencers are the sources (gained fame thanks to SM)	Number of texts in which the sources come from profiles of public figures on SM	Percentage of texts in which the sources come from profiles of public figures on SM
<i>Danas</i>	1-31 July	2443	0	0%	90	3,6%
<i>Politika</i>	1-31 July	2094	0	0%	45	2,1%
<i>Večernje novosti</i>	1-31 July	6975	0	0%	226	3,2%
<i>Blic</i>	1-31 July	9982	20	0,2%	1015	10,1%
<i>Kurir</i>	1-31 July	13697	15	0,1%	1605	2,7%
<i>Alo</i>	1-31 July	7206	19	0,2%	1136	15,6%
<i>Informer</i>	1-31 July	7785	9	0,1%	1173	15,6%
<i>Telegraf</i>	1-31 July	8895	28	0,3%	1047	11,7%
IN TOTAL	1-31 July	59077	91	0,15%	6327	10,7%

Out of the total number of texts (91) in which the sources were social network profiles of influencers that gained fame owing to social media sites, 68 texts referred to domestic influencers, while for 23 texts the posts of foreign influencers served as a journalistic source (Table 2). In the further analysis, we will process only texts related to domestic influencers and exclude texts in which the sources are related to profiles of public figures on social network sites due to a large number of texts, since the posts of celebrities on the Internet have long served as a journalistic source. Accordingly, by the end of this analysis, we will use the term influencer to denote a previously unknown person who gained influence and popularity thanks to social media.

Table 2: Number and type of texts where the sources are influencers – previously unknown people who gained popularity thanks to social network sites, in online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia (*Refers to influencers who gained popularity thanks to social network sites)

Online edition of the daily newspaper	Period	Number of texts where influencers* are the sources	Percentage of texts	Number of texts where the sources are foreign influencers	Number of texts where the sources are domestic influencers	Number of entertaining texts where the sources are domestic influencers	Number of serious texts where the sources are domestic influencers
<i>Danas</i>	1-31 July	0	0%	0	0	0	0
<i>Politika</i>	1-31 July	0	0%	0	0	0	0
<i>Večernje novosti</i>	1-31 July	0	0%	0	0	0	0
<i>Blic</i>	1-31 July	20	0,2%	6	14	12	2
<i>Kurir</i>	1-31 July	15	0,1%	3	12	12	0
<i>Alo</i>	1-31 July	19	0,2%	3	16	16	0
<i>Informer</i>	1-31 July	9	0,1%	2	7	7	0
<i>Telegraf</i>	1-31 July	28	0,3%	9	19	19	0
IN TOTAL	1-31 July	91	0,1%	23	68	66	2

Informer had the fewest texts in which the source of information is from the social network sites of domestic influencers – nine, i.e. two about foreign and seven about domestic influencers. In July, *Informer* published three texts in which posts from the profile of Zorana Jovanović, better known as Zorannah, and Bogdan Ilić, known as Baka Prase, served as a journalistic source. One text referred to the post of Milica Poluskaya. All seven texts were related to entertainment content and no text had an author. All texts were equipped with images while two of them were equipped with videos, one of which was removed in the meantime. All photos had a cited source, and none had a description of people who were on it.

During the research period, *Kurir* used contents from the profiles of influencers for 15 texts, out of which the sources are domestic influencers in 12 texts and in 3 texts all sources are related to the profile contents of foreign influencers. The posts of Bogdan Ilić were used as a source for five texts, Zorana Jovanović for three texts, Ružica Rupić for two texts and one post each for Dunja Jovanić and Milica Poluskaya who were the source of information. Out of the total of 12 texts, nine texts had author details, unlike three texts with no authors. All 12 texts had photos and were entertaining contents, while two texts were equipped with videos. No footage contained a description. All photos had a source, and only one had a description of people who were on it.

Alo published 19 texts in which the sources were influencers (16 texts about domestic and three texts about foreign influencers). 11 texts referred to the posts of Bogdan Ilić. The posts of Zorana Jovanović were used for two texts, while the posts of Stefan Janković, known as Janko, Milica Poluskaya and Andrija Jović were used for one text each. All texts were entertaining and all had photographs with sources cited. Only one photo had a description of people on it. The video was present in three texts.

Blic used profile contents of influencers' social network sites as a journalistic source for 20 articles. Out of the total number of published texts in which the sources were influencers, 14 texts referred to posts of domestic influencers, and six texts related to foreign influencers. The posts of Zorana Jovanović and Bogdan Ilić were used as sources for four texts each, and the posts of Milica Poluskaya, Dunja Jovanić and Andrija Jović were used as two sources each. The posts from the profiles of Anastasia Đurić, known as Stasha, Sara and Lea Stanković, Tamara Kalinić, Vanja Veljić, known as Va Van and Stefan Vuksanović Muđa, also served as a source. Contents from social network sites of multiple influencers were used for the same text as the source. Two texts had serious informative content, while the other 12 were entertaining. All 14 texts were equipped with photographs, the source of which was cited, and only three had a description. The two texts contained a video.

Most of the texts in July in which information on influencer profiles served as a journalistic source were published by *Telegraf*. In the online edition of this paper, 28 texts were published, out of which 19 texts used the profiles of domestic influencers, and nine texts used the social network profiles of foreign influencers. All the texts related to the posts of domestic influencers were entertaining content. In July, *Telegraf* used posts from Bogdan Ilić's profile for 12 articles, while it used posts by Zorana

Jovanović for five articles. The posts of Milica Polskaya and Stefan Janković were used as a source for one text each. Five texts were not signed, while the other 14 contained the name or initials of the author. As on other portals, all texts were equipped with photographs, the sources of which were listed. 17 texts had descriptions below the photographs, while two texts had no descriptions below the image. There was also a video in eight texts.

Out of the total number of texts (68) based on social media content of Serbian influencers, previously unknown people, there were 66 texts involving entertaining content and two texts with serious content. The largest number of published texts in which the sources are profile contents on social media of Serbian influencers refers to the YouTube posts of Bogdan Ilić – 36 texts. The posts of fashion blogger Zorana Jovanović were used for 17 texts, and YouTube posts of Milica Polskaya were used for six texts. As a source of information, the posts of fashion blogger Dunja Jovanić, YouTuber Ružica Rupić and YouTuber Andrija Jović were used for three texts each, while posts from the profiles of fashion blogger Tamara Kalinić, YouTuber Stefan Vuksanović and YouTuber Anastasia Đurić, Sara and Lea Stanković, Ana Lazarević, were used for one text each. In some texts, social media content from several influencers was used, so the number of influencers that appeared was higher than the number of texts.

The most reported topics were Baka Prase withdrawing from the public, his alleged correspondence with minors, the loss of a sponsor, the appearance of drugs in his video and the incident when his car was egged. The media mostly reported about Zorana about her video with the Bosnian football player Ermin Bičakčić, as well as about the photographs in which she is in a bathing suit and topless. Milica Polskaya, a Serbian woman who married a Kazakh businessman, drew the attention of the reporters due to her video in which she talks about what she did before she met her husband and how they met.

Based on all the obtained results, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of texts published in online editions of domestic daily newspapers in the period from July 1 to July 31, 2020, we can conclude that online editions of daily newspapers in Serbia use content created and published by influencers on social network platforms as a source of information. Additionally, the fact remains that these are mostly entertaining contents, that is, soft news.

4.1. Influencers and the audience in Serbia: who follows the influencers?

In a web survey conducted in the period from July 19 to July 27, 2020, posted on private profiles of researchers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook groups (Filozofski fakultet u Nišu, Novinarstvo 2015/2016, Komunikologija 2019/2020 i Studenti beogradskih univerziteta – SBU), 175 respondents participated. Out of the total number of respondents, 51 respondents were male, or 29.1%, and 124 respondents were female, or 70.9% of respondents. The largest number of respondents were respondents aged 18 to 29, 154 of them, which is 88% of the survey, and respondents aged 30 to 39, 10 of them, which is 5.7% of all respondents. In the

age group of 40 to 49 there were seven respondents (4%), under 18 (1.7%) and in the group of 50 to 59 there was one respondent (0.6%). There were no respondents older than 60 years in the survey.

More than two-thirds of respondents, i.e. 144 respondents (82.3%) followed online media, while 31 respondents (17.7%) did not follow. When asked about online editions of domestic daily newspapers, they had the opportunity to choose more answers and most respondents answered that they followed *Danas* – 80 of them (45.7%) and *Blic* – 58 respondents (33.1%). The online edition of *Politika* was followed by 36 respondents (20.6%), *Kurir* by 24 respondents (13.7%), *Telegraf* also by 24 respondents (13.7%), and *Večernje novosti* by 20 respondents (11.4%). The lowest number of respondents follows the online edition of *Alo* – 10 respondents (5.7%) and *Informer* – 9 respondents (5.1%). 51 respondents (29.1%) answered that they didn't follow the media.

The most popular social media platform among respondents was Instagram, used by 160 respondents (91.4%). Facebook was used by 148 respondents (84.6%), YouTube by 146 (83.4%), while 78 respondents (44.6%) had Twitter accounts. The least used social network platform among the respondents was TikTok, used by 26 respondents (14.9%). Respondents were able to choose from multiple choice answers.

When asked whether they followed influencers on social media, 100 respondents, which is 57.1% of the total number of respondents, answered that they followed influencers. 75 respondents (42.9%) answered that they did not follow influencers on social media. The area in which respondents followed influencers the most was fashion and style – 69 respondents (39.4%), travel – 52 (29.3%) and tutorials and advice – 43 respondents (24.6%). Influencers dealing with topics in the field of food were followed by 35 respondents (20%), photography – 36 respondents (20.6%), and home decoration by 24 respondents (13.7%). Influencers in the field of fitness and sketches and reactions were followed by 29 respondents (16.6%). 20 respondents (11.4%) followed contents about books, 18 (10.3%) followed contents about family and children, 10 respondents (5.7%) followed contents about pets and nine respondents (5.1%) followed influencers in the field of technology. 15 respondents (8.6%) followed influencers from politics and five respondents (2.9%) followed influencers from the field of games. Nine respondents (5.1%) followed influencers from other areas. 68 respondents (38.9%) answered that they did not follow influencers. Respondents had the opportunity to choose from multiple choice answers.

Articles on influencers in online media were followed by 38 respondents (21.7%), while 137 respondents (78.3%) did not follow articles about influencers. Comments under the articles about influencers in online media were often left by one respondent (0.6%), and occasionally by five of them (2.9%). 16 respondents (9.1%) rarely wrote comments, while 153 respondents (87.4%) never wrote comments. No respondent always wrote comments.

Based on all the obtained results, we can conclude that the respondents followed online media sites and that the portals of serious daily newspapers were among the most followed issues. Respondents used social network sites in large numbers and

the largest number of respondents answered that they also followed influencers on them. The most popular were influencers from the entertainment fields. Articles in the media about influencers were followed by 38 respondents (21.7%). Very few respondents commented on media articles about influencers, as well as the posts of influencers themselves on social network platforms.

5. Conclusion

Personalities who have gained their popularity on the basis of their activities on social media, i.e. influencers, are increasingly represented in society. Their number is increasing, and the ways in which they address their followers, as well as the areas in which they operate, are becoming more and more diverse. The media and the audience are adapting to all these changes and trends that are happening in the sphere of influencers, in addition to the influencers themselves. Influencers now take up time in television reports and columns in newspaper articles. Although they spread their influence through social network sites, it seems that a large number of them are insufficiently represented in media reporting, especially due to the area in which they operate (specialized content and niches). On the other hand, scandals, nude photos, quarrels, suicides and the tragic deaths of influencers are the focus of the public and they fill the pages of tabloids and occupy considerable time in entertainment shows on commercial media channels.

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the online edition of domestic daily newspapers (*Danas*, *Politika*, *Večernje novosti*, *Blic*, *Kurir*, *Alo*, *Telegraf* and *Informer*) in the period from July 1 to July 31, 2020, we realized that the media used profile content that influencers published on social media platforms as a journalistic source and that these contents usually consisted of entertainment, i.e. soft news. The largest number of published texts in which the source was obtained from social media profiles of domestic influencers referred to the posts of YouTube content creator Bogdan Ilić and fashion blogger Zorana Jovanović. Topics covered by the media related to the content of influencers on social media dealt with entertainment (soft news), such as the loss of sponsors and pictures containing partial nudity. The media most often reported on popular influencers and influencers with the largest number of followers, as well as those individuals who attracted media attention with their attitudes or contents. Based on the results of the web survey, we can conclude that the audience in the media followed the texts about influencers, and in that way the media acquired a new audience that believed in influencers.

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INFLUENSERI I MEDIJI: SADRŽAJI NA PROFILIMA INFLUENSERA NA DRUŠTVENIM MREŽAMA KAO NOVINARSKI IZVORI⁶

Sažetak. Rast popularnosti društvenih mreža, posebno Jutjuba, Fejsbuka, Tviterra i Instagrama, omogućio je da se pored ranije poznatih slavni ljudi javljaju i onlajn influenseri koji predstavljaju novi globalni fenomen i nove uzore mladima – influencersere. Biran (Biran) sa saradnicima u radu “Otkrivanje influencersera u pisanoj onlajn konverzaciji” („Detecting influencers in written online conversations“) navode da su influenseri oni učesnici onlajn komunikacije koji imaju kredibilitet u grupi, koji istrajavaju u nameri da ubede druge i koji uvode ideje koje drugi prihvataju ili podržavaju (Biran et al., 2012: 38-39). Istraživanje novinarskih izvora, posebno takvih kao što su sadržaji koje kreiraju influenseri na društvenim mrežama, značajan je doprinos istraživanjima u oblasti medijskog pluralizma. Istraživanja društvenih mreža kao izvora informacija u domaćoj literaturi su retka i u tome je značaj ovog istraživanja. Ciljevi istraživanja su da se utvrdi da li sadržaji koje kreiraju i objavljuju influenseri na društvenim mrežama u Srbiji predstavljaju izvor informacija za onlajn izdanja domaćih dnevnih novina i kakvi su sadržaji u pitanju, kao i da li putem takvih tekstova mediji stižu novu publiku koja prati influencersere. Za istraživanje su korišćene kvalitativno-kvantitativne analize sadržaja i veb ankete. Na osnovu kvalitativno-kvantitativne analize domaćih dnevnih novina (Danas, Politika, Večernje novosti, Blic, Kurir, Alo, Telegraf, Informer), možemo zaključiti da mediji kao izvor tekstova koriste sadržaj koji influenceri objavljuju na svojim profilima na društvenim mrežama, a to su meke vesti. A na osnovu veb ankete, u kojoj je učestvovalo 175 ispitanika, možemo zaključiti da tekstove o influencerima u medijima prati 38 ispitanika i da mediji stižu novu publiku koja prati influencersere na društvenim mrežama.

Ključne reči: *influenseri, novinarstvo, mediji, društvene mreže, novinarski izvori*

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