

## TRUST IN JOURNALISTS IN THE LIGHT OF SURVEY FINDINGS GATHERED FROM MEMBERS OF THE JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to establish the factors that journalists consider to be of the greatest significance when building the audience's trust. The research was conducted between the 5th of January and the 31st of January 2020 via a digital platform supporting survey studies. The questionnaire included 13 factual questions (2 open-ended and 11 closed-ended) and 3 questions designed to determine the profiles of 67 respondents. In order to address the research questions, statistical analyses of the feedback were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics package. The research is the first stage of a research project focusing on the question of trust in journalists. The article complements and elaborates on the available research findings and scientific analyses concerning the community of Polish journalists.

**Keywords:** trust, trust in journalists, trust-building strategies, community of journalists

### *Concepts and Literature Review*

A specific feature (being at once a major challenge) of the digital media environment is the abundance of available content. Its recipients are unable to cope with distilling out important information or lack the necessary competence to verify its worth. Instead of the promised freedom of choice, the absence of so-called 'elite gatekeepers' (i.e. journalists) has led to the inevitable disappointments from getting lost in today's informational chaos. As a result, the media and journalists are back in favour, as audiences expect them to deliver information tailored to their personal needs and convenience. Trust in journalists is a vital lynchpin of that relationship.

What is it grounded in? Traditionally, trust in journalism has been grounded in the general belief that media are a source of reliable information. As an element of both individual and collective socialisation of individuals, it has fostered the conviction that content delivered by journalists, and thus by the media, is trustworthy. In turn, trust in journalists has its roots in the overall trust in journalism and in the more specific trust in a particular media outlet (across print, TV, radio or online) for which journalists work (Blöbaum 2014, p. 36).

Hanitzsch, Van Dalen, and Steindl (2018, p. 5) have identified three theoretical assumptions that inform most definitions of trust.

Firstly, the authors emphasise that trust is based on past experiences that lead to expectations about (and the assessment of) how another person or institution will perform in the future (Misztal 1996; Vanacker and Belmas 2009). Some decisions made in life are based on inductive inferences from past trends or experiences which, in some way, are believed to be dependable for the present as a basis of reasoning. This kind of confidence may enhance trust, but is not sufficient in itself to define a trust relation. Trust presumes a leap of commitment, a quality of 'faith' which is irreducible. It is specifically related to absence in time and space, as well as to ignorance. We have no need to trust someone who is constantly in view and whose activities can be directly monitored (Giddens 1991, p. 27–28). It should also be emphasised that the level of trust, including trust in journalists, is meaningfully driven by past experiences of the recipients. What matters are so-called formal experiences, which in Skarżyńska's opinion (Skarżyńska 2011, p. 239–252) may have a devastating impact on interpersonal trust. As examples the author points to unfulfilled promises or the feeling of having been aggrieved or let down by prominent people or by people in power. As she notes, research has found that the feeling of having been let down by such people is a particularly relevant predictor of distrust, which may prove more powerful than other personal negative experiences of social interactions.

Secondly, the concept of trust is linked closely to risk and uncertainty. Trust is a relationship in which both parties are interested and both take a certain risk, i.e. both the trustor and trustee risk ending their relationship. Whenever there is a potential lack of information in a certain situation, someone has to take a risk. As no one has full information and everything could be contingent, there is frequently a need for trust. Moreover, trust is prerequisite where the intentions of actors are unknown and it is particularly difficult to verify someone's actions, behaviours or information. In this respect, the importance of trust in journalism becomes obvious. Because journalists convey information their audiences usually do not know, its acceptance basically depends on trust (Blöbaum 2014, p. 15–16). Recipients of media messages are not always capable of verifying journalistic content. Therefore, the belief that information has been communicated to them professionally and reliably underpins the contract of trust between a journalist and audiences (Waisbord 2006, p. 72–73). This kind of relationship is also present in other areas (such as medicine, education or art), where clients/recipients have to rely on experts without being capable of controlling their expertise. Audiences cannot evaluate

whether a journalist carries out his or her work professionally or not. This lack of control leads a priori to the necessity of trust in journalism (Blöbaum 2014).

Thirdly, trust reduces social complexity by generalising expectations of future behaviour (Luhmann 1979). Trust in the media is therefore a psychological state involving the intention to accept vulnerability to a trustee based on positive expectations of the trustee's future actions, which the trustor cannot control (Mayer et al. 1995; Rousseau et al. 1998, p. 395).

Furthermore, when discussing trust in the media, it is important to note that consumers of content are taking risks when they decide to bestow such trust, because they are unable to verify news content on their own (Tsfati, Cohen 2005). Another source of risk is the fact that audiences do not know whether journalists and the media adhere to professional norms (Tsfati, Cappella 2003).

In the light of these statements, Hanitzsch, Van Dalen and Steindl have proposed an approach in which they define trust in the media as a form of institutional trust seen as a willingness of audiences to be vulnerable to news content based on expectations that the media will perform satisfactorily (Hanitzsch, Van Dalen, Steindl 2018, p. 5). However, looking more closely at the concept of expectations, one should bear in mind the reservation made by Robert Cooley Angell about its inherent ambiguities (Angell 1958, p. 34). As the author points out, the concept conveys an ambiguous meaning involving either anticipation (prediction) about a future state of affairs or a moral obligation (expectation that a specific state of affairs should occur because it is desirable). In such a case, we can talk about probabilistic expectations, concerning the likelihood of future events, and normative expectations, which refer to what individuals believe should happen (Olson, Roese, Zanna 2013, p. 581–582). In defining the concept of expectations, it is also important – besides focusing on their anticipatory nature and ambiguity – to pay some attention to their object (i.e. to what is expected). As noted by Sławomir Tusz, 'expectations can be understood as more or less justified beliefs about the future, concerning our external realities (factual expectations), ourselves (self-expectations) or other people (interpersonal expectations)' (Trusz 2013, p. 581–582).

An aspect inextricably linked to trust is credibility. The relationship between trust and credibility has been highlighted by Małgorzata Giełda, who perceives it as a component of the concept of expectations (Giełda 2015, p. 4). Whether one person trusts another depends usually on whether they find that person credible (trustworthy) under particular circumstances, which in turn depends on whether they know of that person's propensity to behave as expected (Honderich 1999, p. 1101). A noteworthy view in this context is the one posited by Piotr Sztompka that credibility involves 'acting upon the expectations or fulfilling the obligations towards those who have trusted us' (Sztompka 2007, p. 99).

The philosophical and societal pillars of building and demonstrating trust have been dealt with by Maria Czajkowska, who presents a holistic approach, indicating that trust (in terms of its building and showing) is derived from the entirety of the relations, contextual background and person delivering a message, rather than just the way in which a message is delivered. The important drivers of trust include

reputation, knowledge and experience one party has of interacting with another (Czajkowska 2010, p. 413 et seq.). On the other hand, according to Sztompka, the credibility of people or objects depends on a set of inherent criteria (essential attributes of such people or objects) considered when assessing their credibility (Czajkowska 2010, p. 313). Among such criteria as listed by Sztompka are reputation, performance and physiognomy. Reputation is understood as the record of a person's or an institution's past actions. The more is known of such past record and the wider the time span in which it is viewed, the more solid the reputation of a trustee. Current performance is the second inherent criterion, which however seems less dependable compared with the previous one. The third and least dependable criterion involves the physiognomy as well as status symbols and other external attributes (e.g. symbols reflecting an organisational culture). They form so weak a basis for trust that it is difficult to rely on them in making any predictions about future behaviour.

### *Conceptualisation of Approach*

Given the fragmented state of journalism and persistent lack of consensus over journalistic norms and practices, journalists resort to various trust-building strategies, based generally on two sets of expectations: professional or ideological. While the first approach is underpinned by the assumption that journalists are technically competent (have the necessary skills of their profession) to deliver news content, the other set of expectations in trust building relies on the assumption that journalism defends the interests of particular groups of people. Colloquially, the first strategy projects the 'trust me, I am an expert' message, while the other one is based on the: 'trust me, I am one of us' philosophy. The first approach corresponds to the 'journalism of information' model, whereas the other one incorporates 'journalism of ideas' (Waisbord 2006, p. 71).

In the 'journalism of information' model, trust is built on the premise that journalists are technically competent (have command of a unique set of skills making them professional experts). As Anthony Giddens (1991, p. 27) has argued, citizens turn to experts with specialist knowledge of complex social processes. In this sense, journalists are seen as experts whose qualifications and reliability come from adherence to specific professional rules and methods. From this perspective, trust is defined as a matter of professional competence, resting on the belief that 'news experts' adhere to specific rules and standards in delivering information (Waisbord 2006, p. 72–73). It should be noted at this point that the general public typically perceive individual journalists in their professional role: reading their texts in print or online, seeing them on the TV screen or hearing them on the radio, they associate a journalist with a specific 'face' or name. However, in general no personal relationship between the audience and journalists exists (Blöbaum 2014, p. 40). Even if journalists share their private lives via social media, we are still more in the position of a 'spectator' watching scenes from a journalist's life rather than engaging with them in any actual personal relationship.

As far as the ‘journalism of opinion’ model is concerned, trust is earned not by competence and professionalism (as in ‘journalism of information’), resting instead on a ‘pact of credibility’ which involves certain emotional and ideological bonds underlying the relationship between a journalist and the audience. Trust in this case depends in a large measure on whether journalists (or a media outlet) remain politically loyal to their target recipients. Any journalism committed to defending specific views exemplifies such ‘pact of credibility’. In this model, journalists are expected to act as members of a ‘community of ideas’, with professional factors (such as impartiality, ethical conduct or public interest) seen as less relevant drivers of trust. Incidentally, it is worth noting that in this model the concept of ‘professional journalism’ is unclear because journalists ambiguously define themselves as members of a ‘community of practice’ and ‘community of ideas’. Journalism is not understood as a separate institution with its own set of rules and procedures, but as a field of practice. The pact of trust between journalists and audiences is based more on an ideological bond than journalistic professionalism, the essence of their relationship lying in that the former meet the ideological expectations of the latter. Presenting bare facts, adhering to the universal principles of journalistic ethics or producing well-balanced messages are not unanimously recognised as measures of credible journalism (Herrán and Restrepo 1995). In fact professionalism is trumped by politics, with ideological affinity underpinning the contract of trust between journalists and audiences (Waisbord 2006, p. 72–73).

This raises the question of which of these models journalists tend to favour as their trust-building strategy.

### *Methodology*

The issue of ‘trust in journalists’ does not easily lend itself to analysis. Most trust-focused studies have been concerned with media in general. On the other hand, studies dealing directly with individual journalists have often connected them with the relevant media formats (Blöbaum 2014, p. 40). In Poland, the findings of research studies concerned directly with journalists have been presented by Agnieszka Stępińska (2017) (2017a); Agnieszka Stępińska and Szymon Ossowski (2015); Lucyna Szot (2016); Sebastian Skuza, Anna Modzelewska, Marta Szeluga-Romańska (2019); Bogusława Dobek–Ostrowska and Nygren Gunnar (2015), among others. The following study provides a more detailed insight complementing the earlier research aimed at capturing a comprehensive, in-depth picture of the community of Polish journalists. Its objective is to present the understanding and perception of ‘trust in journalists’ by journalists themselves. The survey sought to explore the perceived relevance of selected factors affecting trust in journalists.

It was conducted between January 5th and January 31st 2020 via a digital platform supporting survey studies. The questionnaire included 13 factual questions (2 open-ended and 11 closed-ended ones) and 3 questions designed to determine

the profiles of respondents. It covered 67 respondents (journalists), of whom 39 gave answers to all the questions.

In order to address the research questions, statistical analyses of the feedback were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics package, including frequency analyses, Fisher's exact tests and one-way analyses of intergroup variance. The standard significance threshold of  $\alpha = .05$  was adopted; however, the probability results of  $.05 < p < .1$  were considered to reveal a significant statistical trend. The statistically significant survey findings are presented below.

## Findings

Open-ended questions: the first of the open-ended questions put to respondents was: *How do you understand the concept of trust in journalists?* The feedback was classified into the three categories listed below.

Firstly, the concept of *trust* was understood in procedural terms, with respondents attributing trust directly to a journalist's professional skills, pointing for example to impartiality, integrity, objectivity, ethics and competence. The percentage of responses classified into this category was 40.5%.

Secondly, the concept of *trust* was understood in terms of perception, with respondents equating trust with the audience's belief that journalists can be trusted. 43% of all responses fell into this category.

Thirdly, the concept of *trust* was understood in relational terms, with respondents seeing trust as a lasting relationship built between a journalist and his or her audience, where a sense of connection and interaction via social media featured prominently. 11% of all responses were classified into this category. The remaining answers, in view of their diversity, were categorised as 'other'.

Table 1. The relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists

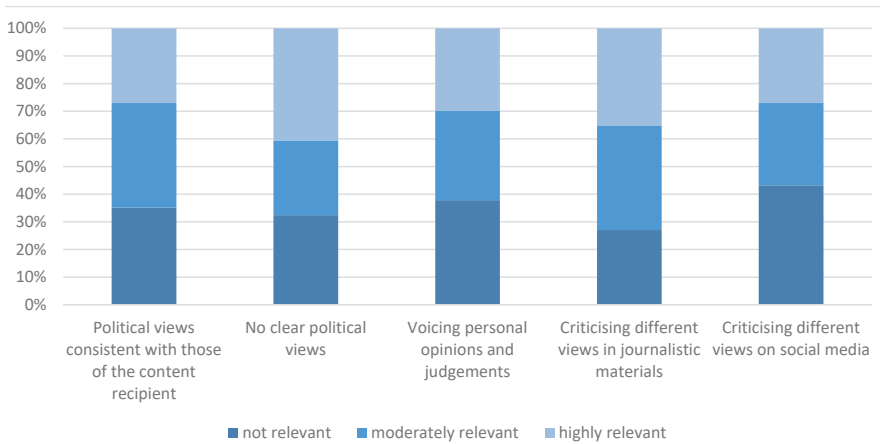
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant
Political views consistent with those of the content recipient	N	13	14	10
	%	35.1	37.8	27
No clear political views	N	12	10	15
	%	32.4	27	40.5
Voicing personal opinions and judgements	N	14	12	11
	%	37.8	32.4	29.7
Criticising different views in journalistic materials	N	10	14	13
	%	27	37.8	35.1
Criticising different views on social media	N	16	11	10
	%	43.2	29.7	27

Source: own analysis

The second of the open-ended questions was: *How do you understand the concept of trust in a media outlet?* As in the case of question one, the feedback was classified into the three respective categories as follows: 43%, 43% and 8%.

Closed-ended questions: in the first step, respondents were asked to assess the relevance of selected factors that may drive trust in journalists. The findings are shown in Table 1. As detailed in the table, the journalists' opinions varied widely. Most often, they disagreed that the factor of criticising different views on social media was relevant (43.2% of negative responses), whereas the highest percentage of affirmative responses (40.5%) was recorded for the factor of having no clear political views. The results are summarised in graphical form in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists



Source: own analysis

*Association Between a Journalist’s Gender and His or Her Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors Driving Trust in Journalists*

In the next step, the study aimed to find out whether a respondent’s gender was in any way correlated with his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists. A series of Fisher’s exact tests were performed. As shown in Table 2, there was one result at a statistical trend level. Men were more likely than women to perceive criticism of different views on social media as a factor irrelevant in the context of trust towards a journalist. Women were demonstrably most likely to select ‘moderately relevant’ in this instance. The strength of the association was moderately large, as measured by the value of Cramer’s V coefficient.

**Table 2. Association between a journalist's gender and his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists**

Political views consistent with those of the content recipient					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
man	N	10	9	8	<i>p</i> = .720
	%	37.00%	33.30%	29.60%	
woman	N	3	5	2	
	%	30.00%	50.00%	20.00%	
No clear political views					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
man	N	10	6	11	<i>p</i> = .518
	%	37.00%	22.20%	40.70%	
woman	N	2	4	4	
	%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%	
Voicing personal opinions and judgements					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
man	N	12	7	8	<i>p</i> = .360
	%	44.40%	25.90%	29.60%	
woman	N	2	5	3	
	%	20.00%	50.00%	30.00%	
Criticising different views in journalistic materials					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
man	N	9	8	10	<i>p</i> = .231
	%	33.30%	29.60%	37.00%	
woman	N	1	6	3	
	%	10.00%	60.00%	30.00%	
Criticising different views on social media					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
man	N	14	5	8	<i>p</i> = .062 <i>V</i> = .41
	%	51.90%	18.50%	29.60%	
woman	N	2	6	2	
	%	20.00%	60.00%	20.00%	

Source: own analysis



*Association Between the Length of a Journalist’s Service in the Profession and His or Her Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors Driving Trust in Journalists*

In the next step, the study aimed to find out whether the length of a respondent’s service in the journalistic profession was in any way correlated with his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists. Another series of Fisher’s exact tests were performed. As shown in Table 3, no statistically significant results were obtained. Thus, it can be concluded that the length of journalists’ service in the profession was not significantly correlated with how they assessed the relevance of factors driving trust in journalists.

**Table 3. Association between the length of a journalist’s service in the profession and his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists**

<b>Political views consistent with those of the content recipient</b>					
		<b>not relevant</b>	<b>moderately relevant</b>	<b>highly relevant</b>	
1 – 5 years	<i>N</i>	1	2	2	<i>p</i> =.711
	%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%	
5 – 10 years	<i>N</i>	3	5	4	
	%	25.00%	41.70%	33.30%	
over 10 years	<i>N</i>	9	7	4	
	%	45.00%	35.00%	20.00%	
<b>No clear political views</b>					
		<b>not relevant</b>	<b>moderately relevant</b>	<b>highly relevant</b>	
1 – 5 years	<i>N</i>	1	0	4	<i>p</i> =.343
	%	20.00%	0.00%	80.00%	
5 – 10 years	<i>N</i>	3	5	4	
	%	25.00%	41.70%	33.30%	
over 10 years	<i>N</i>	8	5	7	
	%	40.00%	25.00%	35.00%	
<b>Voicing personal opinions and judgements</b>					
		<b>not relevant</b>	<b>moderately relevant</b>	<b>highly relevant</b>	
1 – 5 years	<i>N</i>	2	1	2	<i>p</i> =.323
	%	40.00%	20.00%	40.00%	
5 – 10 years	<i>N</i>	5	6	1	
	%	41.70%	50.00%	8.30%	
over 10 years	<i>N</i>	7	5	8	
	%	35.00%	25.00%	40.00%	

Criticising different views in journalistic materials					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
1 – 5 years	N	0	2	3	<i>p</i> = .493
	%	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%	
5 – 10 years	N	3	6	3	
	%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	
over 10 years	N	7	6	7	
	%	35.00%	30.00%	35.00%	

Criticising different views on social media					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
1 – 5 years	N	2	0	3	<i>p</i> = .397
	%	40.00%	0.00%	60.00%	
5 – 10 years	N	5	5	2	
	%	41.70%	41.70%	16.70%	
over 10 years	N	9	6	5	
	%	45.00%	30.00%	25.00%	

Source: own analysis

### *Association Between a Journalist's Workplace and His or Her Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors Driving Trust in Journalists*

In the next step, the study sought to find out whether a respondent's workplace was in any way correlated with his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists. Another series of Fisher's exact tests were performed. Based on the results, it should be concluded that a journalist's workplace was not significantly correlated with how they assessed the relevance of factors driving trust in journalists.

**Table 4. Association between a journalist’s workplace and his or her assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists**

Political views consistent with those of the content recipient					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
other	N	1	1	0	<i>p</i> =.960
	%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	
TV	N	4	4	3	
	%	36.40%	36.40%	27.30%	
radio	N	5	4	4	
	%	38.50%	30.80%	30.80%	
press	N	2	4	1	
	%	28.60%	57.10%	14.30%	
online	N	1	1	2	
	%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	
No clear political views					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
other	N	0	0	2	<i>p</i> =.858
	%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	
TV	N	4	3	4	
	%	36.40%	27.30%	36.40%	
radio	N	4	4	5	
	%	30.80%	30.80%	38.50%	
press	N	2	3	2	
	%	28.60%	42.90%	28.60%	
online	N	2	0	2	
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
Voicing personal opinions and judgements					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
other	N	1	1	0	<i>p</i> =.643
	%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	
TV	N	4	4	3	
	%	36.40%	36.40%	27.30%	
radio	N	7	2	4	
	%	53.80%	15.40%	30.80%	
press	N	1	4	2	
	%	14.30%	57.10%	28.60%	
online	N	1	1	2	
	%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	

Criticising different views in journalistic materials					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
other	N	1	0	1	<i>p</i> = .468
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
TV	N	2	5	4	
	%	18.20%	45.50%	36.40%	
radio	N	3	4	6	
	%	23.10%	30.80%	46.20%	
press	N	4	2	1	
	%	57.10%	28.60%	14.30%	
online	N	0	3	1	
	%	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	

Criticising different views on social media					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
other	N	1	0	1	<i>p</i> = .813
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
TV	N	4	3	4	
	%	36.40%	27.30%	36.40%	
radio	N	5	5	3	
	%	38.50%	38.50%	23.10%	
press	N	5	1	1	
	%	71.40%	14.30%	14.30%	
online	N	1	2	1	
	%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	

Source: own analysis

### *Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors That May Drive Trust in Journalists Compared with Assessment of Selected Aspects*

Next, the study sought to understand whether a respondent's assessment of the relevance of selected factors behind trust in journalists was correlated with his or her assessment of other selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism. As those questions were assessed on a classic Likert scale (1–5), with a higher rating indicating a more affirmative response, a series of one-way analyses of intergroup variance were performed.

First, three groups of journalists were compared, one assessing that political views consistent with those of the content recipient were not relevant, the other seeing this factor as moderately relevant and the third one feeling it was highly relevant in the context of trust in journalists. The results are summarised in Table 5. As shown

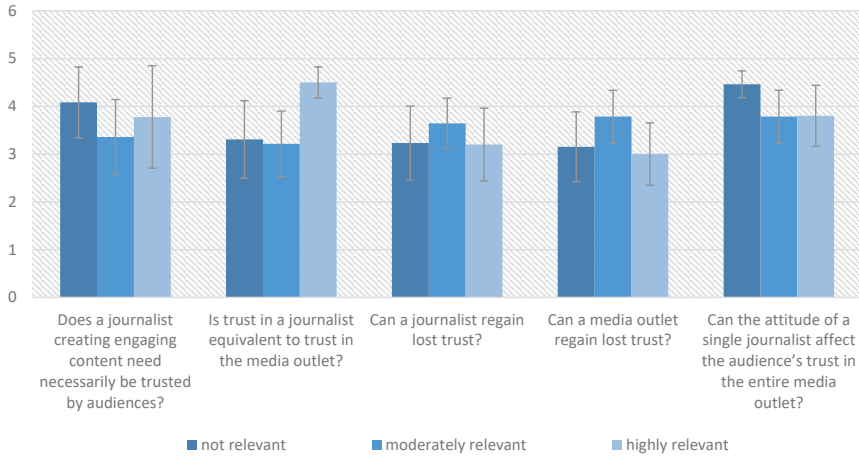
in the table, one statistically significant result was obtained for the question *Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?*. The strength of the recorded association, measured by the  $\eta^2$  coefficient, was large. Thus, a post-hoc analysis was performed using Dunnett's test. Two statistically significant differences were recorded. Those believing that political views consistent with those of the content recipient were relevant as a factor behind trust in journalists were more likely to agree with the statement that trust in a journalist was equivalent to trust in the media outlet, compared with those who said this factor was irrelevant ( $p = .049$ ) or only moderately relevant ( $p = .011$ ). The results are summarised in Figure 2.

**Table 5. Assessment of the relevance of political views consistent with those of the content recipient as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**

	Political views consistent with those of the content recipient									
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	$\eta^2$	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Does a journalist creating engaging content need necessarily be trusted by audiences?	4.08	1.31	3.36	1.50	3.78	1.64	0.79	.461	.05	
Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?	3.31	1.49	3.21	1.31	4.50	0.53	3.72	.026	.18	
Can a journalist regain lost trust?	3.23	1.42	3.64	1.01	3.20	1.23	0.53	.596	.03	
Can a media outlet regain lost trust?	3.15	1.34	3.79	1.05	3.00	1.00	1.59	.218	.09	
Can the attitude of a single journalist affect the audience's trust in the entire media outlet?	4.46	0.52	3.79	1.05	3.80	1.03	2.37	.109	.12	

Source: own analysis

**Figure 2. Assessment of the relevance of political views consistent with those of the content recipient as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**



Source: own analysis

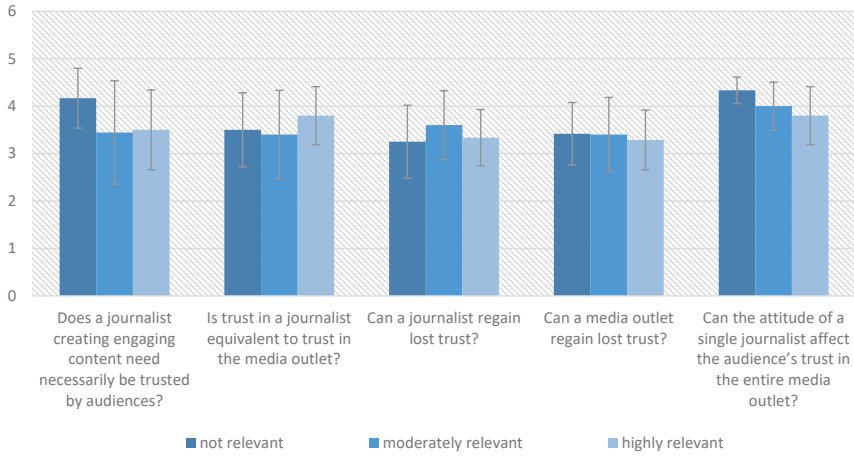
Next, the responses given by persons differing in their assessment of the relevance of not having clear political views were examined. However, this time no statistically significant differences were recorded (Table 6). The results are summarised in Figure 3.

**Table 6. Assessment of the relevance of not having clear political views as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**

	No clear political views									
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	$\eta^2$	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Does a journalist creating engaging content need necessarily be trusted by audiences?	4.17	1.11	3.44	1.67	3.50	1.61	0.87	.43	.05	
Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?	3.50	1.38	3.40	1.51	3.80	1.21	0.31	.737	.02	
Can a journalist regain lost trust?	3.25	1.36	3.60	1.17	3.33	1.18	0.24	.792	.01	
Can a media outlet regain lost trust?	3.42	1.16	3.40	1.26	3.29	1.20	0.05	.956	.00	
Can the attitude of a single journalist affect the audience's trust in the entire media outlet?	4.33	0.49	4.00	0.82	3.80	1.21	1.12	.34	.06	

Source: own analysis

**Figure 3. Assessment of the relevance of not having clear political views as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**



Source: own analysis

Subsequently, the responses given by persons differing in their assessment of the relevance of the factor involving a journalist’s voicing his or her personal opinions and judgements were examined. As detailed in Table 7, there was only one result at a statistical trend level – for the question *Can a journalist regain lost trust?* The result did not permit post-hoc analyses to be performed; however, it is worth noting that the strength of the observed association was significant (Table 7). The results are summarised in Figure 4.

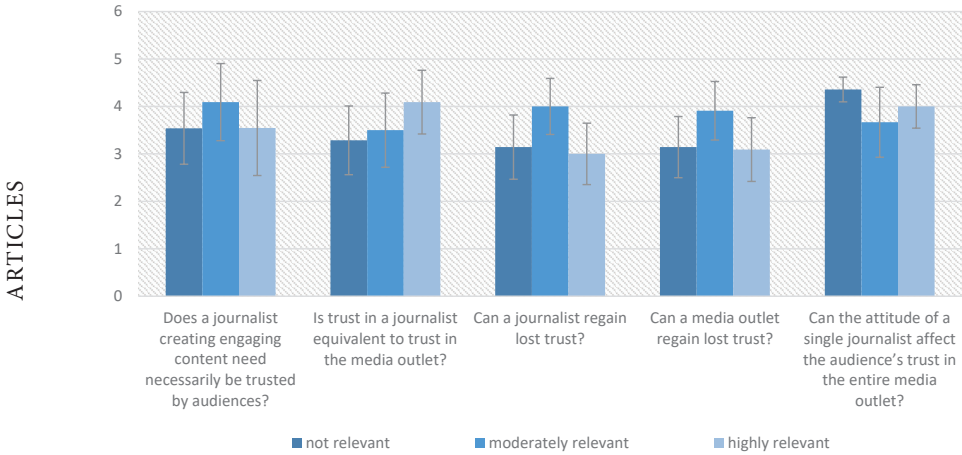
**Table 7. Assessment of the relevance of a journalist’s voicing his or her personal opinions and judgements as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**

	Voicing personal opinions and judgements								
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	η <sup>2</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Does a journalist creating engaging content need necessarily be trusted by audiences?	3.54	1.39	4.09	1.38	3.55	1.69	0.51	.603	.03
Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?	3.29	1.38	3.50	1.38	4.09	1.14	1.20	.313	.07
Can a journalist regain lost trust?	3.14	1.29	4.00	1.04	3.00	1.10	2.60	.089	.13
Can a media outlet regain lost trust?	3.14	1.23	3.91	1.04	3.09	1.14	1.81	.18	.10

Voicing personal opinions and judgements										
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	$\eta^2$	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Can the attitude of a single journalist affect the audience's trust in the entire media outlet?	4.36	0.50	3.67	1.30	4.00	0.77	1.80	.19	.10	

Source: own analysis

Figure 4. Assessment of the relevance of a journalist's voicing his or her personal opinions and judgements as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism



Source: own analysis

As a next step, the responses given by individuals differing in their assessment of the relevance of the factor involving criticism of different views in journalistic materials were examined. This time no statistically significant differences were recorded (Table 8). Worth noting are the results for the last question, where the strength of the recorded association was significant. The results are summarised in Figure 5.

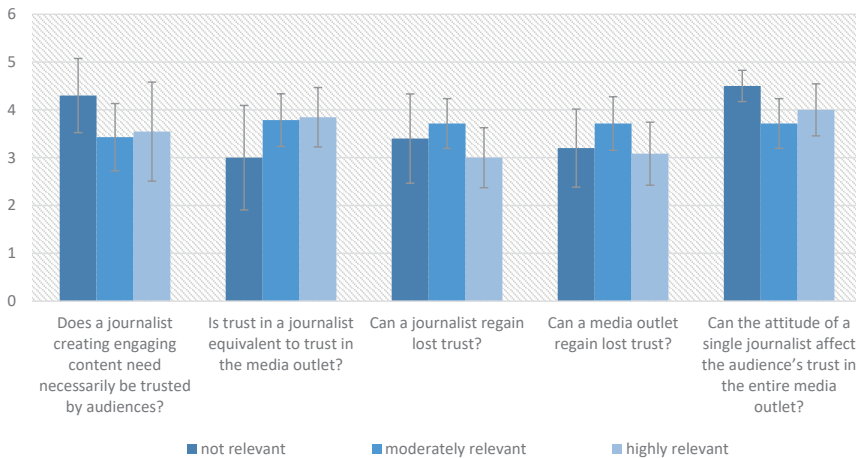


**Table 8. Assessment of the relevance of criticising different views in journalistic materials as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**

	Criticising different views in journalistic materials								
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	η <sup>2</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Does a journalist creating engaging content need necessarily be trusted by audiences?	4.30	1.25	3.43	1.34	3.55	1.75	1.15	.331	.07
Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?	3.00	1.76	3.79	1.05	3.85	1.14	1.43	.254	.08
Can a journalist regain lost trust?	3.40	1.51	3.71	0.99	3.00	1.15	1.19	.317	.07
Can a media outlet regain lost trust?	3.20	1.32	3.71	1.07	3.08	1.16	1.07	.356	.06
Can the attitude of a single journalist affect the audience's trust in the entire media outlet?	4.50	0.53	3.71	0.99	4.00	1.00	2.25	.121	.12

Source: own analysis

**Figure 5. Assessment of the relevance of criticising different views in journalistic materials as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**



Source: own analysis

In the final step of this series of analyses, the responses given by individuals differing in their assessment of the relevance of the factor involving criticism of different views on social media were placed under scrutiny. As detailed in Table 9, there was

only one result at a statistical trend level – for the question *Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?* The result did not permit post-hoc analyses to be performed; however, it is worth noting that the strength of the observed association was significant. The results are summarised in Figure 6.

**Table 9. Assessment of the relevance of criticising different views on social media as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**

	Criticising different views on social media								
	not relevant (n = 13)		moderately relevant (n = 14)		highly relevant (n = 10)		F	p	$\eta^2$
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Does a journalist creating engaging content need necessarily be trusted by audiences?	3.73	1.62	3.64	1.12	3.78	1.72	0.02	.977	0
Is trust in a journalist equivalent to trust in the media outlet?	3.06	1.57	4.00	0.77	4.00	1.15	2.47	.099	.13
Can a journalist regain lost trust?	3.44	1.36	3.73	0.90	2.90	1.20	1.28	.292	.07
Can a media outlet regain lost trust?	3.19	1.28	3.91	0.83	3.00	1.22	1.89	.167	.10
Can the attitude of a single journalist affect the audience's trust in the entire media outlet?	4.19	0.75	3.82	0.98	4.00	1.15	0.51	.606	.03

Source: own analysis

**Figure 6. Assessment of the relevance of criticising different views on social media as a factor behind trust in journalists compared with assessment of selected aspects pertaining to overall trust in journalism**



Source: own analysis

*Opinion on who Makes Audiences Choose Particular Content Compared with Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors Driving Trust in Journalists*

In further steps, the study sought to find out whether the opinion on who made audiences choose particular content was in any way correlated with the assessment of the relevance of selected factors behind trust in journalists. A series of Fisher’s exact tests were performed. As detailed in Table 11, there was one statistically significant result. Assessment of the relevance of having no clear political views as a factor behind trust in journalists was correlated with the opinion on who made audiences choose particular content. Those indicating that audiences chose particular content because of the media outlet were far more likely than others to indicate that having no clear political views was highly relevant. By contrast, of the two respondents who said that audiences chose content because of a journalist they trusted, both felt that the factor under analysis was not relevant. The strength of the association was moderately large. There was also a result at a statistical trend level for the factor involving a journalist’s voicing his or her personal opinions and judgements. Those indicating that audiences chose particular content because of the media outlet were far more likely than others to indicate that this factor was highly relevant. The strength of the association was also moderately large.

Table 11. Opinion on who makes audiences choose particular content compared with assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists

		Political views consistent with those of the content recipient			
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
a journalist they trust	N	1	0	1	<i>p</i> = .420
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
the media outlet where it is published	N	5	9	5	
	%	26.30%	47.40%	26.30%	
topics covered	N	7	5	2	
	%	50.00%	35.70%	14.30%	

No clear political views					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
a journalist they trust	N	2	0	0	<i>p</i> = .018 <i>V</i> = .41
	%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
the media outlet where it is published	N	5	3	11	
	%	26.30%	15.80%	57.90%	
topics covered	N	5	7	2	
	%	35.70%	50.00%	14.30%	
Voicing personal opinions and judgements					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
a journalist they trust	N	1	1	0	<i>p</i> = .078 <i>V</i> = .33
	%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	
the media outlet where it is published	N	4	7	8	
	%	21.10%	36.80%	42.10%	
topics covered	N	9	3	2	
	%	64.30%	21.40%	14.30%	
Criticising different views in journalistic materials					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
a journalist they trust	N	1	0	1	<i>p</i> = .464
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
the media outlet where it is published	N	4	10	5	
	%	21.10%	52.60%	26.30%	
topics covered	N	5	4	5	
	%	35.70%	28.60%	35.70%	
Criticising different views on social media					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
a journalist they trust	N	1	0	1	<i>p</i> = .587
	%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	
the media outlet where it is published	N	7	7	5	
	%	36.80%	36.80%	26.30%	
topics covered	N	8	4	2	
	%	57.10%	28.60%	14.30%	

Source: own analysis

*Opinion on Who Audiences Turn to When Looking for Information About Difficult Topics Compared with Assessment of the Relevance of Selected Factors Driving Trust in Journalists*

Subsequently, the study aimed to find out whether the opinion on who audiences turned to when looking for information about difficult topics was correlated in any way with the assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists. A series of Fisher’s exact tests were performed. As detailed in Table 12, there were two statistically significant results. Assessment of the relevance of having no clear political views as a factor behind trust in journalists was correlated with the opinion on who audiences turned to when looking for information about difficult topics. Those believing that audiences turned primarily to the media outlet they trusted were far more likely than others to indicate that having no clear political views was highly relevant. The strength of the association was moderately large. The factor involving the voicing of personal opinions and judgements by a journalist was also found to be significantly statistically correlated with the opinion on who audiences turned to when seeking information about difficult topics. Those who said that audiences turned primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic were far more likely to indicate that the factor under review was not relevant in the context of trust in journalists. The strength of the association was also moderately large.

Table 12. Opinion on who audiences turn to when looking for information about difficult topics compared with assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists

Political views consistent with those of the content recipient					
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant	
primarily to journalists they trust	N	3	2	1	<i>p</i> = .164
	%	50.00%	33.30%	16.70%	
primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic	N	6	2	2	
	%	60.00%	20.00%	20.00%	
primarily to the media outlet they trust	N	3	10	6	
	%	15.80%	52.60%	31.60%	

No clear political views						
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant		
primarily to journalists they trust	<i>N</i>	3	3	0	<i>p</i> = .022 <i>V</i> = .39	
	%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%		
primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic	<i>N</i>	5	3	2		
	%	50.00%	30.00%	20.00%		
primarily to the media outlet they trust	<i>N</i>	3	4	12		
	%	15.80%	21.10%	63.20%		
Voicing personal opinions and judgements						
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant		
primarily to journalists they trust	<i>N</i>	3	3	0		<i>p</i> = .001 <i>V</i> = .46
	%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%		
primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic	<i>N</i>	8	0	2		
	%	80.00%	0.00%	20.00%		
primarily to the media outlet they trust	<i>N</i>	3	7	9		
	%	15.80%	36.80%	47.40%		
Criticising different views in journalistic materials						
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant		
primarily to journalists they trust	<i>N</i>	2	3	1	<i>p</i> = .435	
	%	33.30%	50.00%	16.70%		
primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic	<i>N</i>	4	2	4		
	%	40.00%	20.00%	40.00%		
primarily to the media outlet they trust	<i>N</i>	3	9	7		
	%	15.80%	47.40%	36.80%		
Criticising different views on social media						
		not relevant	moderately relevant	highly relevant		
primarily to journalists they trust	<i>N</i>	4	1	1		<i>p</i> = .721
	%	66.70%	16.70%	16.70%		
primarily to journalists most knowledgeable about a particular topic	<i>N</i>	5	3	2		
	%	50.00%	30.00%	20.00%		
primarily to the media outlet they trust	<i>N</i>	6	7	6		
	%	31.60%	36.80%	31.60%		

Source: own analysis

## *Conclusions*

While the gathered research material is wide enough to provide a variety of many-sided conclusions, for the purposes of this paper we will only discuss the findings reflected in statistically significant results.

First of all, as a general conclusion, it is necessary to emphasise the relevance of political views as a main factor behind the way 'trust in journalists' is understood and perceived by journalists themselves. According to those surveyed (journalists), what has emerged as the most relevant factor in the context of trust in journalists is their not having clear political views, understood as making their private views inconspicuous in journalistic materials. At the same time, the highest percentage of respondents were of the opinion that criticising different political views on social media was not relevant as a factor behind trust in journalists. This finding came as something of a surprise, suggesting as it is that journalists regarded their professional activity in a specific media outlet as separate and distinct from their activity on social media, and did not treat the traditional media space and virtual space in a coherent and holistic manner. Another noteworthy trend was that the approach described above was more frequent in men than women.

Political views were also found relevant in terms of audiences' choice of particular content, both in the personal and institutional dimensions.

In the personal dimension, it turned out that the correlation between the opinion on who audiences turned to when looking for information about difficult topics and the assessment of the relevance of selected factors driving trust in journalists was significant. In this respect, respondents said that audiences looking for information about difficult topics turned to journalists (trusted journalists) who refrained from voicing clear political views in their materials. The same was true of a journalist's voicing his or her personal opinions and judgements, in the case of which there was also a significant statistical correlation with the opinion on who audiences turned to when seeking information about difficult topics.

In the institutional dimension, as suggested by the study results, the assessment of the relevance of the factor of 'having no clear political views' was correlated with the opinion on who made audiences choose particular content. Individuals indicating that audiences chose content because of the media outlet were far more likely than others to say that inability to ascribe clear political views to the media outlet was a highly relevant factor in this instance.

As regards the correlation between trust in journalists and trust in a media outlet, it should be noted that respondents stating that political views consistent with those of the content recipient were a relevant factor behind trust in a journalist were more likely to agree with the statement that trust in a journalist was equivalent to trust in the media outlet. This finding reveals an apparent proclivity among the surveyed group of journalists towards the 'journalism of opinion' model described in this paper.

Based on the survey findings, it should be noted that neither a journalist's workplace nor the length of his or her service in the profession were significantly correlated

with the perceived relevance of factors driving trust in journalists. While in the case of a journalist's workplace it can be assumed that journalists nowadays work for or are associated with several media outlets or change workplaces over time, which renders the factor of their identification with a particular media institution less relevant, the findings suggesting irrelevance of the length of a journalist's service seem somewhat surprising. Certainly this aspect requires further in-depth research.

Although the conclusions presented above do not exhaustively address all data generated by the study and the collected empirical material will be subjected to further analysis and scientific reflection, the presented study complements and elaborates on the available research findings and scientific analyses concerned with the community of Polish journalists.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### **Zaufanie do dziennikarzy w świetle wyników badań sondażowych polskich dziennikarzy**

Celem badania było wskazanie czynników, które w opinii dziennikarzy mają największy wpływ na budowanie zaufania odbiorców. Przedstawione w artykule badanie zostało przeprowadzone w styczniu 2020 roku (od 5 do 31.01.2020 r.) przy wykorzystaniu platformy cyfrowej wspierającej badania ankietowe. Kwestionariusz badań zawierał 13 pytań rzeczowych (2 miały charakter otwarty, a 11 zamknięty) oraz 3 pytania dotyczące profilu respondentów. W badaniu wzięło udział 67 respondentów (dziennikarzy). W celu udzielenia odpowiedzi na postawione pytania badawcze przeprowadzono analizy statystyczne wypowiedzi respondentów, przy użyciu pakietu IBM SPSS Statistics. Badanie stanowi pierwszy etap projektu badawczego poświęconego zagadnieniu zaufania do dziennikarzy. Artykuł stanowi uzupełnienie i uszczegółowienie dostępnych wyników badań i analiz naukowych dotyczących polskich dziennikarzy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zaufanie, zaufanie do dziennikarzy, strategie budowy zaufania, środowisko dziennikarzy